



Notice is given that a Meeting of Council will be held on:

Date: Tuesday, 25 March 2025
Time: 3.00pm
Location: Loddon Shire Council Chambers, Wedderburn

AGENDA

Council Meeting

Order Of Business

1	OPENING AFFIRMATION	3
2	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY	3
3	APOLOGIES	3
4	DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST	3
5	PREVIOUS MINUTES	4
	5.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES.....	4
6	COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS	5
	6.1 RECORD OF COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS	5
7	REVIEW OF ACTIONS	8
	7.1 REVIEW OF ACTIONS	8
8	MAYORAL REPORT	13
	8.1 MAYORAL REPORT.....	13
9	COUNCILLORS' REPORT	14
	9.1 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS	14
10	DECISION REPORTS	16
	10.1 PLANNING APPLICATION 6030: CONSTRUCT A BUILDING (STORAGE SHED) ASSOCIATED WITH AGRICULTURE.....	16
	10.2 NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT - NOTICES OF MOTIONS	33
	10.3 NEWBRIDGE WATER AND SEWERAGE	43
	10.4 BRIDGEWATER FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB - FEE WAIVER AND REDUCTION APPLICATION	228
	10.5 SALE OF PROPERTIES FOR RATE RECOVERY UNDER SECTION 181 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1989.....	230
	10.6 REQUEST TO WRITE OFF BAD DEBTS	232
	10.7 LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY	234
	10.8 ANNUAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM 2025-2026	454
	10.9 EMERGENCY SERVICES AND VOLUNTEERS FUND LEVY	466
11	INFORMATION REPORTS	472
	Nil	
12	COMPLIANCE REPORTS	472
	Nil	
13	URGENT BUSINESS	472
14	CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS	472
	Nil	

OPENING COMMENT

This meeting is being recorded and audio streamed via the Council website and Facebook.

1 OPENING AFFIRMATION

“We, the Councillors of the Loddon Shire, declare that we will carry out our duties in the best interests of the community, and through collective leadership will maintain the highest standards of good governance.”

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

“The Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered and pays its respects to their Elders both past and present.”

3 APOLOGIES**4 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

5 PREVIOUS MINUTES**5.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

File Number: FOL/19/45615
Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance
Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council confirm the Minutes of the following meetings as previously circulated to Councillors:

1. Council Briefing of 25 February 2025
2. Council Meeting of 25 February 2025
3. Council Forum of 11 March 2025

REPORT

This report seeks Council confirmation of Minutes from the February 2025 Council Briefing and Council Meeting, and the March 2025 Council Forum, as previously circulated to Councillors.

6 COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS**6.1 RECORD OF COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS**

File Number: 02/01/001
Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance
Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council confirm the records of the following auspiced meetings as detailed within this report:

1. Council Briefing held 25 February 2025
2. Council Forum held 11 March 2025.

Rule 35 of Council's Governance Rules requires a record of meetings conducted under the auspices of Council to be presented to the next available scheduled Council meeting for confirmation that must include:

- a) a record of which Councillors and officers attended the meeting;
- b) a summary of the matters considered in the meeting; and
- c) a record of any conflicts of interest disclosed by Councillors and officers and any Councillors or officers that left the meeting whilst a matter that their conflict of interest related to was being discussed.

Section 3 of the Governance Rules defines meetings conducted under the auspices of Council to mean a meeting of the kind described in section 131(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 and includes a meeting which:

- a) is schedule or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors;
- b) is attended by a majority of Councillors;
- c) is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- d) is not a Council meeting or delegated committee meeting.

This report seeks confirmation of the Council Briefing held on 25 February 2025 and the Council Forum held 11 March 2025.

Meeting details	Briefing
Date	25 February 2025
Councillor Attendees	Cr Straub (Mayor) Cr Angelo Cr Holt Cr Weaver Cr Wilson
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	1. Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer 2. David Stretch, Acting Director Community Wellbeing 3. Steven Phillips, Director Operations 4. Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate 5. Lisa Clue, Manager Governance Jude Holt – item 2 below Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services – item 3 below Bradd Worrell, Tourism and Marketing Coordinator – item 4 below
Item(s) discussed.	1. Review of Council Meeting Agenda 2. Councillor roles in Risk Management 3. Finance Report for Quarter Ending 31 December 2024 4. Visitor Economy Strategy (2025-2030) – Final 5. 2024 Municipal Association of Victoria President and Regional Director Elections 6. Victorian Government’s Response: Inquiry into the 2022 Victorian Floods 7. General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Meeting agenda reports • CEO updates • Goldfields PSA Neighbourhood Policing Forum • VNI West Forum for Councils • Visitor Economy Strategy
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/ officer making disclosure	Nil
Councillor/officer left room	n/a

Meeting details	Forum
Date	11 March 2025
Councillor Attendees	Cr Straub (Mayor) Cr Angelo Cr Holt Cr Weaver Cr Wilson (Virtual)
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	1. Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer 2. David Stretch, Acting Director Community Wellbeing 3. Steven Phillips, Director Operations 4. Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate 5. Lisa Clue, Manager Governance 6. Jude Holt – Item 1 below Adam Crameri and Paul Vickery, Coliban Water – Item 3 below David Southcombe, Manager Assets and Infrastructure – Item 4 below Orrin Hogan, Manager Community Partnerships – Item 6 below
Item(s) discussed.	1. Strategic Risk Review 2. Governance Rules Review 3. Coliban Water Presentation 4. Annual Infrastructure Program 2025-2026 5. Management of Inglewood Town Hall Hub 6. Draft Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy 7. Bio Gro Update 8. 2025 ALGA National General Assembly – Call for Notices of Motion 9. General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Laws Permits • Long weekend events across Loddon Shire Council • MAV State Council Elections • Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid Update
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/ officer making disclosure	Nil
Councillor/officer left room	n/a

7 REVIEW OF ACTIONS**7.1 REVIEW OF ACTIONS**

File Number: 02/01/002
Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance
Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer
Attachments: 1. Status of Council resolution actions

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive and note the status of Council resolution actions, as attached to this report.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

REPORT

A document containing the status of actions associated with Council resolutions is attached to this Agenda report.

All five actions arising from February Council meeting resolutions have been completed.

Completion of one action generated from a January Council meeting resolution (relating to a review of Council's Governance Rules) is progressing and will be acted upon at the April Council meeting, in accordance with the resolution.

One action generated from a November 2024 Council meeting resolution, reported on as progressing at the February Council meeting, relates to a report on Newbridge Water and Sewerage, which will be presented to this Council meeting (in accordance with the resolution).

Status of Council resolution actions

Meeting	Officer/Director	Section	Subject
Council 25/02/2025	Caserta, Deanne Stedman, Michelle	Decision Reports	Finance Report for the quarter ending 31 December 2024
RESOLUTION 2025/16			
Moved: Cr Nick Angelo			
Seconded: Cr Gavan Holt			
That Council			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. receives and notes the Finance Report for the quarter ending 31 December 2024 2. approves budget revisions included in the report for internal reporting purposes only 3. approves the supplementary valuations of rateable and non-rateable properties in respect of the 2024/25 financial year, as returned by the Shire Valuer, LG Valuations Pty Ltd, and endorses them being incorporated into the Register of Rateable and Non-Rateable Properties and Rate Book for 2024/25 4. notes that a revised budget under s97 (3) of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> is not required. 			
			CARRIED
03 Mar 2025 2:29pm Caserta, Deanne - Completion			
For information, no further action required.			

Meeting	Officer/Director	Section	Subject
Council 28/01/2025	Clue, Lisa Stedman, Michelle	Decision Reports	Governance Rules Review
RESOLUTION 2025/5			
Moved: Cr Miki Wilson			
Seconded: Cr David Weaver			
That Council:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledge that due to the scheduling of mandatory Councillor training and the Christmas/New Year holiday period, there has been limited time to brief incoming Councillors on this matter or discuss in detail other elements of the Governance Rules, and 2. Defer consideration of this matter until April 2025. 			
			CARRIED
14 Feb 2025 3:07pm Clue, Lisa			
A report is being prepared to commence review of the Governance Rules at the March Council Forum. It is anticipated the review will be complete by April 2025 in accordance with the resolution.			

Status of Council resolution actions

Meeting	Officer/Director	Section	Subject
Council 25/02/2025	Clue, Lisa Stedman, Michelle	Decision Reports	Audit and Risk Committee Charter
RESOLUTION 2025/13			
Moved: Cr Gavan Holt			
Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo			
That Council approve the Audit and Risk Committee Charter 2025 – 2027 (v12).			
CARRIED			
14 Mar 2025 2:02pm Clue, Lisa - Completion			
Required administrative actions following Council approval of the Audit and Risk Committee Charter 2025-2027 (v12) have been completed and the Charter is now accessible from Council's website.			

Meeting	Officer/Director	Section	Subject
Council 26/11/2024	Colls, Renae Fitzgerald, Lincoln	Decision Reports	Newbridge Water and Sewerage Update
RESOLUTION 2024/148			
Moved: Cr Nick Angelo			
Seconded: Cr Gavan Holt			
That Council			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. acknowledge that following the 2024 Council elections there has been minimal time to brief the incoming Council on this item; and 2. defer consideration of this matter until March 2025. 			
CARRIED			
09 Dec 2024 3:35pm Colls, Renae			
In accordance with the resolution, a report will be provided to Council at a meeting in March 2025.			

Status of Council resolution actions

Meeting	Officer/Director	Section	Subject
Council 25/02/2025	Southcombe, David Phillips, Steven	Decision Reports	Annual Infrastructure Program and Flood Program Quarterly Report Update
RESOLUTION 2025/15			
Moved: Cr Miki Wilson			
Seconded: Cr David Weaver			
That Council:			
1. note the progress of the Annual Infrastructure Program 2024-2025 and Flood Restoration Program as at December 2024			
2. approves the reallocation of funds within the 2024-2025 Annual Infrastructure Program as shown in Table 1.			
CARRIED			
14 Mar 2025 2:08pm Southcombe, David - Completion			
Change in project allocations and new project details have been provided to Finance.			

Meeting	Officer/Director	Section	Subject
Council 25/02/2025	Stedman, Michelle Stedman, Michelle	Decision Reports	Appointment of Audit and Risk Committee Chair
RESOLUTION 2025/14			
Moved: Cr Gavan Holt			
Seconded: Cr David Weaver			
That Council, on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, appoint Marg Allan as Chairperson of the Loddon Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee for the period 1 March 2025 to 28 February 2026.			
CARRIED			
14 Mar 2025 2:07pm Clue, Lisa - Completion			
Marg Allan has been advised in writing of this appointment.			

Status of Council resolution actions

Meeting	Officer/Director	Section	Subject
Council 25/02/2025	Worrell, Bradd Fitzgerald, Lincoln	Decision Reports	Visitor Economy Strategy
<p>RESOLUTION 2025/17</p> <p>Moved: Cr Miki Wilson Seconded: Cr David Weaver</p> <p>That Council endorse and adopt the content of the Loddon Shire Visitor Economy Strategy (2025-2030) and authorise the CEO to make administrative and formatting changes in consultation with Councillors.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED</p> <p>03 Mar 2025 11:11am Worrell, Bradd</p> <p>The Visitor Economy Strategy has been published and provided to the Governance department for finalisation and uploading to Council's website. The Strategy will be provided to Council stakeholders.</p>			

8 MAYORAL REPORT

8.1 MAYORAL REPORT

File Number: 02/01/001
Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance
Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive and note the Mayoral Report.

REPORT

Mayor Straub will present a verbal report at the meeting.

Loddon Campaspe Councils	
Loddon Healthy Minds Network	
Murray River Group of Councils	
North Central Local Learning and Employment Network	
Rural Councils Victoria	
Section 65 Community Asset Committees:	
East Loddon Community Centre Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity

9 COUNCILLORS' REPORT

9.1 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

File Number: 02/01/001
Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance
Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive and note the Councillors' reports.

REPORT

Each Councillor will present a verbal report at the meeting.

Cr Angelo

Australia Day Committee	
North Central Goldfields Regional Library	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity

Cr Holt

Audit and Risk Committee	
Municipal Association of Victoria	
Section 65 Community Asset Committees:	
Donaldson Park Hard Hill Tourist Reserve Wedderburn Community Centre Wedderburn Engine Park and Market Square Reserve Wedderburn Mechanics and Literary Institute Hall	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity

Cr Weaver

Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee	
Rail Freight Alliance	
Section 65 Community Asset Committees:	
Boort Aerodrome Boort Memorial Hall Boort Park Korong Vale Mechanics Hall Korong Vale Sports Centre Little Lake Boort Yando Public Hall	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity

Cr Wilson

Calder Highway Improvement Committee	
Section 65 Community Asset Committees:	
Campbells Forest Hall Inglewood Community Sports Centre Inglewood Community Elderly Persons Units Inglewood Town Hall Hub	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity

10 DECISION REPORTS**10.1 PLANNING APPLICATION 6030: CONSTRUCT A BUILDING (STORAGE SHED) ASSOCIATED WITH AGRICULTURE**

File Number: FOL/24/4127

Author: Darcy Jackson, Statutory Planning Officer

Authoriser: Glenn Harvey, Manager Development and Compliance

Attachments:

1. **Decision Report - PA6030**
2. **Proposed Plans**
3. **Objection - Confidential**

This attachment is designated as confidential in accordance with Section 3(1)(f) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It contains personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

contains personal contact information

RECOMMENDATION

That the Responsible Authority having considered all matters which the Planning and Environment Act, 1987, requires it to consider, decides to issue a Notice of Decision to grant planning permit 6030 to construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture subject to the following conditions:

1. Amended Plans Required

Before the development starts, amended plans must be submitted to and approved by the Responsible Authority. When approved, the plans will be endorsed and will then form part of the permit. The plans must be drawn to scale with dimensions. The plans must be generally in accordance with the plans submitted with the application but modified to show:

- (a) Amended site plan drawn to scale showing the shed located within 25 metres of the western boundary and within 10 metres of the southern boundary as per North Central CMA condition.
- (b) Colour of the proposed shed

2. Layout not altered

The development as shown on the endorsed plans must not be altered or modified unless otherwise agreed in writing by the responsible authority.

3. Use of the building

The proposed building must not be used for any other purpose other than storage unless otherwise approved in writing by the responsible authority.

4. Materials and Colours

All external materials must be non-reflective and finished in muted tones to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.

5. Buildings and works – drainage

All buildings and works must be drained to the satisfaction of the Loddon Shire as the

responsible drainage authority.

6. North Central CMA Conditions

- 6.1. Water resistant buildings materials that minimise the physical effects of flooding on the shed structure and its contents must be used for foundations, footings, floor and walls up to at least the Nominal Flood Protection Level of 180.2 metres AHD. In addition:
- a) Electrical fittings must be fixed above the Nominal Flood Protection Level of 180.2 metres AHD.
 - b) All chemicals, oil, fuel, grease, waste or other potential pollutants must be stored above the Nominal Flood Protection Level of 180.2 metres AHD. Adequate storage areas and shelving should be provided for this purpose.
- 6.2. The shed must be located within 25 metres of the western boundary and within 10 metres of the southern lot boundary.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

There have been no previous Council discussion on this matter.

BACKGROUND

The application was lodged on the 17 December 2024 proposing to construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture. The applicant has planted several fruit trees and established vegetable gardens throughout the site.

The application was advertised to surrounding landowners; with one objection received.

The application was also referred externally referrals to North Central CMA (Sec 52 referral).

The North Central CMA provided conditional consent with some amendments to the location of the shed required.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act) the Minister of Planning delegates a municipal council power to become the planning authority for any planning scheme in force in its municipal district.

A municipal council is obligated to enforce and administer the relevant Planning Scheme and must use the scheme to determine applications. The Loddon Planning Scheme is the relevant Planning Scheme for Council. An application is referred to Council for determination, which:

- receive one or more objections, and/or
- are to be recommended for refusal by the Planning officer.

Pursuant to Section 52 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, notices were sent to owners and occupiers of adjoining land. Council has received one objection as the result of the public notification and as such, the matter is being brought to Council for determination. A decision report detailing this application has been prepared and can be found in attachment 1, the plans can be found at attachment 2. The objection is included in the decision report with the personal information removed. Attachment 3 is the same objection with the personal information intact.

The objection has been included twice, once without any personal information and a second time in confidential items including the personal information. This is to insure Council complies with its obligations for handling personal information under the *Privacy and Data Protections Act 2014*. A complete copy of the objection can be made available to the public via an appointment.

COST/BENEFITS

There are various costs associated with having a delegated Planning officer consider an application and make a recommendation as well as with the time of the Councillors to consider this recommendation.

The benefits associated with this report is the ability of Council to fulfil its requirement under law and provide the community with a statutory service that delivers well-managed and appropriate development.

RISK ANALYSIS

The risks of Council not fulfilling its statutory obligation under the Act include:

- inappropriate use and development which could endanger life and property
- Council's reputation as a Responsible Authority
- breaches of the *Planning & Environment Act 1987* requiring compliance action.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Refer to the decision report (attachment 1) for further detail on the application.

LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL

DECISION REPORT 6030: Construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture.



CONTENTS

1	RECOMMENDATION	4
2	DISCUSSION	5
	2.1 The Site & Locality	5
	2.2 Site History	5
	2.3 Proposal	5
	2.4 Loddon Planning Scheme	6
	2.4.1 Zone.....	6
	2.4.2 Overlay.....	6
	2.4.3 Relevant Particular Provisions.....	6
	2.4.4 Permit trigger.....	6
	2.4.5 Restrictive Covenant	6
	2.4.6 Planning Policy Framework	6
	2.4.7 Local Planning Policy Framework.....	7
	2.5 Referrals	7
	2.6 Public Notification	7
3	ASSESSMENT	8
	3.1 Planner assessment	8
4	CONCLUSION	8
5	Appendix 1:	9
	5.1 Objection 1	9

SUMMARY

Application Number:	6030
Applicant:	Mark Osuch
Subject Land:	Crown Allotment 13, Section U Township of Wedderburn Cnr of Ross Road and Boort Wedderburn Road
Owner:	Mark Osuch
Zone:	Low Density Residential Zone
Overlay(s):	None to consider
Existing use:	Vegetable Gardens and Fruit Trees
Proposal:	Construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture

The following dot points provide a summary of the application:

- The application was lodged on the 17 December 2024 proposing to construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture
- The application was advertised to surrounding landowners; with one objection received.
- The application was also referred externally referrals to North Central CMA (Sec 52 referral).
- The North Central CMA provided conditional consent.
- Officer recommendation is to issue a notice of decision to grant a planning permit.

1 RECOMMENDATION

That the Responsible Authority having considered all matters which the Planning and Environment Act, 1987, requires it to consider, decides to issue a Notice of Decision to grant planning permit 6030 to construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture subject to the following conditions:

1. Amended Plans Required

Before the development starts, amended plans must be submitted to and approved by the Responsible Authority. When approved, the plans will be endorsed and will then form part of the permit. The plans must be drawn to scale with dimensions. The plans must be generally in accordance with the plans submitted with the application but modified to show:

- (a) Amended site plan drawn to scale showing the shed located within 25 metres of the western boundary and within 10 metres of the southern boundary as per North Central CMA condition.
- (b) Colour of the proposed shed

2. Layout not altered

The development as shown on the endorsed plans must not be altered or modified unless otherwise agreed in writing by the responsible authority.

3. Use of the building

The proposed building must not be used for any other purpose other than storage unless otherwise approved in writing by the responsible authority.

4. Materials and Colours

All external materials must be non-reflective and finished in muted tones to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.

5. Buildings and works – drainage

All buildings and works must be drained to the satisfaction of the Loddon Shire as the responsible drainage authority.

6. North Central CMA Conditions

- 6.1. Water resistant buildings materials that minimise the physical effects of flooding on the shed structure and its contents must be used for foundations, footings, floor and walls up to at least the Nominal Flood Protection Level of 180.2 metres AHD. In addition:
 - a) Electrical fittings must be fixed above the Nominal Flood Protection Level of 180.2 metres AHD.
 - b) All chemicals, oil, fuel, grease, waste or other potential pollutants must be stored above the Nominal Flood Protection Level of 180.2 metres AHD. Adequate storage areas and shelving should be provided for this purpose.
- 6.2. The shed must be located within 25 metres of the western boundary and within 10 metres of the southern lot boundary.

2 DISCUSSION

2.1 The Site & Locality

The subject site comprises one parcel of land that totals approximately 9,608 square metres. The Korong Creek traverses the northern edge of the property with some areas of native trees mainly along the creek bank. The site has remained undeveloped although the owner has constructed several small vegetable gardens and planted fruit trees throughout the site.



The surrounding area consists of several low density properties which form the edge of the Wedderburn township. Many of the lots are already developed with dwellings and associated outbuildings although there is some vacant land to the east.

2.2 Site History

The property does not have any planning permit history which is likely due to the flood issues associated with the site.

2.3 Proposal

The proposal seeks to construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture.

The proposed shed will be 10.8 metres long x 3.6 metres wide with an eave height of 3 metres. It will sit on a raised base 1.6 metres off the ground to allow flood water to flow underneath unobstructed, giving the shed an overall height of 4.6 metres. It will also have a small landing constructed off one section of the shed and will extend out 2.4 metres to allow easier unloading of hay and other equipment. It is proposed the shed will be setback 40 metres from the bank of the Korong Creek and 50 metres from Ross Road, however this will need to be altered slightly to comply with the conditions imposed by North Central CMA.

The shed will be used to store hay and other equipment associated with maintaining the property. The applicant has established small vegetable gardens and undertaken planting of different fruit trees on sections of the property. The hay will be used around the base of these trees and on the vegetable gardens.

2.4 Loddon Planning Scheme

2.4.1 Zone

The subject site is within the Low Density Residential Zone. The purpose of this zone includes the following:

- *To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *To provide for low-density residential development on lots which, in the absence of reticulated sewerage, can treat and retain all wastewater.*

2.4.2 Overlay

There are currently no overlays affecting this property.

2.4.3 Relevant Particular Provisions

No relevant particular provisions to consider.

2.4.4 Permit trigger

Under Clause 32.03-6 of the Low Density Residential Zone, a permit is required to construct buildings and carry out works associated with a section 2 use (agriculture)

2.4.5 Restrictive Covenant

No restrictive covenants exist on this site.

2.4.6 Planning Policy Framework

The following section considers the relevant sections of the Planning Policy Framework for this application.

11.01-1S- Settlement

The objective of this policy is:

- *To facilitate the sustainable growth and development of Victoria and deliver choice and opportunity for all Victorians through a network of settlements.*

Relevant strategies include:

- *Ensure land that may be required for future urban expansion is not compromised.*

Although the land is zoned Low Density Residential, there is considered to be no potential for the site to be used for future urban expansion due to the proximity to the Korong Creek and the significant amount of floodwater that impacts the site.

13.03-1S- Floodplain management

The objective of this policy is:

To assist the protection of:

- *Life, property and community infrastructure from flood hazard, including coastal inundation, riverine and overland flows.*
- *The natural flood carrying capacity of rivers, streams and floodway's.*
- *The flood storage function of floodplains and waterways.*
- *Floodplain areas of environmental significance or of importance to river, wetland or coastal health.*

Relevant strategies under this policy include:

- *Avoid intensifying the impact of flooding through inappropriately located use and development.*

The property is impacted by flooding from the Korong Creek with some areas of the site inundated by depths of 0.8 metres or more. It is not expected the proposed development will impact the flood carrying capacity of the creek as the shed will be constructed on a raised base 1.6 metres above the ground.

2.4.7 Local Planning Policy Framework

The following section gives consideration to be the relevant sections of the Local Planning Policy Framework for this application.

02.03-3- Environmental risks and amenity

Council's strategic direction in the MPS for flooding are:

- *Prevent development within the floodplain that would compromise its flood carrying capacity, threaten water quality and be compromised by flood activity.*

2.5 Referrals

Table 6: External referrals

North Central CMA (Sec 52)	Conditional consent to the grant of a permit.
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2.6 Public Notification

The application is not exempt from the notice requirement. Pursuant to Section 52 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the following forms of advertising were undertaken:

- Notices were sent to owners and occupiers of adjoining land (including opposite and surrounding).

One objection was received in response to the application. The matters raised in the objection are summarised below and with Officers response in italics:

- I object to this planning permit the flooding on the property is economical it will impact on my property

The property is impacted by flooding however the applicant is aware of this and is building on a raised base 1.6 metres above the ground to allow floodwater to flow underneath. North Central CMA have requested some change to the location of the shed so that it is within an area of lower risk flooding. Due to this alternative design the shed will not obstruct or redirect floodwater in a manner that would impact on the objector's property.

3 ASSESSMENT

3.1 Planner assessment

Is the proposed shed appropriate given the land is zoned for residential purposes?

The subject site is zoned for Low Density Residential development, however has constraints due to the proximity of the Korong Creek and the risk from flooding, therefore residential use and development is too high of a risk for this site. The applicant has stated they have no intention of residing on the site and are aware that this is a unique site which presents many challenges. However the site can still be used for some purposes where the risk to life, health, and safety is not increased as a result of the proposed use and development. The applicant has established vegetable gardens and is in the process of planting several fruit trees across the site, the shed will be used to support this use and allow for storage of mainly hay and other equipment associated with the maintenance of the property.

Although not usually considered on a vacant residential allotment, this site is unique and only has the potential to be used and developed for a small number of purposes, with low impact agriculture such as the proposed to be considered to be appropriate in this case.

Will the proposed shed impede the natural flow the Korong Creek and future flood events?

The site sits on the edge of the Korong Creek is inundated by significant amounts of floodwater during flood events. However given the shed is to be constructed 1.6 metres above the natural ground level, floodwater will have minimal impact on the shed. The imposed conditions from North Central CMA will ensure that internally the shed is not compromised and any materials that are being stored will not be impacted by floodwater.

The shed will not result in an increased risk to life, health and safety as it is non-habitable, therefore it is considered appropriate given the context of the site.

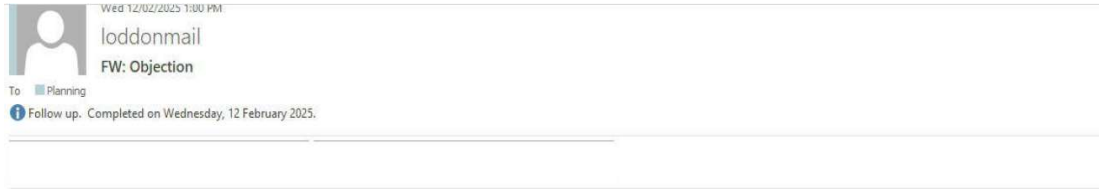
4 CONCLUSION

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the Low Density Residential Zone and relevant State and Local Planning Policy Framework. The Loddon Planning Scheme allows consideration for the development of a building associated with agriculture under the Low Density Residential Zone.

For the reasons discussed above the planning officer recommends that planning application 6030 be approved, subject to the conditions listed in section 1 of this report.

5 Appendix 1:

5.1 Objection 1














From: -
Sent: Tuesday, 11 February 2025 8:53 AM
To: loddonmail
Subject: FW: Objection

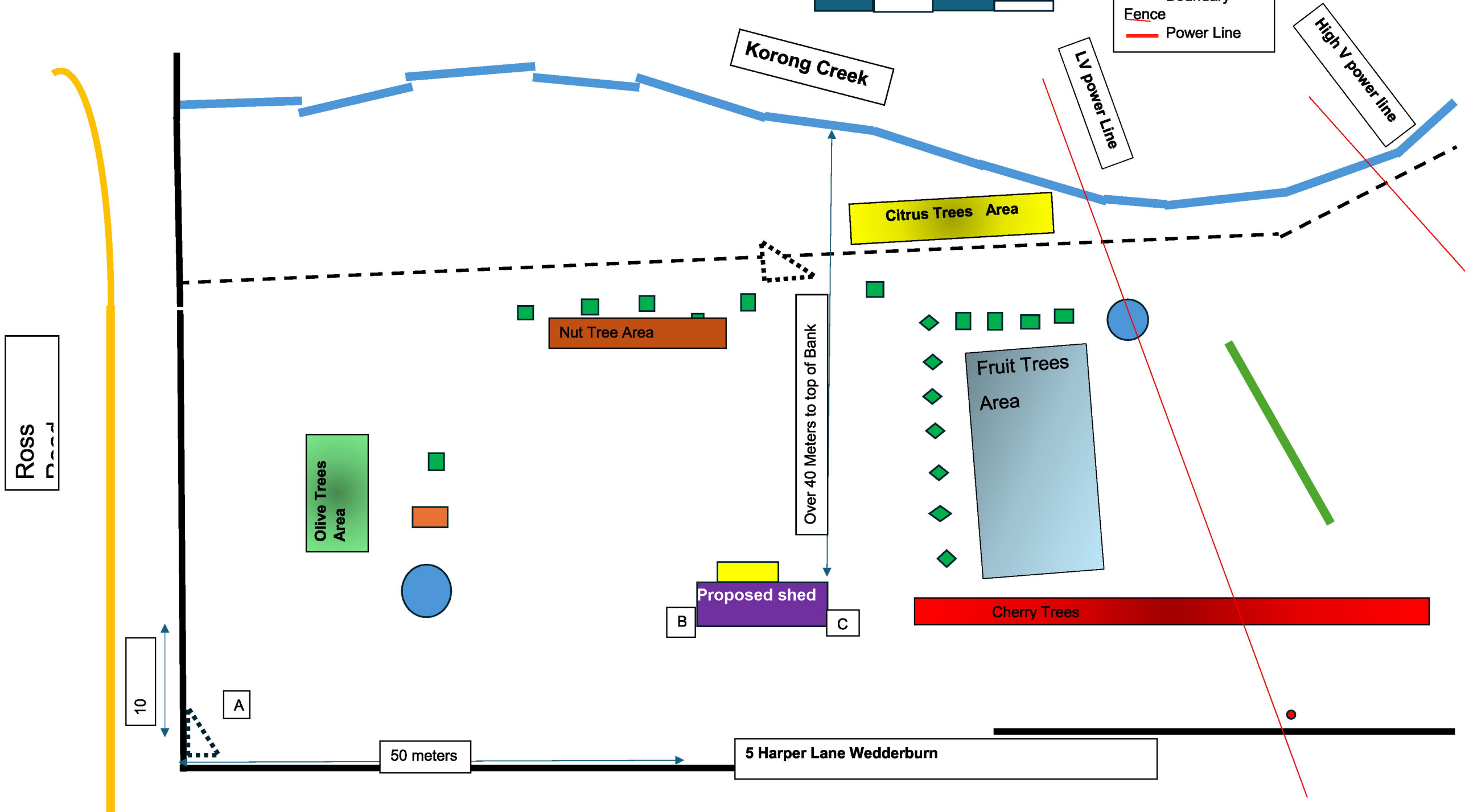
I object to this planning permit the flooding on the property is economical it will impact on my property at Harpers Lane
Kind regards

----- Original message -----
From:
Date: 11/2/25 8:50 am (GMT+10:00)
To: loddon@loddon.vic.gov.au
Subject: Objection

Hello this is from harpers lane wedderburn vic 3518
Hello object to this application due to the flooding on this property and how will impact my property if a sheet goes up there I object to the plan in permit
Kind regards

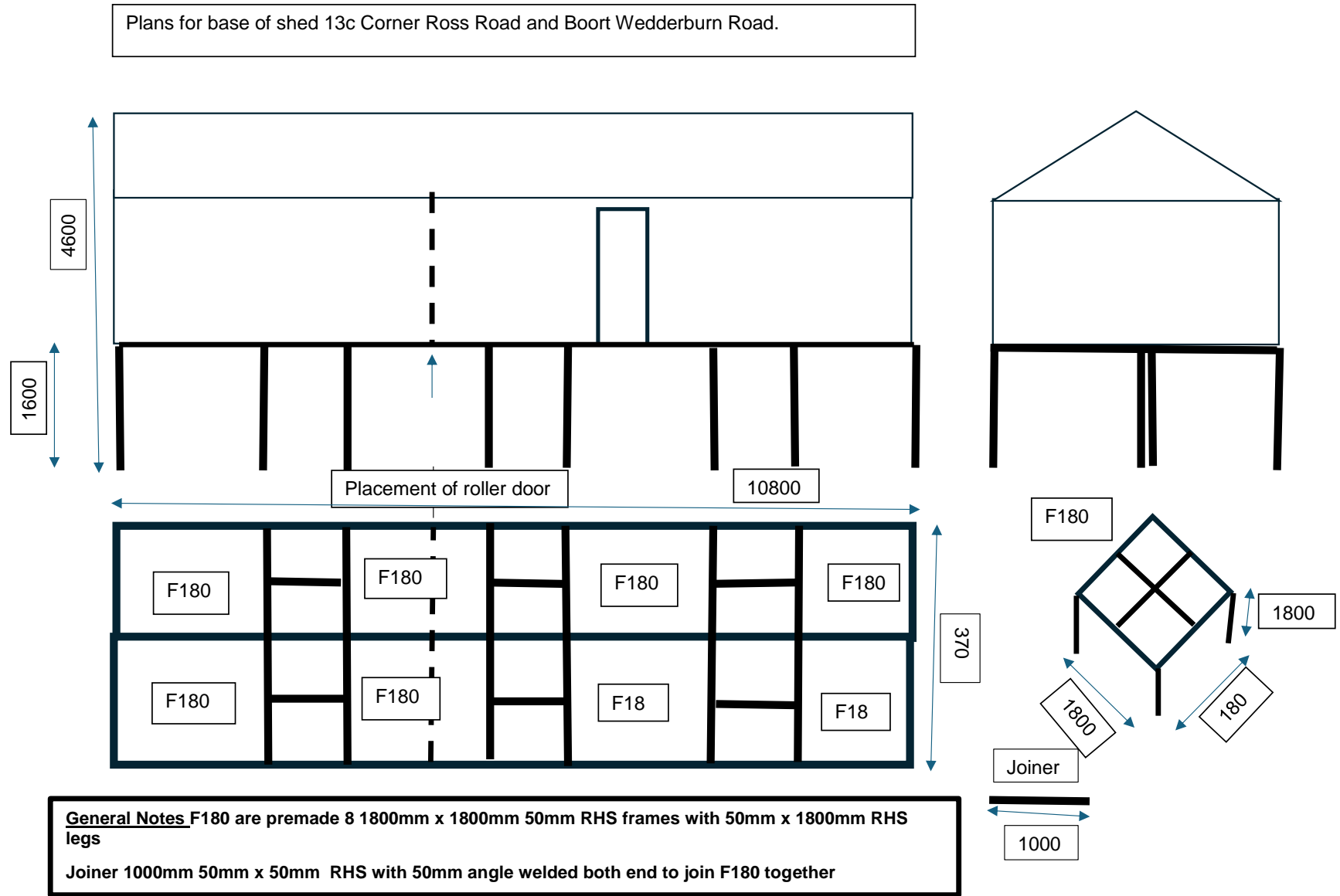
Site Plan for Planning Permit
13C Corner Ross Road and Boort Wedderburn Road,
Wedderburn

KEY	
	Hay shed
	Loading area
	Water tank
	Garden beds
	Kids Cubby
	Gate
	Creek
	Road
	Internal Fence
	Boundary
	Power Line

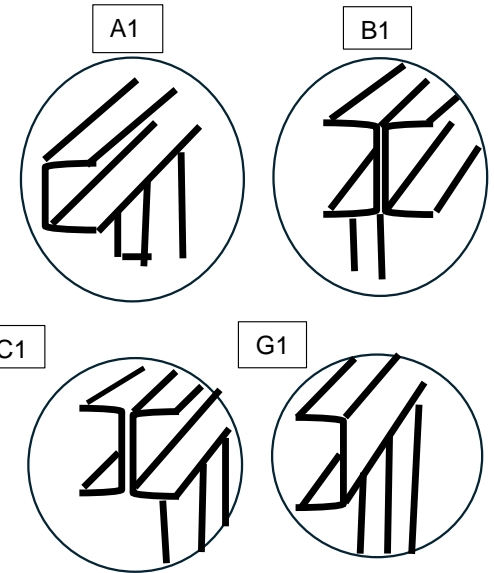
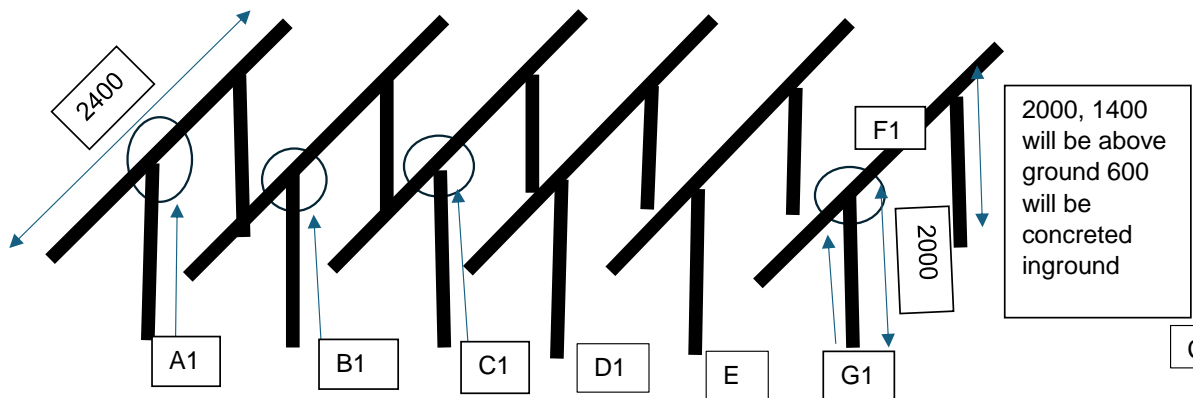
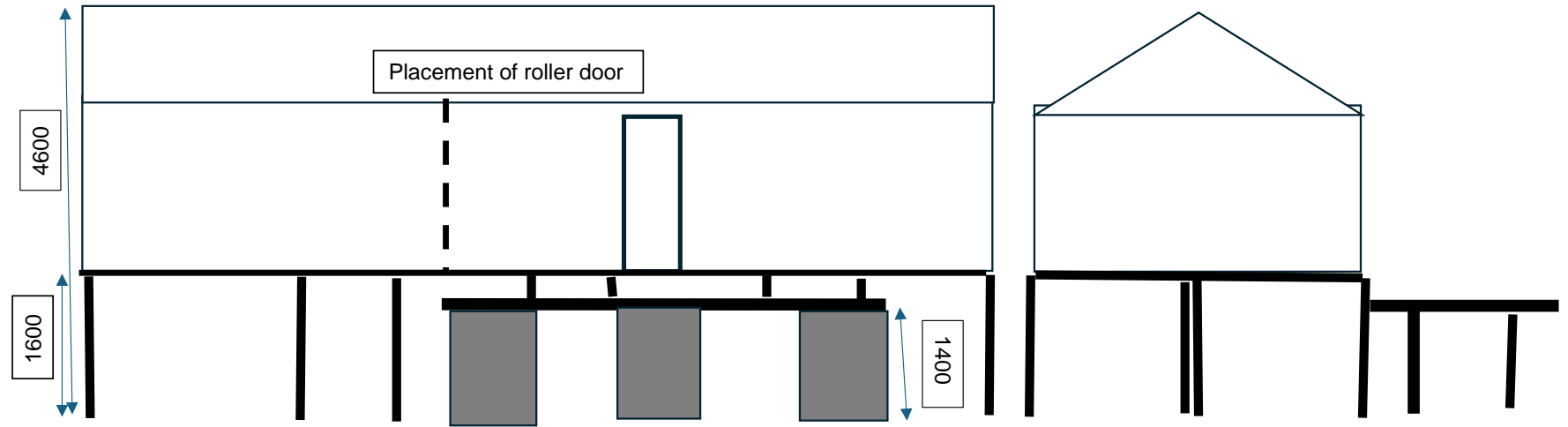


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Plans for landing area of shed 13c Corner Ross Road and Boort Wedderburn Road.



All frame work for the landing area will be made out of retaining wall C-section with speed panel inserted in the spaces. The top will be filled right across with speed panels, however just between the upright of A1 and B1, C1 and D1, E1 and G1 will have speed panel inserted. To allow side woods flow of water.

10.2 NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT - NOTICES OF MOTIONS**File Number:****Author:** Renae Colls, Executive Assistant**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** 1. Murray River Group of Councils - NGA Motions 2025**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. submits the attached Notices of Motions to the National General Assembly of Local Government on behalf of the Murray River Group of Councils;
2. authorises the Chief Executive Officer to amend the wording (without changing the meaning or purpose of the motion) if required during the submission process; and
3. authorise the Mayor to determine on behalf of Council if any motion is proposed to be combined with a similar motion from another council.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Draft versions of these motions were circulated in February and the matter was discussed at the March 2025 Council Forum so that Councillors could consider any motions in advance of this meeting.

BACKGROUND

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is now calling for Notices of Motions for the National General Assembly (NGA) 2025, which is scheduled for 25-27 June 2025 in Canberra.

The NGA provides a platform for local government to address national issues and advocate to the federal government on critical issues facing the sector.

Motions for the National General Assembly must be submitted by 31 March and must be endorsed by a Council resolution. This is the final Council meeting prior to the closing date for Council to resolve upon these motions.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The theme of the 2025 NGA is – *National Priorities Need Local Solutions*.

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, and subsequent debate on the floor of the NGA, motions must meet the following criteria:

- 1) be relevant to the work of local government nationally;
- 2) not be focused on a specific jurisdiction, location or region – unless the project or issue has national implications;
- 3) be consistent with the themes of the NGA;

- 4) complement or build on the policy objectives of ALGA and your state or territory local government association;
- 5) be submitted from a council which is a financial member of their state or territory local government association;
- 6) propose a clear action and outcome ie call on the Australian Government to act on something;
- 7) not be advanced on behalf of external third parties that may seek to use the NGA to apply pressure to Board members or to gain national political exposure for positions that are not directly relevant to the work of, or in the national interests of, local government;
- 8) address issues that will directly improve the capacity of local government to deliver services and infrastructure for the benefit of all Australian communities;
- 9) not seek to advance an outcome that would result in a benefit to one group of councils to the detriment of another;
- 10) be supported by sufficient evidence and demonstrate the relevance and significance of the matter to local government;

Key Dates

18 December 2024 | Opening of Call for Motions

31 March 2025 | Acceptance of Motions closes

24 June 2025 | Regional Cooperation & Development Forum

25 - 27 June 2025 | National General Assembly

A briefing document is attached to this agenda paper containing the motion and a short background on the topic for further information. The proposed motions cover the following topics:

1. Housing
2. Energy
3. Water
4. Roads & Bridges
5. Resilient Infrastructure
6. Swimming Pools

The Murray River Group of Councils motions for endorsement are:

1. Housing

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide multi-year, regional housing development infrastructure funding for investment into essential trunk infrastructure such as sewerage, water, drainage, electricity, roads and communications, to facilitate residential housing development in regional and rural towns where the market is not delivering the needed housing opportunities.

2. Energy

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure that communities hosting new energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure required for Australia's energy transition, directly benefit from new investment to support job growth and in infrastructure upgrades ensuring that the regional communities directly impacted by it are not left behind in the race to transition our energy grid.

3. Water

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to put Basin communities at the heart of Basin Plan delivery and future water reform by ceasing the damaging water purchase programs in our irrigation districts that will lead to job losses, put food production in our region at risk and will add to the cost of living crisis and instead engaging with communities and Local Governments to deliver a long term sustainable future for food growing and manufacturing in the Basin, and to ensure improved environmental outcomes for all the Basin's valued riverine and floodplain ecosystems.

4. Roads and Bridges

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide an additional road maintenance and restoration fund that invests directly in Local Government to fund the road infrastructure repair deficit road and allow local councils to catch up on the road and bridge repair backlog facing councils across the Country.

5. Resilient Infrastructure

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a regional infrastructure resilience fund that will provide local councils with dedicated funding to identify and invest in resilient local infrastructure to ensure communities are better protected and connected even in the face of increasingly severe and frequent weather events.

6. Swimming Pools

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a dedicated national fund to support Local Government to replace and upgrade public swimming pools by providing financial assistance to local councils for the repair, replacement, and upgrading of aging public swimming pool facilities.

COST/BENEFITS

The only costs associated with this report are travel and accommodation expenses for Councillors who may wish to attend either event. Costs will be paid in advance or reimbursed to Councillors in accordance with Council policy.

RISK ANALYSIS

No risks have been identified for the subject matter of this report.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Councillors were advised at the February Council Forum that the calls for notices of motions had been made.

ALGA Motions

Prepared by: Geoff Turner, MRGC Executive Officer



Introduction

MRGC members will be attending ALGA from 24 – 27 June and it has been proposed that the Group seek to use motions to the National General Assembly to reinforce the MRGC advocacy positions.

Motions to the NGA are due by 31 March. It is proposed that Loddon Shire, as Chair, submit the motions on behalf of MRGC. An initial draft of these was circulated for consultation by member councils at the end of January and considered by CEOs at the February meeting. MRGC agreed a final draft of these at its first Mayor and CEO meeting on 6 March in Gannawarra Shire where the proposed motions were endorsed by member Councils.

Motions need to be consistent with the NGA theme of *Local Priorities Need Solutions* and should seek to promote practical programs where the Commonwealth can invest in local communities through Local Councils. ALGA in its discussion paper emphasizes place based solutions and clear outcomes as requirements for motions.

The motions proposed below are in line with current MRGC advocacy priorities and as far as possible also in line with relevant Regional Economic Development strategies and also, to place them in a Victorian context, relevant MAV election pillars: *Housing, Financial Sustainability, Energy Transition and Emergency Management and Resilience*.

Housing

Proposed Motion:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide multi-year, regional housing development infrastructure funding for investment into essential trunk infrastructure such as sewerage, water, drainage, electricity, roads and communications, to facilitate residential housing development in regional and rural towns where the market is not delivering the needed housing opportunities.

Background

Housing affordability and availability are issues affecting almost all communities across Australia. While housing affordability in the regions remain relatively better than in cities, lack of supply of family housing for purchase and highly constrained rental markets have become unwelcome features of northern Victorian and many regional Australian housing markets.

A lack of housing availability is stifling job growth and business expansion in our region according to employers across our council areas. Regional Victoria, in

common with many regional areas across Australia, has room to grow, available, identified land for expansion and resilient, vibrant communities.

Similar to all markets, population growth and a significant increase in land value for residential land across regional Victoria are drivers of insufficient housing supply.

In our region there also exist additional housing market factors specific to the regions that are further restricting the timely supply of new homes.

Regional and rural areas face higher upfront costs for associated enabling infrastructure (water, sewerage, roads, drainage, telecommunications, and electricity). They also face challenges in the availability of trades and suppliers which, with the relatively smaller size of projects affects developer economies of scale and risk appetite for developers to build homes in regional and rural towns.

Investment by governments to address this market failure will remove a key block on residential housing development in regional areas. Local Government is best placed to facilitate this and establish with their communities, the local housing solutions that will tackle their specific challenges.

Energy

Proposed Motion:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure that communities hosting new energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure required for Australia's energy transition, directly benefit from new investment to support job growth and in infrastructure upgrades ensuring that the regional communities directly impacted by it are not left behind in the race to transition our energy grid.

Background

Northern Victoria is where the energy transition is occurring. A new 500KV interconnector, VNI-West is in the final planning stages. When complete it will provide a second link between the Victorian and NSW energy grids to stabilise the National Electricity Market, join Victoria's grid to the Snowy Hydro Battery and increase the capacity for renewable energy generation.

Investment in large scale renewable energy generation is already significant with planning approvals for projects that could deliver over 4GW of renewable energy to the grid already in place. Northern Victoria has the location, climate and available appropriate land to host electricity generation infrastructure to provide clean power for the future. This has made it a popular place for investors to propose projects.

Across the MRGC region, energy projects and transmission line upgrades are likely to impact our communities substantially over the next few years while much of the benefit will accrue to those living in the critical load centres of our capital cities.

Investment in local energy projects or other areas to assist critical regional industries, such as agriculture and food manufacturing which are suffering from higher and higher energy prices, will safeguard regional jobs and food production in Australia for all Australians.

Councils are ideally placed to facilitate appropriate local solutions that will deliver lasting benefit to communities

Other impacts of the transition will be felt in the regions from the temporary workforce. While welcoming local spend, providing temporary housing for hundreds of workers is a challenge. Councils are well placed to work with proponents and State and Federal Governments to find innovative solutions that would accommodate the temporary workforce and leave a positive legacy of longer term local housing market solutions.

Energy grid reliability is a key priority for investment from the energy transition to ensure that impacted regional communities do not miss out on the benefits of cheaper and more reliable electricity that the energy transmission upgrades and investment in new energy generation infrastructure are designed to deliver.

Water

Proposed Motion:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to put Basin communities at the heart of Basin Plan delivery and future water reform by ceasing the damaging water purchase programs in our irrigation districts that will lead to job losses, put food production in our region at risk and will add to the cost of living crisis and instead engaging with communities and Local Governments to deliver a long term sustainable future for food growing and manufacturing in the Basin, and to ensure improved environmental outcomes for all the Basin's valued riverine and floodplain ecosystems.

Background

The Government's current approach to Basin Plan delivery is putting our food production industry and our communities' prosperity at risk. The Murray River Group's six council areas produce some \$7.75 billion in food every year. The entire regional economy and 16000 jobs depend on agriculture and food manufacturing across MRGC councils. Around half our 5000 farm businesses rely on irrigation.

As we prepare for a drier future with more intense and frequent extremes of weather, we need local, community led solutions both to ensuring a viable

agriculture and food manufacturing sector into the future to produce local food for all Australians and also to ensure that unique valued environments across the region are sustained and nurtured.

Open market, non-strategic, buy backs are a blunt instrument that will increase the pressure on irrigation districts and on irrigators, inevitably pushing up the cost of living for all Australians.

There is a better way. Put communities at the heart of the Basin Plan and water reform. By working with local communities on a catchment level to design and implement local solutions that will deliver water savings for environmental watering and will reshape irrigation districts to allow them to be more efficient and continue to be viable into the future.

Transitioning to a lower water future will require innovation and investment in altering the irrigation network. Non-strategic, open market buy backs rip water from districts without regard to their long term operation. The evidence demonstrates that it increases water prices, increases farmer risk and exposure to the increasingly volatile temporary water market.

Roads and Bridges

Proposed Motion:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide an additional road maintenance and restoration fund that invests directly in Local Government to fund the road infrastructure repair deficit road and allow local councils to catch up on the road and bridge repair backlog facing councils across the Country.

Background

Local Councils are responsible for 87 per cent of Victoria's road network. MRGC councils maintain over 23,000 kms of roads which is similar to the length of road assets that the State of Victoria manages. In the regions, these council maintained roads are vital to keep our communities connected and provide access to health care, education, and other vital services. Regional roads are critical freight corridors relied upon for enabling produce to reach market here and for export. The freight task continues to increase, adding further pressure to the regional road network and impacting driver safety.

Despite increases in the Roads to Recovery federal funding, long term consistent underfunding of local government means that there is a significant backlog of road maintenance across the country.

Investing in a one off local road maintenance “blitz” would have direct safety and efficiency dividends for all Australians.

In Victoria despite only 1 in 5 people living in country Victoria, consistently between 50 and 60 per cent of road fatalities occur on regional roads. The majority of these are local people who die within 30kms of their homes.

As Infrastructure Australia has pointed out: Local governments in regional and remote Australia face the dual challenge of maintaining geographically extensive networks while having a relatively low revenue base from which to fund roadworks.

MAV identifies the maintenance backlog in Victoria alone as being around \$4 billion.

Resilient Infrastructure

Proposed Motion:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a regional infrastructure resilience fund that will provide local councils with dedicated funding to identify and invest in resilient local infrastructure to ensure communities are better protected and connected even in the face of increasingly severe and frequent weather events.

Background

2011 saw 1 in 100 year flood events across northern Victoria. 2016 saw severe flooding in some of the same areas and 2022 saw a repeat of the 1 in 100 event with many of the same roads, bridges, drains and other critical local infrastructure damaged again.

While taxpayer funds provided through the DRFA were provided (after long delays in some cases) to repair these assets, the strict rules and highly bureaucratic processes meant that they had to be repaired to the same standard as they were prior to the flood events – even if the base standard had been altered since the construction of the asset.

This was true even when an increased amount of funding in 2011 would have allowed for a more resilient construction standard to be substituted that would have prevented damage in 2016 and or 2022, ultimately saving taxpayer’s money and communities and businesses much disruption.

Increasing frequency and severity of weather events across Australia means fire and flood recovery is a fact of life for councils. A funding stream that provides local councils with the resources to construct to a quality that will be resistant to damage will protect our local communities and will save the Commonwealth and State Governments – an ultimately all Australian taxpayers millions of dollars in repair bills.

Swimming Pools

Proposed Motion:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a dedicated national fund to support Local Government to replace and upgrade public swimming pools by providing financial assistance to local councils for the repair, replacement, and upgrading of aging public swimming pool facilities.

Background

The 1956 Olympics left a legacy of swimming pools across Australia that left an indelible impression on our national identity. Swimming pools provide essential opportunities for physical activity, contributing to the overall health and well-being of the community. With a strong culture of swimming in Australia, public pools are widely used for exercise, relaxation, and recreation, promoting a healthier lifestyle for all age groups. Swimming remains one of Australia's favourite sports according to Australian Government data.

These pools are reaching the end of their effective lives and many require urgent investment. Local Government has for many years now wrestled with unaffordable running costs and ongoing maintenance.

Many regional and rural councils have multiple outdoor concrete seasonal pools servicing widely spread, relatively small populations. The overall importance of these facilities means that closure is not an option for many.

It is estimated that \$8 billion will be required over the next decade to meet the infrastructure demands of public swimming pools across Australia.

Safe, accessible swimming pools are crucial to public health, not just for recreational swimming, but also for essential life-saving skills such as swimming and water safety education. Access to well-maintained public pools is fundamental in teaching water safety and survival skills, and helps to prevent tragic accidents.

Swimming pools provide a social function offering a space for community gather, engage in activities, and connect, especially important in rural and regional areas. In these areas, pools can serve as a vital resource for social cohesion and physical activity, fundamental to community wellbeing.

A significant funding investment over the next 10 years by Federal Government in partnership with Local Councils would see Australian public swimming pools remain a key part of our communities for the next 50 years.

Financial Sustainability

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the Financial Assistance Grants to Local Government in even increments over the next ten financial years until the total funding to Australian amount is restored to 1% of the Australian Government tax revenue by the 2035/36 financial year.

Background

30 years ago, the total Financial Assistance Grants supplied to Local Government was the equivalent to 1% of the Commonwealth national tax take collected by the Federal Government. Now, it is half that.

All levels of Government are facing increasing financial pressures. The Victorian local government sector is experiencing significant financial challenges.

As reported by the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) the number of Victorian councils reporting on underlying operating deficit in 2022-23 compared to the results in 2018-19 has increased from 29% to 46%. This is despite, as VAGO points out, the early payment of Financial Assistance Grants preventing more councils reporting a deficit.

Commonwealth and State Government revenue bases grow in line with economic growth. This is not the case for Local Government. Rates are subject to arbitrary capping by the Victorian Government. The amount of Financial Assistance Grants made available to Local Government continues to decrease as percentage of total Commonwealth Government taxation revenue.

This is inevitably resulting in councils taking difficult decisions to reduce spending on services and infrastructure investment for communities.

10.3 NEWBRIDGE WATER AND SEWERAGE**File Number:****Author:** Renae Colls, Executive Assistant**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

- Attachments:**
1. **SGS Economics and Planning - Newbridge Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Preliminary Business Case**
 2. **Grantus - Newbridge Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme - Business Case**
 3. **Loddon Shire Settlement Strategy**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. Undertake a land use planning process to determine the most appropriate way to expand the township of Newbridge; and
2. Allocate \$300,000 from the Strategic Fund to support the necessary investigations, community consultation and strategic planning required.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Since 2006, the efforts of the Councillors for a reticulated water and sewerage system in Newbridge has been a recurring topic in previous Council Forum, Briefings and Meetings.

The following timeline provides an overview of the history of these discussions and actions to date.

Date	Details
2006	Newbridge was included in the 35 towns announced to be connected to new sewerage services (to the township west of the Loddon River) as part of the State Government's \$42 million Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. However, this funding was withdrawn and the project did not eventuate for Newbridge.
2007	Council engaged AECOM a construction engineering company to complete a Servicing Options Paper identifying a number of sewerage treatment, collection and reuse options. This paper then formed the basis for discussions between Loddon Shire and Coliban Water regarding identification of a suitable service area and initiation of the options evaluation and consultation phase of the project. Following preparation of the Options Servicing paper the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), as the administrators of the "Our Water Our Future" initiative, allocated \$435,000 funding to Coliban Water to proceed with the consultation, design and construction phase of the Newbridge Sewerage Scheme with AECOM also engaged by Coliban Water to prepare the Scheme Options Assessment report.
2008 - October	Coliban Water sent a letter to the Newbridge Community Plan Committee, following a meeting discussing possible sewerage and water supply for Newbridge. The letter referred to the community's desire for a reticulated water scheme if it is to get a sewerage scheme.

2009	Coliban Water provided further details about proposed sewerage scheme under the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program.
2011 – January Council Meeting	Report to Council on Newbridge Sewerage Scheme Options Assessment
2011-2012	Letters from Council advocating for the sewerage scheme and expressing disappointment that Coliban Water's 2013-2018 Water Plan did not include provision for this scheme.
2016	Letter from Newbridge Recreation Reserve Committee (NRRC) seeking Council support for a reticulated water supply and sewerage and subsequent letters from Council to politicians and Coliban Water.
2017	Following discussions with Coliban Water, Council wrote a letter to Newbridge Recreation Reserve Committee explaining that costings for water to Newbridge must await the completion of the South West Loddon Pipeline design. Letter received from NRRC in response agreeing that it's best to wait until costs can be properly identified before consulting with the broader community.
2017	Council resolution 2017/47: That Council resolve that the issue of a reticulated potable water supply and sewerage for Newbridge be deferred until the design of the South West Loddon Pipeline Project is announced.
2017	Letter received from Committee seeking to use Strategic Fund to conduct a costing study for water to Newbridge.
2019	Council officers worked with Coliban Water to prepare an updated business case that considers the supply of reticulated water and sewerage separately, identified the costs associated with each option and recommended the combined option preferred by Coliban Water.
2019 – August	Council officers then obtained funding from the Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning (now known as the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action) Integrated Water Management Stream 1 to provide an economic assessment for the supply of reticulated water and sewerage to the township of Newbridge, to expand on the work undertaken by Coliban Water.
2019 – September Council Meeting	That Council place the draft Loddon Shire Settlement Strategy 2019-2034 on public exhibition in accordance with section 223 of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> , to provide an opportunity for public submissions. The strategy recommends that growth should be promoted in the well serviced towns of Inglewood, Wedderburn, Boort, Pyramid Hill and Bridgewater. The strategy recognises the opportunity for growth at Newbridge should reticulated water and sewerage be provided. The draft strategy was released for public comment during October/November 2019, with one submission received from the Wedderburn Development Association.
2020 – February Council Meeting	Council adopted the Loddon Shire Settlement Strategy.
2021 - March Council Forum	Newbridge sewerage and water business case – Councillors noted the proposal in the lead up to the next State Government election. There was strong support from Councillors for such schemes in Newbridge and other small towns within Loddon Shire.
2021 - June Council	Presentation from Newbridge Arnold Llanelly Community Planning Group gave a presentation of their 2020 Community Plan, which includes discussing funding for

Forum	Newbridge reticulated water and sewerage.
2021 – September Council Forum	<p>Coliban Water officers presented on small town sewerage schemes and the process for Coliban Water implementing new schemes.</p> <p>It was pointed out that the costs to the community would include initial capital costs for connection to the sewer (usually around \$20,000 per lot), as well as over \$1300 per annum for customer service charges, and that this would not result in cost recovery from new customers, as Bendigo revenue subsidises the rest of the Coliban network.</p>
2021 - October Council Forum	<p>Council officer summarised the information provided as attachments to the report for background to enable a discussion by Councillors on a preferred advocacy position regarding Newbridge water and sewerage.</p> <p>Councillors discussed the information provided, including the low number of responses received from the community survey, and whether the community could undertake a new survey.</p>
2021 – November Council Forum	<p>Advocacy for Newbridge water and sewerage proposal - further communication with landowners.</p> <p>The community has requested that Council seek to get better responses from the owners of vacant properties. It is believed that absentee landowners were the majority of the non-responses to the survey, and it should have been worded more strongly, requesting a response rather than taking unreturned responses as a “no”.</p>
2024 – July Council Briefing	<p>Advocacy for Newbridge Water and Sewerage</p> <p>Council Officers sought guidance from Councillors on the future advocacy detail for public water and sewerage supply system for Newbridge.</p> <p>Councillors discussed possible funding and loan structures, contributions by residents and future growth potential for the township. In addition to the cost of a water and sewer system, the added costs of strategic planning and social infrastructure to support growing townships were highlighted.</p> <p>Councillors noted that funding of this particular project for the implementation of a new system is the responsibility of the water authority.</p> <p>A grant is being sourced by the Newbridge/Llanelly community planning group to explore and form a social license scoping direction for the area.</p>
2024 - September Council Meeting	Council adopted the 2024 Council Priorities document, which outlines the development of precinct plans for Bridgewater and Inglewood to support growth and infrastructure investment.
2024 - September Council Meeting	<p>Notice of Motion – Newbridge Sewerage and Water</p> <p>That a report be provided to Council at a meeting in November 2024 on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the next steps required to expand the work undertaken by SGS regarding the feasibility of Newbridge Sewerage and Water to ensure a project concept is ready for funding; and 2) the opportunity to fund this further concept work from Council’s Strategic Fund

BACKGROUND

Newbridge is a small regional town in Loddon Shire and situated on the bank of the Loddon River and on the Wimmera Highway.

Newbridge township does not have a reticulated water and sewerage system. Landowners are reliant on rainwater tanks for drinking supply and septic tank arrangement.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

At the September 2024 Council Meeting, Councillors resolved to receive a further report in November 2024 outlining the necessary next steps to further expand the SGS work on this project and the opportunity to fund the concept work through Council's Strategic Fund. At the November Council meeting the date for a report to Council was extended to March in recognition that new Councillors had not yet been provided with the opportunity to be briefed on the background of this idea.

This report summarises previous key findings and recommendations to provide Councillors an understanding of what is involved in providing a reticulated water and sewerage scheme for the Newbridge township and proposes a way council can seek to progress growth of the township.

While Council has undertaken work to understand the feasibility of reticulated water and sewerage, Council is not responsible for providing this service or infrastructure. This work has been undertaken in order for council to determine the growth capacity of the Newbridge township. Understandably, as a service responsibility of the Victorian government, council does not have the capacity or the appetite to expand its service investment or take on debt given its existing under funded obligations and financial position.

Comprehensive documents prepared by SGS Economics and Planning (attachment 1) and Grantus Newbridge Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme - Business Case (attachment 2) provide detailed analysis of the possible water and sewerage supply systems, including cost estimates, potential funding sources and projected benefits.

Grantus - Newbridge Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme - Business Case (2021)

This business case highlights several key findings, including:

- Newbridge has 139 subdivided quarter-acre (1,000m²) blocks, many of which remain undeveloped due to their inadequate size for an on-site sewerage disposal. The Environment Protection Authority recommends that lot sizes less than 10,000m² are unsuitable for the containment of wastewater onsite based on the soil type at Newbridge.
- The sewerage scheme would involve total costs of around \$6.82 million, with \$5.5 million needed to complete construction costs (Table 1.1).
- Benefit cost assessment identifies a total benefits valuation for the project of \$8.2 million (Table 4.1 property prices \$4.2 million, river health \$3 million and public health \$1 million).
- The main barrier to the project moving ahead is sourcing external capital funding and a third-party financing guarantor. The business case states that while the community and Coliban Water could contribute to the overall cost, without State Government involvement, the project cannot proceed.

SGS Economics & Planning Preliminary Business Case (2022)

This business case was developed in response to the Loddon Mallee Housing Action Plan as one of four example projects which could unlock additional housing supply in the region. The document presents a preliminary business case for the Newbridge Water and Sewerage Infrastructure extension proposal and included involvement of Regional Development Victoria (funder), Loddon Shire and Coliban Water.

Two options were explored based on the preferred delivery method produced by the options analysis by Coliban Water and Newbridge stakeholders within the Grantus report.

Option 1: Water and sewerage infrastructure is provided for the 40 lots in the township zone, west of the Loddon River. The infrastructure will give opportunity for densification within the township zone as larger lots can be sub-divided, increasing the property values of those lots. Businesses are able to expand with the increased water and sewerage capacity. However, further expansion of the

town is limited as the water and sewerage infrastructure under this option is only designed to service the township area.

Option 2: Water and sewerage infrastructure is constructed to service the 40 lots in the township zone plus 290 lots within the available land close to the township zone. This means an increased population for the town and more opportunities to attract businesses into Newbridge. The increased population and business expansion is larger than Option 1, as the water and sewerage infrastructure goes beyond the boundaries of the existing township.

It should be noted that the additional 290 lots utilised for this business case is based on a high level assessment which is not informed by consultation with impacted land owners or site specific constraints such as native vegetation, bushfire attack level, etc. As such, this number could increase or reduce following detailed analysis.

Cost benefit analysis: the cost benefit analysis assessed whether there is a case for government intervention and financial support for this project. The result as outlined on page 19 of the report is:

TABLE 4: COST-BENEFIT RESULTS

	Option 1 (Net Present Value)	Option 2 (Net Present Value)
Capital costs	\$8,780,000	\$27,000,000
Operating costs	\$1,279,200	\$5,500,800
Loss of rural land	\$0	\$184,000
Total incremental costs	\$10,059,200	\$32,684,800
Increase in property values (\$000s)	\$8,528,000	\$70,352,000
Increase in profitability (\$000s)	\$844,000	\$6,962,000
Avoided public health costs (\$000s)	\$90,000	\$68,000
Total incremental benefits	\$9,743,000	\$77,382,000
Net benefits	(\$316,200)	\$44,697,200
BCR	1.0	2.4

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

Findings: Coliban Water can borrow to finance capital investments but only if financial analysis shows the benefitting residents can contribute sufficient revenue to service the debt. This would not be the case in Newbridge. A third-party financier (ie. government) would therefore be needed for investment in water and sewerage infrastructure in Newbridge.

Given the apportionment of benefits from the investment, a combination of loan and grant appears to be the only financing approach.

Unlocking Loddon’s Residential Growth Potential

Villawood Properties “Unlocking Loddon’s Residential Growth Potential” report highlights the potential for residential growth in Inglewood and Bridgewater, given their existing development and proximity to Marong and Bendigo. Consultation with stakeholders conducted as part of this project revealed support for Inglewood and Bridgewater being the focus towns for development. At the March 2024 Council Meeting, Council endorsed the Unlocking Loddon Action Plan that was developed to deliver the recommendations of the Villawood report. This action plan includes the preparation of a precinct plan for Bridgewater and Inglewood to support coordinated growth and infrastructure investment.

Villawood identified that infrastructure costs impact the viability of development. The growth of these towns will require investment in water and sewerage infrastructure.

Social license

A challenge for this project is the social license of the proposal. The Grantus report indicates that the community is divided in support or opposition to this proposal. Without a clear indication of support from local residents, it is challenging for any level of government to progress this proposal and impose an outcome on existing residents who would incur capital connection costs and an ongoing service fee.

Loddon Shire Settlement Strategy

The Settlement Strategy 2019 - 2034 recommends that growth should be promoted in the well serviced towns of Inglewood, Wedderburn, Boort, Pyramid Hill and Bridgewater. These towns currently have a sufficient land supply, including the opportunity for increased density through the further subdivision of existing large residential lots.

The strategy also identifies that Newbridge has potential for expansion subject to the feasibility of connecting the township to reticulated water and sewerage. This feasibility has been explored and demonstrated to be unfeasible within the foreseeable future from both the Grantus and SGS studies.

Water Authority

Coliban Water is the regional water authority. If a reticulated water and sewerage system was to be constructed, Coliban Water would become the responsible authority for its construction, operation and service fee collection.

Coliban Water has worked with Council for many years to investigate options for a water and sewerage scheme to service the township of Newbridge. From the work undertaken within a number of studies, Coliban Water has expressed their concern with the social license and financial challenges of the project given the divided community survey results and inability of the project to self-fund.

Coliban Water has a significant planned capital works program which has seen their investment grow from \$40 million per year to \$110 million in the coming financial years. This capital expenditure is funded by customers and as a result the authority has the highest water and sewerage fees within the sector and significant debt levels.

Considering the existing program of works and high fees to support the service, Coliban Water as a customer funded organisation is not in a position to fund this expansion of service within the foreseeable future unless the project is funded by a third party (such as government).

Options

1. Council could continue advocating for the Victorian Government to fund the necessary capital to connect water and sewerage to Newbridge.
2. Council could undertake a land use planning process to identify the potential to expand Newbridge without sewerage being available (recommended).
3. Council could elect to not progress this matter further.

Considering existing studies demonstrate that a reticulated water and sewerage system is not possible without significant external funding and that there is no existing funding appetite to construct a sewerage scheme for the township, it is proposed that council seek alternative ways to grow the township of Newbridge without sewerage.

COST/BENEFITS

Expansion of water and sewerage to Newbridge

Costs and benefits of the scheme have been detailed in the Grantus Business Case (attachment 2) and the SGS Economics report (attachment 1).

Estimated Landowner Costs associated with water and sewerage connections

Landowners who already have an existing house serviced by a septic tank or other on-site wastewater system will be required to connect to the new scheme. The necessary work required to connect to the new scheme would involve redirecting their plumbing and water supply connection. The costs associated with the connection will be the responsibility of the landowner.

The figures may also be affected by site specific variables which could significantly affect actual individual property costs, including the complexity of plumbing connections, septic decommissioning and site electrical changes.

Landowners would be required to pay the specified residential capital contribution and Coliban Water service fees when they connect to the finished scheme.

Land Use Planning

Land use planning would involve significant consultation and a range of detailed technical reports that are necessary to inform land use planning. These reports are beyond Council's professional capability and cannot be funded within existing operational budgets.

Expert reports which would be necessary could include (but are not limited to):

- bushfire management
- integrated water management
- cultural heritage
- flora and fauna
- transport and traffic
- existing and future trunk infrastructure
- public/social infrastructure
- and more.

Resources would also be required to consult land owners about the impact on their land such as rezoning, windfall gains tax implications and other findings from the studies. Consultation with the broader community would also be required to discuss the options for the township.

A challenge for this land use planning process will be to protect productive agricultural land while supporting residential expansion, as well as seeking government approval for any subsequent land rezoning considering a hesitancy to provide additional rural living or low density residential properties within Loddon Shire.

RISK ANALYSIS

Environmental Risk: the connection of sewerage and water would remove the volume of wastewater currently being managed on-site by individual households. These septic systems pose a higher environmental risk than reticulated sewerage.

Reputational Risk: Council is not the responsible authority for water and sewerage. These services are the responsibility of the Victorian government and Council has been advocating on behalf of the community for a number of years.

The community of Newbridge is divided in its support and opposition. There is a challenge that regardless of any Council decision residents will be equally satisfied and dissatisfied.

Amendment to Planning Scheme: while Council could undertake the necessary work to seek rezoning of land, all rezoning is subject to approval by the Victorian Minister for Planning. This

process can take many years and despite Council's position the Minister may not agree. This is a significant risk to be managed in the process given the hesitancy of government to expand rural living zones or low density residential zones.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The development of the Grantus (attachment 2) business case involved consultation with Coliban Water and representatives of the Newbridge Recreation Reserve as members of a steering committee with Council officers.

In 2020, landowners in the township of Newbridge were mailed a survey with an explanatory letter and information about the background and proposed options presented. The survey sought the level of interest and support for a reticulated water and sewerage system in the Newbridge township. The survey also sought landowners interest in contributing \$15,000 (payable over 20 years) towards the capital works and paying their onsite connection costs. The consultant attended Newbridge during the survey period to be available for face-to-face enquiries from landowners.

The results showed no overwhelming consensus in favour of the proposal, with many respondents expressing concerns about the financial costs. Out of 135 surveys mailed out, only 48 responses were received, with just 28 landowners (20.7%) expressing their support. As a result, 79.3% of landowners either opposed or did not respond to the survey. The survey clearly noted that non-returns were to be considered as not supporting the schemes.

The assessment concluded that without significant financial support, landowners and Council cannot self-fund the required capital investment required for sewerage and water supply to the township of Newbridge.

If a land use planning process was undertaken to explore options to expand Newbridge, significant further consultation would be necessary with directly impacted land owners and the local community.

For nearly 20 years, Mayors and CEOs have engaged with state elected members to seek support for the Newbridge water and sewerage project. These discussions highlighted financial challenges and competing priorities across the region and state. As a result the government has not committed funding to progress water and sewerage connections at Newbridge.



Loddon-Mallee Housing Action Plan: Newbridge Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Preliminary Business Case

Swan Hill Rural City Council

December 2022



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Contents

CONTENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
<i>Context</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Options</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Findings.....</i>	<i>5</i>
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 HOUSING ACTION PLAN AND FOUR ASSOCIATED PROJECTS.....	7
1.2 THIS REPORT.....	7
2. CONTEXT AND ISSUES.....	8
2.1 LOCAL CONTEXT	8
2.2 SCALE OF NEED	8
2.3 PROJECT HISTORY	9
2.4 ACCESS TO FINANCE.....	9
2.5 BENEFITS OF ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM.....	13
2.6 THE PROJECT	14
<i>Further considerations.....</i>	<i>15</i>
3. COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS.....	16
3.1 COST BENEFIT FRAMEWORK	16
<i>Incremental costs.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Incremental benefits.....</i>	<i>18</i>
3.2 PRELIMINARY COST BENEFIT ASSESSMENT	19
<i>Results.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Potential financing and funding mechanisms</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Further considerations.....</i>	<i>22</i>
4. GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR CONTEXTS	23
APPENDIX A: WATER AND SEWERAGE INFRASTRUCTURE OPTIONS CONSIDERED	25
<i>Sewerage.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Water.....</i>	<i>27</i>

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Executive summary

This document is one of four reports on projects which could unlock additional housing supply in the Loddon-Mallee region. The projects were identified during preparation of the Loddon-Mallee Housing Action Plan. While each report relates to a particular project or issue, the responses and lessons from each provide recommendations that are mostly replicable and scalable to similar issues elsewhere in the region, if not indeed across regional Victoria.

This document presents a preliminary business case for the Newbridge Water and Sewerage Infrastructure extension proposal with the aim of facilitating new housing development. Newbridge is located within the Loddon Shire LGA between Bendigo and Dunolly in north-central Victoria. It considers the financing and funding issues relating to providing water and sewerage infrastructure within a small town context. It is a *preliminary* business case because while the included quantitative analysis suggests the project would deliver a net community benefit, further questions and issues requiring resolution to support the project are identified.

Context

A workshop in the style of an Investment Logic Mapping session was used to outline and understand the barriers to water and sewerage infrastructure provision in Newbridge, as a way of facilitating additional housing development, and identify the potential benefits of addressing the problem. Coliban Water and Loddon Shire Council representatives were involved in the workshop.

Options

Two options for water and sewerage infrastructure focussed on facilitating town expansions were identified and chosen by Coliban Water (from a long list, see Appendix A).

The realistic extent and merits of town growth were not considered in detail. More analysis of future and realistic demand prospects is necessary to support and scale the infrastructure investment proposal.

The project cases are based on the preferred delivery method for water and sewerage infrastructure produced by the options analysis undertaken by Coliban Water and the Newbridge stakeholders. The costs of the two project options considered in this report are scaled using the number of lots that would be serviced by the infrastructure.

- Base case: no water and sewerage infrastructure is built. This means Newbridge continues to rely on rainwater tanks, private water pumps for potable and non-potable water and septic tanks systems for sewerage. Under this option the town does not grow due to the constrained water and sewerage infrastructure. Continued use of septic tank systems in the long term will cause a build-up of nutrient and salt in soils and groundwater, suggesting that on site treatment and disposal is not a long term solution.

The two project options considered against the base case are

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- Option 1: water and sewerage infrastructure is provided for the 40 lots in the township zone, west of the Loddon River. The infrastructure will give opportunity for densification within the township zone as larger lots can be sub-divided, increasing the property values of those lots. Businesses are able to expand with the increased water and sewerage capacity. However, further expansion of the town is limited as the water and sewerage infrastructure under this option is only designed to service the township area.
- Option 2: water and sewerage infrastructure is constructed to service the 40 lots in the township zone plus 290 lots within the available land close to the township zone. This means an increased population for the town, more opportunities to attract businesses into the Newbridge as there is a secure supply of potable water and sewerage infrastructure. The increased population and business expansion is larger than Option 1, as the water and sewerage infrastructure goes beyond the boundaries of the existing township.

Cost-benefit analysis

The CBA assessed whether there is a case for government intervention and financial support for this project. The CBA empirically address the question:

- Do the benefits generated by the proposed water and sewerage infrastructure generate an uplift in community welfare? That is, will net benefits, as expressed through measures such as Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) and Net Present Value (NPV), be generated for the Victorian community?

The cost-benefit analysis was undertaken using an incremental approach which compares project options against the base (or do nothing) case (outlined above).

The cost-benefit assessment shows project Option 2 will provide a net benefit to Victoria with a return of \$2.40 for every dollar invested and Option 1 will provide a dollar return for each dollar invested.

The analysis suggests that 90% of the benefit will be capitalised into property values. The remaining 10% of benefits would accrue more broadly through reduced public health risks and uplift in the local economy.

The preliminary economic evaluation provides a prima facie case for applying for external financing and seeking the involvement of a state agency guarantor to enable the infrastructure project, given the net benefits to Victoria.

Findings

Coliban Water can borrow to finance capital investments but only if financial analysis shows the benefitting residents can contribute sufficient revenue to service the debt. This would not be the case in Newbridge. A third-party financier would therefore be needed for investment in water and sewerage infrastructure in Newbridge.

Give the apportionment of benefits from the investment a combination of loan and grant appears to be the appropriate financing approach.

NHFIC would be an appropriate financing source. An indicative financing structure is a low interest loan for 90% of the capital investment (reflecting the share of benefits associated with land value uplift) and a grant equivalent to 10% of the capital cost (reflecting benefits accruing more broadly).

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Establishing a sustainable and realistic funding source for the loan component, linked to the land-owner beneficiaries, is the main challenge.

Recurrent charges against the land are the obvious, notional source of funding.

Assuming a NHFIC or other sourced loan is secured and underwritten by for example DJPR, Council could use a special charge scheme levied on the private landowners that will receive upgraded water and sewerage infrastructure, with the income 'passed through' to the financier. However, such a scheme would be likely onerous in Newbridge unless the loan terms are generous. For example, based on a 10-year loan at 3.1% (current cash rate) interest each landowner will need to pay between \$800 and \$1,900 per month per property (Option 2 and Option 1 respectively). In other contexts (not in Newbridge) where the number of benefitting lots is higher special charge schemes might be more attractive.

There is a high likelihood more generous loan terms would not significantly push down the annual charge to a level comfortable for all private landowners.

Alternatively, State government could **charge a fee when land with upgraded water and sewerage infrastructure is sold or sub-divided**. Essentially the fee would act as a targeted value uplift charge. There is no obvious legal power currently available to establish this value capture charge against the land. The feasibility of developing and administering such a scheme would need to be considered by State government.

Ultimately a combination of a special charge scheme and charge on land sale/sub-division might strike the right balance for private landowners, but more investigation is required to identify an appropriate and available funding mechanism, ultimately reflecting the beneficiary pays principle.

Further analysis needs to be undertaken to support this project. Additional questions that need to be addressed are:

- Is there a wider case for growing the township? What are the strategic merits and community infrastructure cost implications of growth in Newbridge compared to equivalent or substitute growth in an existing well-serviced location?
- What is the latent demand for housing in Newbridge? Does that demand justify the level of investment proposed for water and sewerage infrastructure?
- What share of the capital cost could ultimately be apportioned to private beneficiaries compared to that which accrues to the wider public?
- What is the appropriate financing source? This report suggests using NHFIC, however a combination of sources, inclusive of NHFIC, might be appropriate.
- What are the appropriate funding mechanisms that consider the stakeholder benefits accrued (i.e. that reflect the beneficiary pays principle), stakeholder financial capacity and feasibility of implementation?

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1. Introduction

1.1 Housing Action Plan and four associated projects

This document is one of four reports on projects which could unlock additional housing supply in the Loddon-Mallee region. The projects were identified during preparation of the Loddon-Mallee Housing Action Plan.

While each report relates to a particular project or issue, the strategic responses and lessons from each provide recommendations that are mostly replicable and scalable to similar issues elsewhere in the region. There are two 'business cases' and two 'strategic policy guides' covering the projects. The business cases are quantitative and focus on the economic case for the housing proposal. The strategic guides address good practice processes and steps.

The projects are:

- Mildura worker housing project – expansion of an existing seasonal worker accommodation facility in regional Victoria (quantitative business case report)
- Etty Street housing site opportunity – a potential social and affordable housing development site with multiple titles, including state-owned and Crown land with associated Aboriginal lands rights implications (strategic policy guide report)
- Buloke worker housing project – understanding the strategic need for key worker housing to support the local community and considering options for key worker housing in Donald, in the Buloke Shire (strategic policy guide report)
- Newbridge Water and Sewerage Infrastructure extension – strategic approach to investing in infrastructure supporting new housing development in a small-town context (quantitative business case report).

All documents draw out and summarises replicable and scalable steps. The reports and especially their included "How to guides", are intended to provide housing practitioners with a toolkit to actively address typical barriers to new housing supply found in regional Victoria.

1.2 This report

This document presents a preliminary business case for the Newbridge Water and Sewerage Infrastructure extension proposal having the aim of facilitating new housing development. It considers the financing and funding issues relating to providing water and sewerage infrastructure within a small town context. It is a *preliminary* business case because while the included quantitative analysis suggests the project would deliver a net community benefit, further questions and issues requiring resolution to support the project are identified.

2. Context and Issues

2.1 Local context

The regional town of Newbridge is located within the Loddon Shire LGA between Bendigo and Dunolly in north-central Victoria, merely 20 kilometres from the planned Bendigo Regional Employment Precinct at Marong. Its proximity to Bendigo and access to the Wimmera Highway and Calder Freeway mean the town is well suited to absorb future population growth and businesses.

The residential population of Newbridge is fairly static with approximately 70 houses, around 40 of which are in the township zone¹. While there is vacant residential land available, the lack of growth is at least partly attributed to the lack of water and sewerage infrastructure to enable residential development.

2.2 Scale of need

There is substantial residential demand in Bendigo and the surrounding region, and this is resulting in low vacancy rates, deteriorating housing affordability and lack of access to housing for workers. The infrastructure constraints in Newbridge appear to impede further residential development. Also, the lack of infrastructure poses public health risks to the existing population of Newbridge.

The lack of water and sewerage infrastructure impacts on Newbridge's growth and liveability. As smaller lots are deemed not suitable for onsite containment of wastewater, there are limited development opportunities, and newly built dwellings typically face septic treatment system costs of over \$20,000, compared to the average sewerage connection fee of less than \$1,500².

Newbridge experiences challenges in tackling both water quality and water security. Residents and businesses often rely on rainwater, which is at risk of contamination from the Loddon River during floods (for some households), as well as from animal droppings on roofs, leaking septic tanks and wastewater drainage (for underground tanks), posing health risks to residents and tourists. Furthermore, treatment of water from the Loddon River is not feasible due to its variability in quality and elevated organics, neither is the treatment of groundwater feasible due to high salinity.

Over 90% of septic tanks in Newbridge are over 25 years old and possibly no longer working properly, and a large number of these are located within the flood zone of the River thereby posing environmental risks. Any pollution of the river system impacts upon public health both within Newbridge and further downstream. Those who use the river for recreational purposes could get exposed to contaminated water if effluent from the septic tank systems leeches into the river, and residents who get their private water supply from the river face increased exposure.³

¹ Grantus 2021, *Newbridge Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme – Business Case*.

² IBID

³ Grantus 2021.

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2.3 Project history

A state-wide review of septic tank use conducted in 2006 prioritised Newbridge as one of the locations considered to be at high risk and in need of a proper sewerage management system. The Loddon Shire Council's Domestic Wastewater Management Plan completed in 2006 also highlighted several key issues relating to water and sewerage supply in Newbridge, including improper maintenance of septic tanks, discharge of greywater to the gutter, and poor septic tank placement (for example, being located in floodplains)⁴.

Since then, various agencies have suggested alternate approaches to water and sewerage management in Newbridge. From 2010, Coliban Water and Loddon Shire Council began engaging the local community to develop and understand the costs of a sewerage scheme. The South West Loddon Pipeline announced in 2016, although primarily aimed at supplying rural farmers, was proposed to run past Newbridge and provided a possible alternate source of water supply for the residential community. Renewed community interest was piqued in 2018 when DELWP facilitated an Integrated Water management (IWM) planning exercise to engage with stakeholders from various aspects of the water cycle, with one of the aims to 'grow Newbridge sustainably'. In 2019, Coliban Water worked with the Loddon Shire Council and community representatives to reassess its water and sewerage treatment and supply options and developed a business case⁵.

The Coliban business case identified the preferred options for providing potable water and sewerage. Appendix A outlines the options considered. The business case did not provide a direction regarding government funding sources for construction of water and sewerage infrastructure. However, the report noted consultation with Coliban Water, Loddon Council, Newbridge residents and the DELWP is required to determine the appropriate funding arrangement for this project.

2.4 Access to finance

The key barrier to the project of the 2019 business case moving ahead is sourcing external funding and a third-party financing guarantor. The business case states, "Whilst the community and Coliban Water could contribute to the overall cost, without State Government involvement, the project can't proceed," (Grantus, 2021, p. 24). Newbridge customers are not able to finance the full capital costs of constructing the new water and sewerage services. Coliban Water is regulated by obligations to function in a financially sustainable manner and maintain pricing that is affordable for its customer base. Coliban Water can borrow to finance capital investments but only if financial analysis shows the benefitting residents can contribute sufficient revenue to service the debt. Coliban Water is constrained legislatively not to borrow and fund capital projects whose cost can not be recovered through customer charges.

Loddon Council understandably does not have the capacity and the appetite to take on debt given its obligations and financial position.

⁴ Coliban Water n.d., *Newbridge Water & Sewerage Supply Business Case*.

⁵ Grantus 2021.

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Any costs incurred to provide the proposed services at Newbridge not fully recovered by Newbridge customers would mean higher bills for other customers.

In its recent Pricing Submission Coliban Water set out its priorities for investment, in line with the objectives of the state government and the Essential Services Commission:

- To reduce its charges to customers: To keep prices as low as possible, we will invest only where and when we need to over the next regulatory period ... Prices for all existing tariffs will be set to follow a price path averaging CPI minus 1%, with the business capping inflation at an assumed 2.3% for the first year. This presents a real decrease in prices amounting to 10% by 2027-28.
- To control future capital expenditure: We propose to invest \$142 million over the next regulatory period on capital works. Our proposed average annual capital spend will be \$342 per customer. This compares to \$519 in the previous regulatory period and \$1,286 in the second regulatory period. This demonstrates our commitment to prudent and efficient capital investment for our customers and a focus on long term affordability.

Faced with greater scrutiny by the regulator and pressure to contain price increases for existing customers, Coliban Water's pricing submission did not include Newbridge as there were other perceived higher priorities for capital investment.

Water charging policy has to strike a balance between two conflicting objectives:

- To send strong price signals to customers to drive efficient behaviour. This argues for zonal cost-reflective pricing at a local level.
- Postage stamp pricing. This recognises that many of the corporation's costs are fixed and shared between locations and that disaggregated zonal pricing is expensive and complex to calculate and/or explain to customers.

Coliban Water has progressively moved from a disaggregated to a postage-stamp basis for pricing. It used to have different prices for multiple different locations. These reflected the history of investment in the 25 different water supply systems across its region. However, over time the corporation has moved towards a single unified pricing standard that reflects the level of service delivered rather than the history of investment in the past.

All connected properties would, in the future, be liable for annual charges from Coliban Water, representing a source of additional revenue that could be used to off-set the costs incurred. However, any such revenue would only be sufficient to cover the on-going annual operating costs of the new plant and would not generate funds to cover any capital costs.

However, if external funding and a third-party guarantor were to take on the financing obligations, the water authority would be able to build and operate the infrastructure (provided the investment is justifiable from a net community benefit perspective). As part of the Loddon-Mallee Housing Action Plan SGS identified NHFIC funding might be a suitable source of finance. The NHFIC facility is described

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in Figure 1 below. A third party – potentially a State government agency such as DJPR - would need to take on the role of financial guarantor⁶.

PRELIMINARY

⁶ From NHFIC data, the following entities, Evolve, Housing First, SA Housing Trust and the Victorian Public Housing Renewal Program received a combination of loan and grant funding for site works, including water and sewerage infrastructure. For the loan component, it was not apparent who has underwritten the loan.

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FIGURE 1: NHFIC FACILITY**What is the National Housing Infrastructure Facility (NHIF)?**

The National Housing Infrastructure Facility (NHIF) is an Australian Government initiative, which provides finance for eligible infrastructure projects that will unlock new housing supply, particularly affordable housing. The NHIF offers concessional loans, grants and equity finance to help support critical housing-enabling infrastructure and comprising:

- up to \$175 million for NHIF grants (\$1.5 million of which may be used to provide support to registered community housing providers in the form of capacity building activities); and
- up to \$825 million for concessional loans and equity finance which will form part of a revolving permanent fund (with returns on loans and equity investments to be reinvested).

To be eligible an applicant must demonstrate that without NHFIC financing its project would be unlikely to proceed, or likely to proceed only at a much later date or with a lesser impact on new affordable housing.

The NHIF can provide finance to help support critical housing-enabling infrastructure. For example,

- electricity and gas, transportation including roads, telecommunications, and water, sewerage and stormwater.
- site remediation works including the removal of hazardous waste or contamination

Eligible applicants include registered community housing providers, local governments, state or territory governments, and government-owned development corporations or utility providers.

The provision of NHIF Loans, NHIF Grants and NHIF Equity Investments is subject to sufficient funds being available each financial year.

To apply for a NHIF Loan and/ or NHIF Grant (once an EOI Form has been submitted), Applicants must:

- complete the Application Form provided by the NHFIC relationship manager;
- provide all the information requested in the Application Form and the guidelines;
- address all the Assessment Criteria and (for NHIF Loans) provide evidence of the Applicant's ability to repay the loan; and
- submit their application to the NHFIC through an NHFIC relationship manager, along with all required supporting documentation.

Source: NHFIC

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Where projects can be shown to benefit the state as a whole, the State Government would be best placed as guarantor. Benefits include the following:

- Given the current housing shortfall, residential growth resulting from the infrastructure investment will enable workers to relocate to the region for work and unlock latent economic potential, in turn generating an uplift in Victoria's GSP.
- The provision of the appropriate water and sewerage infrastructure would provide the opportunity for larger business to enter the town and for existing businesses to scale as they do not need to rely on rainwater tanks. More businesses and scaling of businesses will create more job opportunities within Newbridge.
- Access to modern water and sewerage infrastructure will improve public health in the area. Access to clean water and safe sewerage systems reduces health risks to existing and future residents alike.

2.5 Benefits of addressing the problem

The current lack of water and sewerage infrastructure acts as a deterrent to social and economic growth:

- Development of new properties within the township is constrained as the lot sizes are generally too small to allow full retention of the treated wastewater effluent on site. This inhibits the growth of the township which could become a commuter hub for Bendigo, just 30 minutes away, and lift the value of the existing properties.
- Where development is allowed the scale of the housing is severely constrained with a strict limit on the number of bedrooms, which limits accommodation options for families.
- Where dwellings have been built in recent years on larger plots their septic treatment systems cost in excess of \$20,000. This adds an up-front cost impost which is a deterrent to development.
- The existing commercial ventures in the town, such as the general store, hotel, micro-brewery and recreation reserve, are all constrained from further development due to the constraints imposed by the absence of a public water and sewerage system particularly in periods when there are high water needs.
- Tourist opportunities cannot be exploited. For example, the Newbridge Food and Wine Festival saw 450-500 attendees, with another 120 people at the dinner inside the pavilion. It is difficult to repeat or expand this due to the limits on toilet facilities, the water supply being reliant on rainwater tanks in the town and the restricted level of accommodation available for visitors.
- Currently, residents are exposed to public health risks due to reliance on septic systems while being located in a flood risk area.

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The provision of a public sewerage and water supply service would remove these constraints and promote economic development in the township⁷:

- More vacant lots would be developed, increasing the size of the town and bringing in new people and activity. A wider range of lot sizes and dwelling types could be developed, catering for families as well as downsizers and smaller households.
- Existing properties would increase in value as serviced properties are a more attractive proposition and command a higher market valuation. A study as part of the business case for the South West Loddon rural pipeline estimated a 30% increase in value due to the provision of a piped water supply for rural properties. Discussions with local Estate Agents confirms this uplift as a reasonable basis for extrapolation to Newbridge.
- Existing businesses would be encouraged to expand their business activities. This is supported by the existing interest from:
 - The general store wanting to establish bed and breakfast units
 - The micro-brewery wanting to expand its business
 - The hotel wanting to expand its offerings
 - The recreational reserve which has demonstrated the potential for further expansion with the success of the Newbridge Food and Wine Festival.
- Existing and future residents have a reduced exposure to public health risks associated with access to fresh water.

2.6 The project

The initial proposal focused on servicing 40 lots within the township zone. However, with a broader understanding of the strategic placement of Newbridge within the regional context and the availability of developable land, Newbridge could accommodate an additional 290 lots⁸, with appropriate water and sewerage infrastructure.

⁷ Grantus 2021, Newbridge Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme – Business Case.

⁸ The estimation is based on an indicative housing capacity assessment of a broad area of land near the township identified by Loddon Council to indicate a potential yield of housing that could be unlocked from providing water and sewerage infrastructure. A precise calculation of yield and the associated land requirement was beyond the scope of this report.

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Further considerations

For the development proposal to be robust, some additional key contextual questions needed to be answered:

- What is the latent demand for housing in Newbridge? Where would the demand come from and over what time might an additional 330 lots be occupied?
- Does the level of realistic projected demand justify the size of the development proposal?
- Does Council have the capacity to support increased demand on community infrastructure?

Justifiable projected demand might be lower (or higher) than anecdotal expectations. Scrutinising demand prospects relative to the development proposal will be important in threshold justifications for investment and thereafter to guide the scope of the project and investment size.

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3. Cost Benefit Analysis

3.1 Cost benefit framework

As per convention, the CBA is undertaken at the State level and assesses the costs and benefits to Victoria as a whole.

CBA is an appraisal method that compares the costs and benefits of a project (the project case) to a situation without the project (Business as Usual case, or base case).

An options analysis was undertaken by Coliban Water in consultation with stakeholders to determine the appropriate type of water and sewerage infrastructure (a list of the options considered is in Appendix A). The option chosen for water was a gravity-fed piped supply from the neighbouring town of Tarnagulla, part of the Laanecoorie system. For sewerage, a standard gravity-fed system to a central collection sump with the sewage pumped to a new small-scale local treatment plant was selected. The use of onsite treatment and disposal is not sustainable in the long-run due to the build-up of nutrients and salts in the soil and groundwater that is occurring⁹.

The project cases described in this report are scaled versions of these preferred water and sewerage infrastructure delivery options. The base case and the project case are described below.

Business-as-usual

Newbridge residents keep using rainwater tanks and private water pumps drawing water from the Loddon River. Sewerage continues to be serviced through septic tanks. Under this case, Newbridge does not expand as a town and business growth opportunities are constrained.

Option 1

Water and sewerage infrastructure is only provided to 40 township lots. This option addresses the core issues of health risks posed by the current water and waste water system. Future town growth is not secured under this option. Further financing and construction will be needed to enable expansion.

Option 2

The water and sewerage infrastructure services the existing 40 lots, and also allows developments of a further 290 lots conditional on private developer converting the available rural land into residential land. A connection point is constructed and water and sewerage infrastructure is built to accommodate a further 290 lots. This proposal sets up the town to expand based on attracting the right investor and market interest. The aim is to kick start developer led housing provision by shifting the development feasibility equation in a way that improves the Residual Land Value.

⁹ Coliban Water, Newbridge Water & Sewerage Supply Business Case

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Table 1 lists the costs and benefits that are considered in the cost benefit analysis and the quantification method.

TABLE 1: COST BENEFIT FRAMEWORK

Incremental costs	Incremental benefits
<p>Capital costs – these are the costs to providing the water and sewerage infrastructure.</p> <p>These costs were provided by Coliban Water</p>	<p>Increase in property values – having appropriate water and sewerage infrastructure make development of land in Newbridge more attractive. Existing properties would see an uplift due to the potential to sub-divide lots. Housing development would be more feasible with any subsidised infrastructure funding that draws in private developers.</p> <p>Quantification based on number of lots * uplift estimate provided in the Grantus (2021) business case.</p>
<p>Operating and maintenance costs – are the ongoing costs to maintain the operation of the water and sewerage facilities.</p> <p>Costs provided by Coliban Water</p>	<p>Increase in economic profitability - enabling further housing development attracts more workers to the region, not otherwise available to regional producers.</p> <p>Quantification based on number of workers per dwelling and profits generated per worker using ABS Industry data. Profits are weighted by the industry structure of Loddon.</p>
<p>Loss of rural farming land – switching the land use from rural farming land to housing would include a loss from the agricultural productive potential.</p> <p>This is quantified using the market price for farmland in North-West which is \$3278 per hectare, CPI adjusted, from the Australian Farmland Values report 2020¹⁰</p>	<p>Avoided public health risks – The provision of appropriate water and sewerage infrastructure will reduce the health risks posed by the current system that leaves the river vulnerable to contamination by ageing septic systems and rainwater tanks at higher risk of exposure to contaminants.</p> <p>This benefit is quantified using the NSW SSWP Guidelines for avoided costs of water borne diseases. The parameter estimates an avoided cost of \$352 per household, CPI adjusted. A typical household size is 2.2 according to ABS Census 2021 for Loddon LGA. The avoided cost is applied to the 40 lots already using septic tanks and either rainwater tanks or water pumps.</p>

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

Incremental costs

The incremental costs are the capital costs, operating costs and loss of rural land shown in Table 2. Under Option 1 there is no loss of rural land as water and sewerage infrastructure is only developed to meet the needs of the 40 lots within the township zone of Newbridge.

TABLE 2: INCREMENTAL COSTS

	Total	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27 and onwards
--	-------	------	------	------	------	------------------

¹⁰

<https://www.ruralbank.com.au/siteassets/knowledgeandinsights/publications/farmlandvalues/victoria/afv-vic-2020.pdf>

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Option 1						
Capital costs (\$000s)	8780.0	8780.0				
Operating costs (\$000s)	1760.2		88.0	88.0	88.0	88.0
Loss of rural land (\$000)	-	-				
Option 2						
Capital costs (\$000s)	27,000	27,000				
Operating costs (\$000s)	8,600		430	430	430	430
Loss of rural land (\$000)	184	184				

Source: SGS Economics and Planning; Coliban Water

Incremental benefits

Property value uplift and increased economic output will be the most significant benefits generated by providing water and sewerage infrastructure in Newbridge across the 2 project options. Avoided public health costs from water borne diseases, though small are still a substantive benefit that will result from the infrastructure. Table 3 shows the dollar values for each of the benefits.

TABLE 3: INCREMENTAL BENEFITS

	Total	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27 and onwards
Option 1						
Increase in property values (\$000s)	16,000	-	800.0	800.0	800.0	800.0
Increase in profitability (\$000s)	1428	-	71.4	71.4	71.4	71.4
Avoided public health costs (\$000s)	281.6	-	14.1	14.1	14.1	14.1
Option 2						
Increase in property values (\$000s)	132,000	-	\$6600.0	\$6600.0	\$6600.0	\$6600.0
Increase in profitability (\$000s)	11781.0	-	589.1	589.1	589.1	589.1
Avoided public health costs (\$000s)	281.6	-	14.1	14.1	14.1	14.1

Source: SGS Economics and Planning-

3.2 Preliminary Cost Benefit Assessment

Overarching assumptions

Overarching assumptions for the discounted cashflow analysis are as follows:

- Values 2022, real (i.e. no escalation)
- Timeframe 20 years (2022 to 2042)
- Discount rate 7% real.

Results

The preliminary economic evaluation provides a prima facie case for applying for external funding and seeking the involvement of a state agency guarantor to enable the infrastructure project, given the net benefits to Victoria. Table 4 shows Option 2 will provide a net benefit to Victoria with a return of \$2.40 for every dollar invested and Option 1 will provide a dollar return for each dollar invested. Table 5 provides descriptions of the CBA performance measures. Even when the benefits are varied according to Table 6, Table 7 shows the project Option 2 will still generate a net benefit to Victorians with the BCR above 1. Whilst Option 1 will generate a net dis-benefit if the estimated benefits varied.

The analysis suggests that 90% of the benefit will be capitalised into property values. The remaining 10% of benefits would accrue more broadly through reduced public health risks and uplift in the local economy.

TABLE 4: COST-BENEFIT RESULTS

	Option 1 (Net Present Value)	Option 2 (Net Present Value)
Capital costs	\$8,780,000	\$27,000,000
Operating costs	\$1,279,200	\$5,500,800
Loss of rural land	\$0	\$184,000
Total incremental costs	\$10,059,200	\$32,684,800
Increase in property values (\$000s)	\$8,528,000	\$70,352,000
Increase in profitability (\$000s)	\$844,000	\$6,962,000
Avoided public health costs (\$000s)	\$90,000	\$68,000
Total incremental benefits	\$9,743,000	\$77,382,000
Net benefits	(\$316,200)	\$44,697,200
BCR	1.0	2.4

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

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TABLE 5: CBA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measure	Estimation method	Decision rule
Net Present Value (NPV)	A number is generated by deducting the present value of the stream of costs from the present value of the stream of benefits (with the present value of costs and benefits determined by using an appropriate discount rate). Reject options with a negative NPV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accept options with a positive NPV - Reject options with a negative NPV - The greater the NPV, the better.-
Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)	Ratio of discounted present-day benefits over discounted present-day costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accept options with a BCR > 1 - Reject options with a BCR < 1 - The greater the BCR, the better.

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

TABLE 6: SENSITIVITY TEST ASSUMPTIONS

	Base assumption	Pessimistic	Optimistic
T1: Discount rate	7%	10%	4%
T2: Benefits	As per model	-5%	+5%

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

TABLE 7: SENSITIVITY RESULTS

	Pessimistic (BCR)	Optimistic (BCR)	Pessimistic (NPV)	Optimistic (NPV)
Option 1				
T1: Discount rate	0.7	1.1	(\$2,492,200)	\$1,255,200
T2: Benefits	0.9	0.9	(\$987,800)	(\$925,800)
Option 2				
T1: Discount rate	1.9	2.8	\$28,176,800	\$61,189,200
T2: Benefits	2.3	2.3	\$41,484,000	\$41,927,000

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

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Potential financing and funding mechanisms

When it comes to infrastructure investment, financing and funding are two separate concepts. Financing is defined as the act of obtaining or providing money or capital for an investment or purchase or business activity. Funding is defined as the money provided, especially by an organization or government, for a particular purpose, often to 'repay' or provide a return on the capital financing. A government grant to an organisation, for which no return is expected, could be considered both finance and funding (though ultimately the taxpayer is the source of the funding).

Give the apportionment of benefits from the investment a combination of loan and grant appears to be the appropriate financing approach.

NHFIC would be an appropriate financing source. An indicative financing structure is a low interest loan for 90% of the capital investment (reflecting the share of benefits associated with land value uplift) and a grant equivalent to 10% of the capital cost (reflecting benefits accruing more broadly).

Establishing a sustainable and realistic funding source for the loan component, linked to the land-owner beneficiaries is the main challenge.

Recurrent charges against the land are the obvious, notional source of funding. Coliban Water is constrained in the place specific or 'zonal' pricing approaches they can impose and the limits to spikes in costs being shared across the wider customer base under a 'postage stamp' pricing approach.

Assuming a NHFIC or other sourced loan is secured and underwritten by for example DJPR, Council could use a special charge scheme levied on the private landowners that will receive upgraded water and sewerage infrastructure, with the income 'passed through' to the financier. However, such a scheme would be likely onerous unless the loan terms are generous. For example, based on a 10-year loan at 3.1% interest (current cash rate) each landowner will need to pay \$1,900 per month per property under Option 1 (40 lots) and \$800 per month per property under Option 2 (330 lots). Indicatively, a survey of private landowners showed a rate of \$750 per annum would be not feasible for some landowners¹¹. In other contexts (not in Newbridge) where the number of benefitting lots may be higher special charge schemes might be more attractive.

NHFIC does provide generous loan terms such as a longer loan periods, extended periods of capitalisation, deferral of loan payments and options for debt restructuring. There is a high likelihood more generous loan terms would not significantly push down the annual charge to a level comfortable for all private landowners.

Alternatively, State government could **charge a fee when land with upgraded water and sewerage infrastructure is sold or sub-divided.** Essentially the fee would act as a targeted value uplift charge. There is no obvious legal power currently available to establish this value capture charge against the land. The feasibility of developing and administrating such a scheme would need to be considered by State government.

Ultimately a combination of a special charge scheme and charge on land sale/sub-division might strike the right balance for private landowners.

¹¹ Grantus 2021, Newbridge Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme – Business Case.

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Further considerations

In considering an appropriate financing and funding structure where support or subsidies are being sought for a public infrastructure investment which could yield a net community benefit questions to be addressed include:

- Can the beneficiaries of the capital investment or costs be split between private interests and the wider public?
- What is the appropriate financing structure for example, combination of loan and grant conditional on the respective split between private landowners or beneficiaries relative to the public?
- What is an appropriate and justifiable funding mechanism that could apply to private landowners or entities, recognising the share of benefits accruing to these interests and based on the 'beneficiary pays' principle.

The proposed Loddon-Mallee Housing Support Officer would be pivotal in investigating these questions and options.

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4. Guidance for similar contexts

The table below provides guidance for councils facing similar ‘up-front’ infrastructure impediments to growth. The guidance is high-level and specific to water and sewerage infrastructure in a small local government area. As part of the guidance, the role for a Housing Support Officer (or similar) in similar projects is shown in the table.

The CBA components are also transferable to areas with similar issues. The CBA results for this preliminary business case demonstrate a wider community benefit to support the infrastructure provision (albeit a share of value is capitalised as private property value). It provides a justification for Council or other levels of government to collaborate, advocate for funding and potentially contribute funding to enable the project to proceed, particularly where a funding or revenue source can be established. While the exact results of the CBA may vary from site to site, there will be common components of the CBA across areas with similar issues.

TABLE 8: GUIDANCE MATERIAL SECURING FUNDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Key stages	Role of Housing Officer
Development of infrastructure and housing supply proposal	<p>Strategic and Needs Assessment: Assist council in developing a proposal that details the housing supply unlocked by the infrastructure and estimates of the cost of the required infrastructure. A clear ‘project’ case needs to be based on a sound development scenario justified by a realistic projection of housing demand. Questions to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the latent demand for housing in Newbridge? Where would the demand come from and over what time might an additional 330 lots be occupied? Does the level of realistic projected demand justify the size of the development proposal? <p>Scrutinising demand prospects relative to the development proposal will be important in threshold justifications for investment and thereafter to guide the scope of the project and investment size.</p>
Development of business case	<p>Building the investment case: undertake the economic and financial analysis (with consultant if necessary) to support the project case (including identifying appropriate financial and economic indicators consistent with State Government guidelines). A clear statement of costs and benefits, and the quantification methodology, will need to be included.</p>
Secure a financial guarantor	<p>Secure financial partner: assist council with identifying and securing a State agency to be a financial guarantor for the required capital, as warranted and justified by the business case.</p>
Identify funding mechanism	<p>Investigate funding options – in line with the financial capability of the stakeholders. Questions to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the beneficiaries of the capital investment or costs be split between private interests and the wider public?

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the appropriate financing structure for example, combination of loan and grant conditional on the respective split between private landowners or beneficiaries relative to the public? ▪ What is an appropriate and justifiable funding mechanism that could apply to private landowners or entities, recognising the share of benefits accruing to these interests and based on the 'beneficiary pays' principle. <p>identify the appropriate funding solutions</p>
<p>Seek financing</p>	<p>Support NHFIC application: provide council with assistance to obtain capital for infrastructure including with applications.</p>

Source: SGS Economics and Planning

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Appendix A: Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Options Considered

Below are the water and sewerage options considered for Newbridge. These are direct excerpts from the Coliban Water report

Sewerage

Option 2 – Conventional Gravity System with Lagoon Plant

The use of Modified Conventional Sewerage is consistent with sewerage systems installed in other small towns across the Coliban Water region. Sewer mains are laid from every allotment that is to be serviced and run to a central pump station which pumps waste to be treated at a new Water Reclamation Plant. Sewers will be from 1m to 5 m deep. The pump station requires extensive works and the WRP requires land to be purchased.

This option requires 2400 m of gravity main, 25 manholes, one pump station and 3500 m of rising main to a WRP that is to be located outside the flood plain. The WRP is to be a lagoon based plant located on 64 ha of land. Reclaimed water is expected to be irrigated onto land using a centre pivot irrigator.

Each owner is required to run a new drain to their connection point

Option 3a – Pressure sewer system, truck to an existing system

While not used extensively in Coliban's systems, the pumps and small diameter pressure mains are a technology that is not uncommon and quite manageable from an operations and maintenance viewpoint. Pump stations are now purchased as off the shelf units and are relatively simple to install. The pump unit will be owned and maintained by Coliban Water. Future development of the area would require the use of similar methodology and is not as customer friendly as a conventional gravity system.

Pressure pipes of 50 mm and 63 mm diameter will be installed at about 1 m deep and run to a central collection point. A pump will be installed on every property. The pump will be connected to the owner's household power supply. The owner will connect their property drains to the pump station. Waste will be pumped to the central collection point from which it will be trucked away to an existing system on a regular basis.

Option 3b Pressure sewer system, truck to an existing system for 10 years and then construct a WRP.

This option is the same as Option 3a except that it is proposed to construct a WRP after 10 years. There is a risk that trucking waste to an existing system may be unsustainable if growth in Newbridge increases beyond Coliban Water's prediction. This option includes trucking for the first 10 years life of the scheme and then the construction of a lagoon based treatment plant with agricultural reuse within a 3.5 km to the west of Newbridge.

Option 4 Pressure sewer system, treatment at the recreation reserve and reuse on the recreation reserve.

The collection system is similar to option 3 but the waste is pumped to a mechanical treatment plant for treatment prior to reuse on the recreation reserve on the east side of the Loddon River and largely in the

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flood plain. A package treatment plant will be established together with a small winter storage. Subsurface irrigation is proposed as a means of reducing the risk of human contact with the treated waste at the Recreation Reserve.

Option 5, Household treatment, Pressure sewer system and irrigation of agricultural land

This option proposes that waste from every house be treated on site and the treated effluent pumped to a WRP. Small household treatment plants are commonly used on larger allotments with the treated waste being reused sustainably on site. Under this option for the smaller lot sizes in Newbridge, treatment plants and a pump would be constructed on each lot and the treated effluent pumped to a winter storage and reuse area. It is planned that the reuse area would be within 1 km of the town.

Option 6a Pressure sewer system, package treatment plant and agricultural reuse

The Pressure sewer system to be installed is the same as for option 3b. However, rather than initially trucking the waste to another WRP for treatment, the WRP is to be constructed up front. The sewage is to be treated in a package treatment plant, stored in a winter storage and then reused on agricultural land.

Option 6b Pressure sewer system, lagoon based treatment and agricultural reuse

This option is similar to Option 6a but utilises lagoons for the treatment of the waste. Lagoons require a larger buffer zone so this option requires a larger area of land than that needed for a package treatment plant. It is the same as Option 3b except that the WRP, winter storage and reuse area is constructed up front.

Option 7 Conventional Gravity Sewer with pipeline to Bridgewater WRP

This option is similar to Option 2, but instead of constructing a new lagoon based water reclamation plant near Newbridge township, utilises a rising main to pump effluent to the existing WRP in Bridgewater.

This involves a 16.3km rising main from Newbridge to the Bridgewater WRP.

Septic Tank Effluent Drainage

The Elmore and Lockington Systems are STED systems. A Septic Tank Effluent Drainage system would involve the installation of a similar length of pipe as the gravity system but pipes can be smaller and at a flatter grade as they carry liquid only. The assessment determined that this type of system would not provide any cost advantage over the gravity system. It has not been considered any further.

Septic Tank Effluent Pump

This is similar to the STED option except that pumps are installed after the septic tank and waste is pumped through a pressure system to the WRP. Coliban operates a STEP system for two houses in Kangaroo Flat and Chelsworth Park in Echuca with about 160 houses. The whole of life costs are not expected to be significantly less than a Pressure sewer system. This option does not provide an advantage over the Pressure sewer system. It has not been considered further.

Vacuum System

While a vacuum sewerage system is technically feasible, the options assessed above present outcomes with lesser risk. It has not been considered further

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Recycling

Wastewater trucked to another sewerage system, will be reused in accordance with the established reuse system in that town. Should a WRP be established at Newbridge, the community will be consulted about opportunities for reuse in and around the town.

Water***Option 2 – Pipeline from Bridgewater/Inglewood system***

Connection of Newbridge via a new pipeline from the Bridgewater WTP.

Scope of works:

- New transfer pipeline from Bridgewater WTP to a new tank in Newbridge. 18 km of DN100 pipework and dedicated pump station at Bridgewater WTP site. As well as 2 km of DN100 pipework transferring water from the storage reservoir to the reticulated system.
- 100 kL tank at Newbridge (180 kL tank to service both side of Loddon River). Located adjacent to the Wimmera Hwy to the west of Newbridge at an elevation to allow gravity supply to the town. Sized to provide 16 hours capacity on a peak day.
- Allowance for a booster chlorinator at the Newbridge tank to maintain chlorine residual at the customer tap.
- Reticulation of town based on the East Loddon Water Supply Stage 1 Feasibility Study (W3Plus) on the Western side of Loddon is proposed to service 50 lots. An allowance has been included for the addition of a reticulation system and bridge crossing to service the properties within the township zone on the Eastern side of Loddon River

Option 3 – Pipeline from Tarnagulla (Laanecoorie system)

Connection of Newbridge via a new pipeline from the Bridgewater WTP.

Scope of works:

- New transfer pipeline from Laanecoorie WTP to a new tank in Newbridge, with the interface being at Tarnagulla. 6.2 km of DN100 pipework gravitates to the water supply tank, with 2 km transferring water from the water supply tank to reticulation system.
- 100 kL tank at Newbridge (180 kL tank to service both side of Loddon River). Located adjacent to the Wimmera Hwy to the west of Newbridge at an elevation to allow gravity supply to the town. Sized to provide 16 hours capacity on a peak day.
- Allowance for a booster chlorinator at the Newbridge tank to maintain chlorine residual at the customer tap.
- Reticulation of town based on the East Loddon Water Supply Stage 1 Feasibility Study (W3Plus) on the Western side of Loddon is proposed to service 50 lots. An allowance has been included for the addition of a reticulation system and bridge crossing to service the properties within the township zone on the Eastern side of Loddon River

Option 4 - New Water Treatment Plant (South West Loddon Pipeline)

Connection of Newbridge via a new pipeline connecting to the Southwest Loddon Pipeline. Water supply will be transferred to a new WTP at Newbridge via a pump station.

Scope of works:

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- New 2 km transfer pipeline from Southwest Loddon Pipeline to a new WTP at Newbridge, including pipeline from water supply tank to reticulation system.
- New WTP to treat the Southwest Loddon Pipeline influent.
- 100 kL tank at Newbridge (180 kL tank to service both side of Loddon River). Located adjacent to the Wimmera Hwy to the west of Newbridge at an elevation to allow gravity supply to the town. Sized to provide 16 hours capacity on a peak day.
- Reticulation of town based on the East Loddon Water Supply Stage 1 Feasibility Study (W3Plus) on the Western side of Loddon is proposed to service 50 lots. An allowance has been included for the addition of a reticulation system and bridge crossing to service the properties within the township zone on the Eastern side of Loddon River

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Newbridge Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme – Business Case

Growing Newbridge Sustainably

Version Final
February 2021

Table of contents

1. Executive Summary	1
1.1 Summary	1
1.2 The problem	1
1.3 The solution	1
1.4 Costs and cost recovery	1
1.5 Stakeholder engagement.....	1
1.6 Recommendation	2
2. Problem	3
2.1 Background	3
2.2 Water and sewerage services	3
2.3 Definition and evidence of the problem	4
2.4 Timing considerations	8
3 Recommended solution	9
3.1 Details of recommended solution	9
3.2 Preferred solution - sewerage.....	9
3.3 Water – pipeline from Tarnagulla system	10
3.4 Evidence of the proposed solution’s effectiveness	12
3.5 Scalability of the recommended solution	12
3.6 Evaluation strategy.....	13
4. Benefits	14
4.1 Environmental benefits.....	14
4.2 Public health.....	14
4.3 Economic benefits	14
4.4 Social benefits	15
4.5 Liability.....	15
4.6 Benefits valuation.....	16
5 Costs and cost recovery.....	19
5.1 Proposed costs of supply	19
5.2 Proposed funding sources and alternatives	19
5.3 Customer contributions	20
5.4 Property owners: value capture	21
5.5 Coliban Water	21
5.6 Local Government	22
5.7 State Government	23
5.8 Summary	24
6. Deliverability	25
6.1 Assessment and management of risks and sensitivities	25
6.2 Risk.....	25
6.3 Readiness and implementation process.....	25
7. Limitations	28
Appendix A Town layout	29
Appendix B Schematic of proposed sewerage scheme	30
Appendix C Alternative options considered	31
Appendix D Potential cost sharing arrangements	35
Appendix E Landowner survey	36

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Summary

This business case reviews the available evidence to support the provision of water and sewerage services to the township of Newbridge in north-central Victoria. Newbridge is a small regional town in the Loddon Shire, located on the bank of the Loddon River on the Wimmera Highway between Bendigo and Dunolly. Newbridge has a stable population with a regular influx of tourists arriving for recreation and camping along the Loddon River, particularly during the summer months.

1.2 The problem

Newbridge is reliant on rainwater tanks for drinking water supply and septic tanks for wastewater management. The current arrangements pose increased risks across a range of outcomes:

- Adverse environmental impacts on the Loddon River from poorly managed wastewater leakage from the septic tanks and over-flow in flood events
- Public health impacts from poorly managed wastewater and contaminated drinking water
- Economic and social impacts through constraints on commercial activities in the town and opportunities to grow

1.3 The solution

The proposed solution is the provision of a public sewerage and water supply system as part of the regional service provided by Coliban Water. The respective schemes would involve:

- In the case of sewerage: a standard gravity-fed system to a central collection sump with the sewage pumped to a new small-scale local treatment plant. Sewerage would be provided to the township zone west of the Loddon River.
- In the case of the water supply: a gravity-fed piped supply from the neighbouring town of Tarnagulla, part of the Laanecoorie system. The Laanecoorie WTP has spare capacity and has recently been upgraded to improve treated water quality and reliability. Water supply would be provided to both east and west parts of Newbridge.

The provision of these services would generate benefits both for local householders and wider regional stakeholders.

1.4 Costs and cost recovery

The scheme would involve total costs of around \$6.82 million, with \$5.5 million needed to complete construction costs.

Table 1.1 Total cost for sewer and water to Newbridge

Item	Sewer (\$M)	Water(\$M)	Total (\$M)
Construction capex	3.13	2.4	5.53
Landowners capex	0.14	0.08	0.22
Annual opex	0.023	0.065	0.088
NPV	3.53	3.29	6.82

Costs would need to be recovered from three main parties for the scheme to be viable:

- Customers/landholders
- Coliban Water
- State Government

1.5 Stakeholder engagement

Throughout the development of the business case, a project steering committee was established that consisted of members from the Loddon Shire, Coliban Water and the Newbridge community. Their participating guided the options, engagement strategies and recommended outcomes.

When a draft business case was costed and a recommended solution provided, a survey was sent out to each landowner (Appendix E). The survey was sent to each landholder seeking their level of interest and support for a sewerage and wastewater supply in the Newbridge township. The survey also sought landowners interest in contributing \$15,000 (payable over 20 years) towards the capital works and paying their onsite connection costs. These costs reflected the need for a landowner contribution and potential private benefits that they may receive through increased land prices.

The survey responses were generally supportive of the project. Willingness to pay the contribution recommended received mixed results, and there was a significant number of landholders that did not respond.

1.6 Recommendation

Without significant financial support, landholders and the Loddon Shire Council can't self-fund the required \$5.5 million required for sewerage and a safe drinking water supply to the township of Newbridge.

2. Problem

2.1 Background

Newbridge is a small regional town in the Loddon Shire, located on the bank of the Loddon River on the Wimmera Highway between Bendigo and Dunolly. (Appendix A – Town layout)

Newbridge has a stable residential population with a regular influx of tourists arriving for recreation and camping along the Loddon River, particularly during the summer months.

In the gold rush, the town thrived and was subdivided into over 250 allotments. There are currently approximately 70 houses in Newbridge, with 40 identified within the township zone.

2.2 Water and sewerage services

Water for household use is sourced primarily from rainwater tanks, with some extraction of groundwater, and limited direct diversions from the Loddon River. Wastewater flows are managed through septic tanks and onsite effluent disposal.

A staged exercise over the last fifteen years has reviewed the adequacy of the current provision of wastewater management and the alternative approaches available. The main elements of that history are:

- In 2006, a state-wide review of septic tank use was conducted in consultation with the Department of Human Services, the Environment Protection Authority, Local Councils and the Municipal Association of Victoria. Loddon Shire Council produced a Domestic Wastewater Management Plan with Newbridge considered high risk and in need of a proper sewerage management system. It was prioritised and added to a list of locations where sewerage and water improvement works were required across the state.
- “*Our Water Our Future*” announced that 23 towns were to receive funding for the provision of new sewerage infrastructure. This included Newbridge, to protect the health of residents and the quality of the environment. The key concern related to the risk associated with the presence of septic tanks within the floodplain of the Loddon River.
- In 2006 Newbridge along with 34 other regional towns in Victoria were reported to receive investment in water and sewerage services as part of a \$42 million Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program (CTWSSP).
- In 2007, an Options Servicing Paper was prepared to identify sewerage treatment, collection and reuse options in Newbridge. A preliminary design was developed based on the installation of a low-pressure reticulated sewer network.
- In 2010, Coliban Water and Loddon Shire Council started engaging the community to develop a sewerage system design and understand the cost to deliver the scheme. Residents were asked to complete a survey, factsheets were produced, modelling of water use behaviours undertaken and meetings held with representatives of the community.
- In 2011 the Loddon River flooded and inundated much of the town. The recreational reserve was 10 feet underwater, and sewage escaped from numerous septic tanks into the River. Flood funding rebuilt the recreation reserve facilities; however, the new septic system is still susceptible to the next flood, like much of the town.
- In 2013 Coliban Water reported its findings on a sewerage scheme to the Government. The preliminary cost for the preferred sewerage solution was \$2.42 million.
- In 2014, the *Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan* proposed that investigations for sewerage Newbridge should be considered in the medium to longer-term to support growth.¹
- In 2016, a rural stock water pipeline project was announced that would run past Newbridge. The South West Loddon Pipeline, while funded to supply rural farmers, had the potential also to provide Newbridge with a water supply for urban customers. However, the raw water

¹ Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (2014), p58.

supply would have needed treatment to improve on the existing untreated tank water supply.

- In 2018 an Integrated Water Management (IWM) planning exercise facilitated by DELWP, brought together organisations that had an interest in all aspects of the water cycle. The output was the 'Coliban Strategic Directions Statement'. One of the actions was 'Growing Newbridge Sustainably':

Newbridge is a town where growth is restricted due to a lack of water security and sewerage infrastructure. The proposed Loddon Southwest Scheme provides a new opportunity to look at a reliable water supply for the town. The potential for collaborative opportunities has not previously been considered.²

- In 2019, Coliban Water reassessed its sewerage and water treatment and supply options in consultation with the Loddon Shire Council and community representatives.

This Business Case brings together more than a decade of lobbying and comes at an opportune time. The South West Loddon pipeline has secured water supplies for farmers surrounding the town, and water quality improvement opportunities are now available for Inglewood, Bridgewater, Laanecoorie, Bealiba, Tarnagulla and Dunolly. River health and climate change are impacting on the Loddon River and other waterways. With several commercial operations within a short distance of Newbridge and the growth of Bendigo (only 40km away), now is the time to grow Newbridge sustainably.

2.3 Definition and evidence of the problem

Newbridge is reliant on rainwater tanks for drinking water supply and septic tanks for wastewater management. The current arrangements pose increased risks across a range of outcomes:

- Adverse environmental impacts on the Loddon River from poorly managed wastewater
- Public health impacts from poorly managed wastewater and contaminated drinking water
- Economic and social impacts through constraints on commercial activities in the town and opportunities to grow
- Legal and liability issues for authorities

2.3.1 Environmental health impact

Sewage

The Loddon River is an essential regional ecosystem. The Loddon basin is assessed as being in a 'moderate' environmental condition due to altered flow regimes, water quality, aquatic life and physical form.³ The condition of waterways is affected by:

'Increased input of contaminants such as sediment, salt or nutrient causing deterioration in in-stream habitat and negative impacts on water supply for human consumption.'⁴

Water quality in the upper and mid reaches of the Loddon is particularly affected by nutrients.

Waterways of the Loddon River catchment have a history of high levels of nutrients from both point and diffuse sources. High nutrient levels have resulted in blue-green algal blooms in the majority of storages and water bodies in the catchment over time including Cairn Curran, Tullaroop and Laanecoorie. In the 1990s the Loddon catchment recorded the highest incidence of blue-green algal blooms in Victoria.⁵

Septic tanks in Newbridge contribute to this adverse outcome through two routes:

- **Low-level contamination:** Old and failing septic tanks will not adequately contain the effluent stream, particularly on small blocks with limited area for absorption. Where those blocks are located within 100m of the River, this will result in elevated levels of discharge of salt, nitrogen, phosphorus and bacterial contamination from surface runoff.

² Integrated Water Management Forum (2108), Coliban Strategic Directions Statement.

³ DELWP, Index of Stream Condition The Third Benchmark of Victorian River Condition, 2010.

⁴ NCCMA - 2013-19 North Central Regional Catchment Strategy, p24.

⁵ NCCMA (2013), *Loddon River system Environmental Water Management Plan*, p29.

Investigations over the last decade confirm that septic tanks in Newbridge have the following issues:

- There are a large number of septic tanks within 100 metres from the River and within the flood zone of the Loddon River.
 - Over 90% of septic tanks are older than 25 years, suggesting that many may not be working properly.
 - There is evidence of off-site discharge of greywater and failing onsite wastewater systems.⁶
- **Flooding:** The second risk is that the septic tanks are inundated during river flooding with the contents of the septic tanks then washed out and drained back into the River. This was identified in early DWMPs and state-wide reviews. This risk was realised in practice in 2011 when flooding of the Loddon River saw much of Newbridge submerged in floodwater. Septic tanks leached their contents into the River and posed a significant threat to public health and also to the biodiversity of the River.

The *Environment Protection Act 1970* regulates the provision of onsite wastewater management systems. Onsite wastewater management systems must comply with the EPA publication 891.2, *Code of Practice – Onsite Wastewater Management*.

The State Environment Protection Policy – Waters of Victoria provides that Councils are required to prepare Domestic Wastewater Management Plans (DWMP) that assess the performance of onsite wastewater management systems. Where those systems are not performing appropriately, installation of reticulated sewerage can be identified as a preferred option for domestic wastewater management.

The Loddon Shire's 2006 and 2013-19 DWMP has consistently rated Newbridge as one of its highest priority towns for the installation of a sewerage service. This was recognised by the State in its priority listing under the CTWSSP announced in 2006. Due to cost at the time, Newbridge sewerage hasn't been funded.

In 2016, the State government established an Integrated Water Management Framework, and the Coliban region was the first to host an IWM Forum. The output of the IWM Forum was the *Coliban Strategic Directions Statement*, in September 2018 that stated that investment was needed for:

*A feasibility study to consider supplying the township of Newbridge with a secure water supply and associated water and sewerage infrastructure.*⁷

The Victorian Government has recognised that support for IWM projects is needed. In the *Victorian Budget 2019/20* there is \$6 million for important local projects that have been identified through the Integrated Water Management Framework.⁸



Figure 1 Loddon River at Newbridge

⁶ Loddon Shire Council, Domestic Wastewater Management Plan, 2006.

⁷ IWM, Coliban Strategic Directions Statement, Sep 2018.

⁸ Victorian Government Media Release, - SECURING VICTORIA'S WATER FOR COMMUNITIES AND FARMERS, May 2019.

Water

The impact of water on the environment is associated largely around extractions via legal and illegal diversions off the Loddon River. Anecdotally there are a number of pumps used to pump water for non-residential use around town. This has impacts on the hydrology of the River and overall catchment health. Given the extent of licensed irrigation and extraction for potable use along the Loddon River, the impact from Newbridge would be considered minimal.

2.3.2 Public health impact

Sewage

The River plays a significant role in the life of the region. It provides non-potable water to farmers and residents between the towns of Daylesford and Swan Hill. Water is extracted downstream for further treatment and potable use. The River is also used by many residents and tourists for recreational purposes and camping along the riverbank.

Inappropriate lot sizes to contain septic tank effluent, poorly designed systems, ageing septic tanks and lack of proper maintenance are known to increase chances of contamination from chemicals, bacteria, protozoa and viruses. All of which are likely to end up in the Loddon River. With a high recreational value, extraction used for drinking water supplies downstream and irrigation uses, there is a statistically significant risk of illness if people come in contact with contaminated water.

Illnesses that are contracted from sewage contamination include gastroenteritis, shigellosis, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis and hepatitis. Illnesses can also include ear, eye and respiratory infections.

Water

Without a public, potable water supply, residents and businesses are consuming and preparing food that is higher risk, building and development can be hamstrung or add considerable cost and extraction from the River or groundwater have negative impacts on the natural environment and catchment health.

With the majority of residents and commercial business reliant on rainwater tanks for drinking purposes, the general public perception is that rainwater is safe to drink. The microbial quality of water collected in tanks is not as good as that in urban supplies.⁹ In Newbridge, private rainwater tanks are mainly used for personal use, but there are also a number of food businesses and community facilities that use rainwater tanks that could pose a risk to customers, the community and tourists.

With failing septic tanks and the risk of flood, there is an elevated risk of contamination of private drinking water supplies from the River, while "rainwater tanks may be contaminated with harmful microorganisms from animal droppings on roofs, or from leaking septic tanks and wastewater drainage if you have an underground tank".¹⁰

2.3.3 Preventing growth of town

There are 139 subdivided quarter-acre blocks in Newbridge. Many have not yet been developed because they are not of sufficient size to cater for sewage disposal onsite. The Environment Protection Authority recommends that lot sizes less than 10,000m² are not suitable for the containment of wastewater onsite based on the soil type at Newbridge.¹¹

The principles of efficient resource use should also be applied when considering the options for all onsite wastewater management. This is especially the case for homes on small lots of land (<4000 m²) in unsewered areas which, to contain (recycle) all wastewater onsite, must minimise the amount of wastewater generated. The feasibility of providing a reticulated sewerage system should be seriously considered for the development of individual lots and for subdivision proposals that would result in allotments smaller than 10,000 m² (1 hectare). This area should not be seen as a minimum lot size but as a risk threshold, as lots smaller than 10,000 m² may be unable to retain all wastewater onsite. (See Section 3.6.1 for key risk factors such as proximity to waterways.)

⁹ Health.gov.au, Your private drinking water supply, 2006.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Environment Protection Authority, *Code of Practice – Onsite Wastewater Management*, 2016.

As a result, there is limited development of many of the existing lots at Newbridge, as the Planning Department at the Council raises the constraints associated with the use of septic tanks on small blocks. Alternative options for owners raised by the Council include purchasing the neighbouring block to achieve the area required or use of different treatment options. This situation has resulted in a significant number of the available lots remaining undeveloped.

Within the small lots, the only developments allowed are smaller dwellings which are limiting the ability of families to reside in town. Employees of the general store can't live in town due to restrictions of building sizes and the prohibitive costs to treat sewage on small lots.

Where dwellings have been built in recent years, it is estimated that their septic treatment systems cost in excess of \$20,000. Compare this to typical sewerage system connection fees of less than \$1,500, the lack of sewerage infrastructure in Newbridge is significantly impacting its potential to grow and support the region's needs.

All three commercial businesses are impacted by the lack of water and sewerage infrastructure to expand their services. The general store's current septic tank system cannot meet the additional demands placed upon it by growth in its business. This means the store can't cater to large groups and its two bed and breakfasts can't be let.

The Newbridge Brewing Company attached to the business is planning a micro-brewery. However, without potable water and suitable wastewater disposal, brewing occurs elsewhere, and the business can't expand. The general store employs three full time and three casual staff. Extra opportunities exist to expand and employ more staff if able to grow and with labour living closer to Newbridge.

The Recreation Reserve was rebuilt after the 2011 floods. It relies on one 250,000 L tank to supply all of its water needs. With a commercial kitchen and ability to cater for hundreds of people, the committee needs to ration water and therefore can't hold too many functions over summer just in case they run out of water. At the Food and Wine Festival held in May 2019, 500 ticketed people participated in the event during the day and 130 at the dinner. The committee bought 720 bottles of water to cater for that weekend at an estimated cost of \$180.

The hotel faces similar challenges with water and sewage management.

Similarly, building a new home in Newbridge requires at least four 22,000 litre rainwater tanks to meet a family's needs. For firefighting purposes, a minimum supply of 10,000 litres per lot is required.¹²

The cost of the supply and installation of a self-sufficient water supply exceeds \$10,000, where a connection to a reticulated supply would be less than \$1,000.

While there is an abundance of subdivided, ready to build on blocks, restrictions in place prevent the ability to build. Subsequently, blocks are on the market for \$30,000. The provision of water and sewerage infrastructure would promote active development and increases the capital value of the lots.

2.3.4 Liveability of Newbridge

Without a reticulated water supply or sewerage infrastructure, the only green grass in summer is around septic tank disposal envelopes. The poorly managed septic tanks can cause amenity issues, particularly in warmer periods.

Some landholders also have licences with Goulburn Murray Water to use the Loddon River as a source of water supply to conserve valuable rainwater. The downside for these landholders is that it speeds up the rusting-out of appliances from high salt levels. Coloured river water stains clothes when they are washed in it.

In the summer, river water is in high demand from all users in the catchment, and low flows significantly impact the enjoyment of this valued community asset.

¹² CFA guidelines, Preferred requirements: Water Supplies and Access for Subdivisions in Rural Zones, Nov 2006.

2.3.5 Legal risk

The Council has duties under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to exercise enforcement powers where it knows there is a breach of the legislation and there is a likelihood of injury.

For the general store, hotel and recreational reserve committee serving food, the Council have the responsibility to make sure that the water used will not harm the health of the people served. Apart from any civil action arising from the provision of unsafe drinking water, there are substantial penalties under various pieces of legislation of up to \$100,000 for an individual and \$500,000 for a corporation.¹³

The *Food Act 1984* (Vic) requires that food businesses use drinking (potable) water for food preparation at registered food premises. This includes water used for washing food ingredients, cooking, adding to food and drinks, making ice, cleaning, sanitising and handwashing.

The *Health (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2001* require proprietors of prescribed accommodation to ensure that water intended for drinking is fit for human consumption. This is limiting the potential for hotel accommodation, B&Bs, Airbnbs, camping and overnight stays.

Without treatment, most rainwater harvesting uses the roof as its catchment, which can be contaminated by a number of sources.¹⁴ These include roof materials, animals and birds, leaves, debris, emissions from wood heaters and pesticides and fertilisers from aerial spraying.

Most residents and businesses are unlikely to treat their own rainwater tanks and either ignore regulatory requirements, source costly water from carting contractors or use bottled water.

2.4 Timing considerations

Newbridge has been registered with the state government as a priority town for sewerage since 2006. Numerous studies and consultation with the community have been undertaken and concept designs with costings completed.

Sewerage previously had not been provided due to the construction cost falling on either the Newbridge landholders and/or shared across Coliban Water's existing customers.

With the completion of the South West Loddon Pipeline project water is now also more feasible.

Renewed community interest in water and sewerage services was supported by the IWM Forum held in 2018. Newbridge is the last of the sewerage schemes on Coliban Water's back-log scheme that was established as part of the CTWSSP.

With greater social, environmental and economic benefits, there are now no constraints, apart from financial capacity, to commence water reticulation and sewerage Newbridge.

While water and sewer could be delivered separately, delivering them together will be less of an impact on the community, both at a township scale and within each property. Some savings are also expected to occur if the two schemes are delivered at the same time.

¹³ DHHS, Guidelines for private drinking water supplies at commercial and community facilities, 2009.

¹⁴ Ibid.

3 Recommended solution

3.1 Details of recommended solution

The area of Newbridge on the western side of the River consists of 80 lots of approximately 1,000m², five lots of about 2,000m² and five lots of approximately 4,000m². There are 36 houses within the township zone, a shop, hotel, CFA shed and Hall. There are approximately another 40 houses plus the recreation reserve located to the east of the Loddon River.

3.2 Preferred solution - sewerage

The Coliban Water preferred solution is to use a conventional gravity system with a lagoon plant located nearby to Newbridge. The approach proposed is consistent with systems installed in other small towns across the Coliban Water region. Sewer mains are laid along each major street and connected to every allotment that is to be serviced. The wastewater then runs to a central pump station which then pumps the waste to a new Water Reclamation Plant (WRP). Sewers will be from 1m to 5 m deep. The pump station will require extensive works and land purchased for the WRP.

The WRP would be located outside the flood plain and at a suitable distance away from residents. The WRP and lagoon will need to be approved by the EPA and located on approximately 64 ha of land.

The volume of reclaimed water is expected to be minimal for a small town and likely to evaporate most times of the year. When excess reclaimed water is available, it will be used to irrigate land adjacent to the WRP.

Each owner will run a new household sewer drain to their connection point and be expected to decommission their existing septic tanks.

A schematic of the proposed sewer layout for western Newbridge is located in Appendix B.

3.2.1 Costs

In 2013, Coliban Water developed an initial business case considering a reticulated sewerage supply for Newbridge. In 2018 these findings were reviewed and identified that the initial analysis was "sound", but recommended a further detailed review of the cost estimates if a sewerage supply was to be pursued. On this basis, the original sewerage assessment has been utilised within this business case, with updated values shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Cost to sewer Newbridge

Capital Cost	(\$ in 1000s)
Water Reclamation Plant	681.9
Gravity Sewer & House Branches	646.1
Pressure Pipes	350
Pump Stations & Manholes	308
Pumps	50
Customer Connections	136
Subtotal	2,172.0
TOTAL (incl engineering, design, and contingencies)	3,130
Operational costs	(\$ in 1000s)
Treatment costs	13.6
Maintenance Civil	4.0
Maintenance M&E	0.4
Subtotal	18.0
TOTAL (incl contingencies)	23.0

3.2.2 Scale of scheme

All houses to the West of the River within the township zone are planned to be connected to the sewer. It is not planned to serve all of the vacant lots with sewerage as part of this project as the driver for the project is to resolve the current problem. Vacant lots will only be served if the owner elects to connect. Extension and growth will be accommodated in the design, but unless the owner expressly requests to connect at the time of construction, the service will not be extended as part of the initial works.

The proposed water and sewerage scheme will service 40 properties, including the CFA shed, the shop, hotel and hall. While it is not proposed to service properties to the East of the Loddon River with a reticulated sewerage supply, consideration has been made to extend the proposed water supply to the recreation reserve and a further 40 properties on larger blocks to the east of the Loddon River.

Each service can be extended in the future to properties not currently proposed to be served subject to appropriate review and at the expense of the property owners.

Whilst not originally proposed, there is merit in extending sewerage services to the recreation reserve. The reserve is a significant community and regional asset that would remain on a septic tank in the flood zone. Whilst further consultation and design would be required, it is estimated that to extend the sewer main on the underside of the existing bridge to service the recreational reserve would cost in the order of \$50,000. VicRoads would need to grant use of their bridge and a small annual fee paid to them.

Given the close proximity of the recreational reserve to the River and the hundreds of patrons that use the facility for sporting events and functions during the year, it is worth considering supplying a private sewer line as part of this project.

3.3 Water – pipeline from Tarnagulla system

3.3.1 Preferred option

The preferred option is to supply the water from Tarnagulla, part of the Laanecoorie system. Relative to other options, the upfront capital costs are lower due to the shorter transfer pipeline required and the ability to supply from Tarnagulla via gravity.

The option is also supported because the Laanecoorie WTP has spare capacity and has recently been upgraded to improve treated water quality and reliability. The demands from Newbridge can be accommodated by the existing treatment plant. Future operating costs of the Laanecoorie WTP are expected to decrease as water is sourced in future from the South West Loddon Pipeline, which will mitigate any current aesthetic quality limitations with treated water from the Laanecoorie WTP.

This scope of works includes:

- New transfer pipeline from Laanecoorie WTP to a new tank in Newbridge, with the interface being at Tarnagulla. 6.2 km of DN100 pipework gravitates to the water supply tank, with 2 km transferring water from the water supply tank to reticulation system.
- 100 kL tank at Newbridge (180 kL tank to service both sides of Loddon River). Located adjacent to the Wimmera Hwy to the west of Newbridge at an elevation to allow gravity supply to the town. Sized to provide 16 hours capacity on a peak day.
- Allowance for a booster chlorinator at the Newbridge tank to maintain chlorine residual at the customer tap.
- Reticulation of town based on the East Loddon Water Supply Stage 1 Feasibility Study (W3Plus) on the Western side of Loddon is proposed to service 50 lots. An allowance has been included for the addition of a reticulation system and bridge crossing to service the properties within the township zone on the Eastern side of Loddon River to service an additional 40 lots.

A layout of the proposed option is shown below:

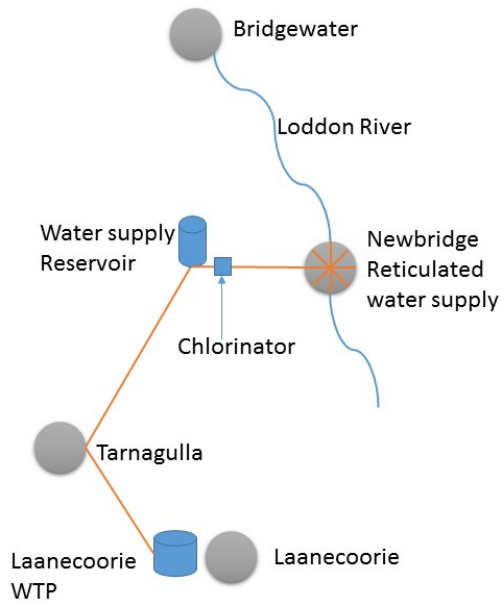


Figure 2 Laanecoorie WTP to Newbridge water supply option

Table 3.2 Costs of treated water from Tarnagulla

	Supply to west of Loddon River	Supply to west and east of Loddon River
CAPEX		
Water treatment plant	NA	NA
Transfer pipeline from Tarnagulla	\$840 k	\$990 k (incl river crossing)
Pump-station	NA	NA
Reticulation	\$180 k	\$370 k
New tank	\$70 k	\$100 k
Booster chlorinator, instrumentation, telemetry and power supply at tank site	\$150 k	\$150 k
Subtotal	\$1,240 k	\$1,610 k
TOTAL (incl engineering, design, and contingencies)	\$1.9 M	\$2.4 M
OPEX		
Treatment costs (marginal cost of treatment at Laanecoorie WTP)	\$10 k	\$20 k
Pumping Power	NA	NA
O&M	\$30 k	\$30 k
Subtotal	\$40 k	\$50 k
Total (incl contingencies)	\$52 k	\$65 k

3.3.2 Scope and scale

The values in Table 3.2 show the costs of supplying the new water supply either solely to the 40 existing properties in the western half of the township or to properties on both the east and west of the River. This second option increases the capital costs from \$1.9 million to \$2.4 million with a pro-rata consequential increase in operating costs.

In the following assessment, the assumption is that the service would merely be supplied to the western half of the town in the first instance, in a similar approach to the sewerage service.

3.4 Evidence of the proposed solution's effectiveness

Coliban Water has responsibility for water and sewerage services across the north-central Victorian region. The solutions proposed are proven across the region and will address the needs of the community, the catchment and the state. The lagoon based WRP solution exists at ten other locations in the region and can be incorporated easily into current operations.

The preferred solutions were risk assessed against other viable options and analysed utilising Coliban Water's Multi-Criteria Analysis Tool. The analysis builds on the identification of the options, the assessment of their advantages and risks, the estimation of the costs and the acceptability to the community. Criteria used for the assessment included economic, environmental, social and technical elements of each option.

Coliban Water's preferred option for both water and sewerage scored the highest sustainability score. The water solution has the lowest overall NPV for Coliban Water.

A cheaper sewerage solution is available where smaller diameter and shallow pipework can be used. Under a pressurised system, this creates less disruption during construction and obstacles can be avoided. However, a pump station would be required on each property and the owner would bear the cost for power. This option was ruled out as least favourable amongst the community and factoring in costs being transferred to the landowner, the overall price is comparable to the preferred option.

The community also registered that their preferred sewerage solution was to transport sewage to the Bridgewater WTP. This option is viable but would require odour control for the long distribution distance and would be more expensive. Further discussion with the community regarding their concerns with a WRP in Newbridge will be required.

A full listing of the other options considered and Coliban Water's assessment is provided in Appendix C.

3.5 Scalability of the recommended solution

Without water and sewer infrastructure, Newbridge is being held back from growth. The projects can't be staged, they either occur, or they don't.

Sewer could be prioritised, if necessary, as the impact of septic tanks is contributing negatively to the Loddon River and the environmental/social values it brings to the region and State. However, water corporations prefer not to construct public sewerage systems without a public water supply as the reduced flows available from rainwater tanks lead to blockages in gravity fed sewerage systems.

If a reticulated water supply became available without sewerage, the impact on the catchment would likely increase. Water uses typically increase when moving from a household needing to be self-sufficient to a reticulated, on-demand supply.

Both water and sewerage services will be delivered to existing houses. Sewer and water would not be extended beyond the last household unless the vacant landholder 'signed up' as part of this scheme. The costing and assessment below assumes that the scheme caters solely for the western half of the township at this stage.

Extensions beyond those planned in this project can occur on an as required basis. Capacity in both the sewer and water can be made to cater for future staging outside the township zone and on the east of the River, if or when that might occur.

Providing scope for future development while focusing on existing households and businesses keeps the capital costs down.

3.6 Evaluation strategy

The success of this project will be the construction of water and sewerage infrastructure at Newbridge with all existing households in the western portion of the township connecting within 12 months of completion.

Over a period of three years, it is expected that ten vacant blocks would have permits for new buildings or extensions and the commercial businesses catering for more visitors and events.

4. Benefits

The proposed investment in a public sewerage scheme will generate a suite of benefits as the reverse of the problems identified in Section 2 above:

- Environmental outcomes
- Public health outcomes
- Socio-economic benefits

4.1 Environmental benefits

The Loddon River is a key environmental asset for the North Central region of Victoria. The River rises on the Great Dividing Range near Trentham and flows for some 430 km to the Murray River. The catchment is home to two-thirds of the region's population with an area of 15,000km² or about 7% of the area of Victoria. It therefore represents a major asset for the region and for Victoria.

The North Central CMA's *Waterway Strategy* confirms that reaches 6 and 7 of the Loddon River are priority Waterways for the region and that the catchment contains many of the region's most valuable wetlands, including the Gunbower Forest and Kerang Wetlands Ramsar sites. The strategy reports that there are a number of threats to these wetland systems, including altered hydrology, soil disturbance, habitat fragmentation, excess salinity, nutrients, invasive plants and animals.

Minimising the risk of discharges from the septic tanks in Newbridge will reduce the level of nutrients and salinity discharged to the mid and Lower Loddon river and contribute to priority targets in the Waterway Strategy both for the Loddon River itself and its regional wetlands. The approach is also aligned with the priorities of the *Loddon River system Environmental Water Management Plan* and the *Loddon Stressed River Project* under the previous regional River Health Strategy.

This means that the investment will generate benefits for a much wider regional population beyond the inhabitants of the township of Newbridge itself. The North Central region has a total population of around 250,000, two thirds of whom, or around 165,000, live within the Loddon catchment.

4.2 Public health

The current arrangements for the supply of water and sewerage services within Newbridge create heightened risks for public health both for the residents of the township themselves and for any visiting tourists:

- **Rainwater tanks:** drinking water supplied from rainwater tanks pose a greater risk than from the public potable supply due to the potential for contamination of that supply from detritus on the roof or within the tank itself. This contamination can be chemical or bacteriological. This risk is higher for non-residents who have not built up resistance to potential bacterial infection.
- **Septic tanks:** the current septic tanks are old and ineffective due to poor design, maintenance and the small area of land available to absorb the residual liquid effluent. This means that the risk of bacteriological contamination is raised as members of the public are exposed to contaminated flows.

The provision of a public sewerage system and piped potable supply would reduce these risks effectively to zero.

4.3 Economic benefits

The current water and sewerage service provision acts as a deterrent to social and economic growth:

- Development of new properties within the township is constrained as the lot sizes are generally too small to allow full retention of the treated wastewater effluent on site. This inhibits the growth of the township and constrains the economic value of the existing properties for what could become a commuting suburb of the regional hub of Bendigo - 30 minutes away.

- Where development is allowed then the scale of the housing is severely constrained with a strict limit on the number of bedrooms, which limits accommodation options for families.
- Where dwellings have been built in recent years on larger plots their septic treatment systems cost in excess of \$20,000. That adds an impost to the costs of development.
- The existing commercial ventures in the town, such as the general store, hotel, micro-brewery and recreation reserve, are all constrained from further development due to the constraints imposed by the absence of a public water and sewerage system.
- Tourist opportunities cannot be exploited. For example, the Newbridge Food and Wine Festival saw 450-500 attendees, with another 120 people at the dinner inside the pavilion. It is difficult to repeat or expand this due to the limits on toilet facilities, water supply by rainwater tanks in the town and the restricted level of accommodation available for visitors.

The provision of a public sewerage and water supply service would remove these constraints and promote economic development in the township:

- More vacant lots would be developed, increasing the size of the town and bringing in new people and activity. The public supply would also allow the development of a wider range of property sizes catering for families as well as smaller social units.
- The provision of public water and sewerage services would reduce the upfront capital costs of development for each lot as there would be no need to construct a site-specific septic tank system in each case.
- Existing properties would increase in value as serviced properties are a more attractive proposition and command a higher market valuation. A study as part of the business case for the South West Loddon rural pipeline estimated a 30% increase in value due to the provision of a piped water supply for rural properties. Discussions with local Estate Agents confirms this uplift as a reasonable basis for extrapolation to Newbridge.
- Existing businesses would be encouraged to expand their business activities. This is supported by the existing interests from:
 - the general store wanting to establish bed and breakfast units
 - the micro-brewery wanting to expand its business
 - the hotel wanting to expand its offerings
 - the recreational reserve which has demonstrated the potential for further expansion with the success of the Newbridge Food and Wine Festival

4.4 Social benefits

The economic development of the town would generate wider social benefits as it would bring vitality and growth to the local community, where, at present, the presence of multiple vacant lots and constraints on development limit social welfare.

There are also some additional outcomes which would promote social benefits for the community:

- The availability of a public water supply would encourage some judicious additional watering of gardens, promoting both private and public enjoyment and benefit and making the township a more attractive destination for tourism.
- The public service would allow the development of a wider range of housing needs increasing the diversity of the housing stock, including families and smaller units. That increased diversity would promote a richer community.
- The ability for local commercial outlets to expand would provide a broader range of services within the community, enhancing the quality and resilience of local services.
- The public water supply would also provide a more reliable local firefighting capability.

4.5 Liability

The current poor level of service delivery means that individuals, businesses and agencies are placed at greater risk of legal challenge and liability in the event of illness or injury. Those risks are minimised when a high-quality public service is provided.

4.6 Benefits valuation

The following section seeks to establish an estimate of the relative value of the suite of benefits to be generated by the investment in water and sewerage services. A number of different tools and approaches are employed.

4.6.1 Loddon River benefits

The public sewerage scheme will eliminate risks of contamination of the Loddon River with leakage from septic tanks in the town that currently leads to excess levels of nutrients and salt. This will improve the health of priority reaches of the River and reduce risks to high-value wetlands in the Lower Loddon.

There are two broad approaches that can be adopted to help establish the value that the general public places on the health of rivers:

- **Use value:** this relates to the value that members of the public place on being able to swim, boat and fish in the River.
- **Non-use value:** members of the public also place value on knowing that the River is in good health even though they may never go near it, particularly as far as it applies to special ecosystem assets such as wetlands. This attribute is known as existence value.

A comprehensive survey could be carried out of the general public along the Loddon River and more widely to establish these values. However, this would be costly and time-consuming to complete. Therefore, a simpler approach has been widely adopted known as 'benefits transfer' where the results of a detailed survey in one place are applied to a separate location, where the characteristics of the two locations are sufficiently similar.

In 2003, the *National Land and Water Resources Audit* completed a major survey of households across Australia to establish their interest in and willingness-to-pay for improved water resources. This identified that they would be willing to pay \$1.60/yr for 10km of waterway that is restored for fishing and swimming, covering both use and non-use values. This is equivalent to an annual value of \$2.30/10km in 2018 values. This figure provides a useful reference for a benefits transfer approach when establishing a value for the improved river health benefits for the Loddon River.

In order to calculate the benefits for this project, a three-step exercise is required:

- It is reasonable to assume that reduced contamination creates benefits for a distance of 20km. That triggers an annual value of \$4.60 per interested person (i.e. 2 x \$2.30).
- The total population of north-central Victoria is 250,000, of whom 2/3, or 165,000, live within the Loddon catchment. Let us assume that one-third of those, or 54,450 people, have an interest in the health of the River.
- The annual value of the improved river health can then be calculated as $4.60 \times 54,450 = \$250,000$. The present value of this benefit over 20 years with a 5% discount rate is \$3 million.

This is a conservative estimate as Coliban Water will also receive benefits from the investment as the reduced contamination reduces risks for its water treatment plants downstream of Newbridge.

4.6.2 Public health benefits

A major study would be required to establish a quantified value for the benefits that the proposed scheme will have for wider public health outcomes, with comparative data from other locations matched to the socio-economic demographic characteristics of the sample. This section therefore explores a number of possible hypothetical approaches:

- Let us assume that there are an additional 6 cases of ill-health in the community each year related to the adverse effects of the inadequate wastewater treatment facilities and use of rainwater tanks.
- Each additional incident could reasonably be attributed a value of \$5,000 to cover the costs of medical treatment, lost wages due to time-off, discomfort etc, i.e. an annual value of \$30,000.
- The public health risks also constrain the commercial opportunities for the hotel, general store and brewery. These are estimated at a value of \$50,000/year.

- This therefore involves an annual loss of \$80,000 or a value of \$1 million over twenty years, with a 5% discount rate.

4.6.3 Socio-economic and housing

A major benefit is provided to householders in Newbridge from being connected to the public water and sewerage services. There are a number of elements to this benefit:

- **Convenience:** knowing that drinking water will always be available and that there is no need to manage the old septic tank system.
- **Aesthetics:** the quality of life will be higher from the improved quality of the potable supply and the reduction in odour and nuisance from the wastewater treatment system.

The challenge is to place a quantified monetary value on this benefit. Two broad approaches could be adopted to arrive at this value:

- **Stated preference:** The householders could be asked how much they would pay to convert from the current arrangements to the new services. This would establish a willingness-to-pay estimate for the sample population. This approach is costly and complex to undertake and tends to be subject to participant bias because householders perceive that there are incentives to minimise the levels of their stated willingness-to-pay.
- **Revealed preference:** An alternative approach involves identifying a market value that 'reveals' the underlying value of the services involved. The most appropriate technique involves what is known as 'hedonic pricing'. In this case, we would compare similar properties with or without the relevant services and see what added premium people have been willing to pay for the benefit of having water and sewerage services provided.

Applying this approach to Newbridge, two residential properties in the township are currently on the market:

- 28 Giffard Street: 3 beds, 1 bath, 1,000m² lot: asking price \$280,000
- 35 Nelson Street: 2 beds, 1 bath, 1,000m² lot: asking price \$175,000

In addition, there are a number of undeveloped lots for sale with an asking price of around \$30,000 for a 1,000m² lot. However, the adverts for these lots clearly state that:

A minimum of 4,000m² is required before an application for a three bedroom home would be considered. Full enquiry should be made to the Loddon Shire in regard to these restrictions and future use.

Relevant information on the premium payable for the provision of water and sewerage services is available from a number of sources:

- We can compare data on the prices of houses in Newbridge without services with similar properties in neighbouring towns such as Bridgewater that have these services.
- We can look at the uplift that has occurred in other locations when services are provided.
- We can seek informed judgment from relevant informants - in this case, Estate Agents in the region.

This assessment suggests that properties that are provided with the relevant services see a 25% - 35% uplift in value.

So in this case, we can estimate the following overall quantified benefits for existing properties:

- Average property prices in Newbridge are around \$200,000
- Adopt a conservative 25% uplift in market value = \$50,000
- 40 properties in the western half of the township
- Aggregate value of the uplift = 40 x \$50k = \$2 million

The value of the uplift will vary between properties and will be higher for commercial properties, where there will be wider benefits from being able to expand commercial activities. However, the broad estimate is robust.

In terms of the vacant plots, the current asking price seems optimistic as the sale information clearly indicates that, currently, there would be no right to construct a property on the site. Sale data for

equivalent vacant plots within serviced areas suggests a market price of \$40,000 for a 1,000m² plot (again a 35% uplift). So for this market segment, there would be a range of benefits:

- Market uplift of 35%, for the undeveloped site from \$30,000 to \$40,000
- Approval to construct a property on a 1,000m² lot once there is access to the public sewer. This will generate far greater market interest in the developed site
- A reduction in construction costs as no need to construct a septic tank or install additional rainwater tanks
- Therefore a total uplift per property of \$65,000 to represent: the uplift in the undeveloped site value, plus the avoided cost, plus the increased market value of the developed site. However, a conservative estimate of \$50k is adopted for this assessment.
- There are 80 lots of 1,000m² within the western part of the township, with 36 houses developed. That leaves a further 44 plots that will benefit from the public services.
- 44 plots @ \$50,000 = \$2.2 million

The total benefit for householders is, therefore estimated at \$4.2 million.

4.6.4 Benefit cost assessment

Following the above assessment identifies a total benefits valuation for the project of \$8.2 million.

Table 4.1 Benefits valuation

Benefit	Value (\$M)
Property Prices	4.2
River health	3.0
Public health	1.0
Total	8.2

The following section confirms the total cost for the project at \$6.82 million. This then generates a benefit to cost ratio of 1.2 and an NPV of \$1.38 million. This provides a robust basis for justifying investment in this initiative.

5 Costs and cost recovery

5.1 Proposed costs of supply

The total cost of the gravity supply option for sewerage services is set out in Table 5-1 below with a total NPV of \$3.53 million over 20 years at a 6% discount rate, with the largest component representing the upfront capital costs of construction.

Table 5.1 Sewerage costs

Item	Cost (\$M)
Sewerage System Capex	3.13
Landowners capex	0.14
Sewerage System annual Opex	0.023
Owner Opex	Nil
Sewerage System & Owner NPV	3.53

The preferred option for the water supply involves connecting Newbridge to the Laanecoorie WTP from Tarnagulla Reservoir and then supplying the water to Newbridge by gravity. This involves total costs of \$3.3 million as an NPV over 20 years at a 6% discount rate.

Table 5.2 Water supply costs

Item	Cost \$M
Water supply capex	2.4
Landholder capex	0.08
Annual opex	0.065
Water supply NPV	3.29

This gives an overall combined project cost for the two services of \$6.82 million covering upfront capital construction costs, annual operating costs and private property connection costs. This involves a unit cost of around \$170,000 for each of the 40 properties to be serviced.

5.2 Proposed funding sources and alternatives

The Government, Loddon Shire Council, and Coliban Water have all contributed funds previously to determine the cost and feasibility of sewerage Newbridge.

- The State government provided funding through the IWM Forum to refresh existing reports and to combine an investigation to supply Newbridge with both water and sewerage services.
- Coliban Water estimates that it has spent \$125,000 towards investigations, options analysis and costing options.
- Loddon Shire has been successful in receiving funding in the past to undertake its own needs analysis and these reports have been used in this business case.

There are four possible sources of future funding for the construction costs of the scheme:

- Customers
- Property owners
- Coliban Water
- The State Government

Appendix D indicates potential cost-sharing arrangements that were subsequently tested with landowners.

5.3 Customer contributions

Under the CTWSSP the contribution of new customers to local programs was capped at \$800/lot. This scheme expired in 2013 and is no longer applicable. However, Newbridge was clearly listed as a candidate for this scheme and the community may have expectations about its eligibility.

Water corporations include a New Customer Contribution (NCC) in their approved pricing lists. In the case of Coliban Water the relevant fees are \$1,318.47/lot for each of water and sewerage services. NCCs are intended to cover the costs that the water corporation will incur to augment its existing supply assets prompted by the connection of a new property. This applies, in particular, to properties seeking supply at the margin of existing supply systems, or for in-fill within existing service areas.

The costs of any extension of the system to provide for additional supply to a new area are additional to the NCCs and need to be borne by the new customers serviced. This implements the powers in Sections 268-270 of the Water Act 1989. There are two scenarios:

- If the development is an entirely independent supply then the charges would be calculated to recover the full costs of the new scheme, but there would be no liability for NCCs
- If the development relies on accessing an existing supply system, then the new customers would be liable for both:
 - a NCC for the augmentation costs up/downstream of the assets as well as
 - the costs of the extension from the existing assets.

So in the case of Newbridge,

- the sewerage scheme would be a free-standing, independent service, so customers would be liable for the full capital costs of the scheme but would not be liable for a NCC:
 - \$3.13 million divided between the 40 serviced properties = \$78,000 per property
- the water supply scheme would be an extension of the existing Laanecoorie WTP. Customers would therefore face two charges:
 - A NCC of \$1,318.47
 - Cost recovery for the capital costs of the new scheme = \$2.4 million / 40 = \$60,000
 - = Total costs of \$61,300 per property.

On this basis, if the full costs recovery model and NCCs are applied, then each of the 40 properties would be liable for a combined up-front charge from Coliban Water of \$138k to convert to public provision of water and sewerage services. Properties would also face conversion costs from decommissioning existing private infrastructure and for constructing connections from the public service to the property. They would also be liable for annual water charges to cover the on-going operating costs.

5.3.1 Ability to pay

When considering the appropriate contribution from customers, it is necessary to assess their ability to pay. The Loddon Shire is in the bottom five local government areas in the state for relative social disadvantage. Four of the towns in the Loddon Shire in the neighbourhood of Newbridge are found in the ten most disadvantaged small towns in the wider Loddon Mallee region under the SEIFA index from the latest ABS census returns which measure relative socio-economic disadvantage.

The median age for the Shire is 50 years and the greatest demographic growth is in the older age groups (significantly higher than the regional and state median ages). The median weekly income is \$686 which is two-thirds of the regional median and almost half of state median weekly incomes. The municipality has a significant amount of very low-cost housing both for purchase and rent compared to the regional and state average prices. The capacity of the existing owner/occupiers is therefore limited. Investors and potential landholders are expected to take advantage of the low cost of land and their capacity to pay could be higher.

5.3.2 Willingness to pay

Surveys were sent to all landowners asking whether they would support and pay for a water and sewerage connection. The survey requested landholders to indicate if they were prepared to pay a capital contribution of \$750 for water and sewerage, each year for 20 years.

The survey responses were mixed, with those not supporting the schemes were generally done so based on the costs involved.

Further consideration for cost-sharing arrangements should be considered if external funding is considered. As an example, refer to section 5.4 below.

5.4 Property owners: value capture

Discussions with local estate agents suggest that the provision of the proposed combined services would lead to an uplift in the market value of the residential properties serviced. So, for example, a new two bedroomed house with garage and 1,000m² is currently on the market in Newbridge for \$175,000. The township is within easy reach of the growing conurbation of Bendigo and seen as a highly attractive location due to its proximity to the River, but the current lack of services is seen to deter purchasers. With services provided, informed advice was that the market value of the listed property would increase by 35%, i.e. by \$60,000. This uplift reflects the added value of having services provided and the increased size of the pool of interested buyers once these services are provided.

Although it may be unrealistic to demand a large capital contribution from property owners upfront, it may be reasonable to recover some of the uplift in capital value as and when a property is sold. This approach involves the implementation of the policy known as "Value Capture".

Value capture seeks to recover from beneficiaries some of the added value that individuals receive from investments in public assets.¹⁵ The approach has been applied in the growth areas around Melbourne where a fee applies to land brought into the Urban Growth Boundary called the *Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution*. The charge of between \$97-115k/ha contributes to the cost of essential infrastructure in the growth area and reflects the individual benefit that a landholders accrues from an uplift in property values.

One option to explore for this project would be whether it would be possible to place a lien on the property title of all serviced properties in Newbridge to require repayment of a specified capital contribution when the property was sold for the first time.

5.5 Coliban Water

A further possible contributor to the scheme would be Coliban Water who would be responsible for constructing, owning and operating the new supply assets.

5.5.1 Drivers and obligations

Coliban Water has to meet broad outcomes that are consistent with its Statement of Obligations:

In performing its functions and providing its services the Corporation must assist in the task of transitioning Victoria to an environmentally sustainable economy. The Corporation must:

- *Manage water resources in a sustainable manner that enhances environmental outcomes and amenity in urban and rural landscapes;*
- *Effectively integrate economic, environmental and social objectives into its business operations;*
- *Support sustainable and liveable communities;*
- *Manage risk to protect public safety, quality and security of supply;*

Coliban Water's Strategy 2030 is guided by four strategic directions that address their future challenges and opportunities. Two of these directions are; health people and environments, and prosperous economies.¹⁶

Actions within Strategy 2030 include; 'partner with local councils and catchment management authorities on improving environmental outcomes' and 'conduct a multi-agency investigation of infrastructure needed to support a much larger population'.

¹⁵ Infrastructure Victoria, *Value Capture – Options, Challenges and Opportunities for Victoria*, 2016..

¹⁶ Coliban Water, *Coliban Water Strategy 2030*, Sep 2019.

These obligations would support co-investment in the provision of additional services in Newbridge.

Coliban Water has particular interests in reducing risks from the effluent flows from septic tanks to the Loddon River, as the River is a source of supply for multiple locations downstream, including Bridgewater, Inglewood, Serpentine and Boort. Controlling contamination of that supply is recognised as an important way to achieve compliance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and the Victorian *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003*, which require the adoption of multiple barriers to reduce risks and ensure a safe water supply.

5.5.2 Customer charges

Coliban Water's costs have to be recovered through its customer charges. Therefore, any costs incurred to provide the proposed services at Newbridge that are not fully recovered by Newbridge customers would mean higher bills for other customers.

In its recent Pricing Submission¹⁷ Coliban Water set out its priorities for investment, in-line with the objectives of the state government and the Essential Services Commission:

- To reduce its charges to customers: *To keep prices as low as possible, we will invest only where and when we need to over the next regulatory period ... Prices for all existing tariffs will be set to follow a price path averaging CPI minus 1%, with the business capping inflation at an assumed 2.3% for the first year. This presents a real decrease in prices amounting to 10% by 2027-28.*
- To control future capital expenditure: *We propose to invest \$142 million over the next regulatory period on capital works ... Our proposed average annual capital spend will be \$342 per customer. This compares to \$519 in the previous regulatory period and \$1,286 in the second regulatory period. This demonstrates our commitment to prudent and efficient capital investment for our customers and a focus on long term affordability.*

Faced with greater scrutiny by the regulator and pressure to contain price increases for existing customers, Coliban Water's pricing submission did not include Newbridge as there were other higher perceived priorities for capital investment.

Water charging policy has to strike a balance between two conflicting objectives:

- To send strong price signals to customers to drive efficient behaviour. This argues for zonal cost-reflective pricing at a local level.
- Postage stamp pricing. This recognises that many of the corporation's costs are fixed and shared between locations and that disaggregated zonal pricing is expensive and complex to calculate and/or explain to customers.

Coliban Water has progressively moved from a disaggregated to a postage-stamp basis for pricing. It used to have different prices for multiple different locations. These reflected the history of investment in the 25 different water supply systems across its region. However, over time the corporation has moved towards a single unified pricing standard that reflects the level of service delivered rather than the history of investment in the past.

On that basis, Coliban Water could be justified in including a contribution to the capital costs of the investment to deliver water and sewerage services to Newbridge as part of its future capital expenditure program. We understand that the Corporation may consider making such a commitment, although the decision needs to be endorsed by its Board.

Finally, all connected properties would, in the future, be liable for annual charges from Coliban Water. That would provide a source of additional revenue that could be used to off-set the costs incurred. However, Coliban Water indicates that any such revenue would only be sufficient to cover the on-going annual operating costs of the new plant and would not generate funds to cover any capital costs.

5.6 Local Government

Councils have been involved with public health protection, maintenance and promotion for many years. Council's primary role has been to establish basic infrastructure such as roads, drains and

¹⁷ Coliban Water, *Pricing Submission 2018, A Bold Plan to Deliver Long Term Bill Stability*, 2018.

waste management. Recently a growing focus has developed on managing Council assets to ensure long term viability and protection of public health and the environment.

The *Local Government Act 1989*, Section 3C, states that Council must: "*promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district.*"

In the case of Newbridge's services, it is the responsibility of the local Government to ensure that onsite wastewater systems are:

- installed in accordance with the planning controls, having due regard for the ability of the soil to absorb the waste and in compliance with any special requirements of the water authority or the catchment management authority,
- operated in accordance with the State Environment Protection Policies (SEPPs) and Septic Tank Code of Practice, and
- transferred to new owners with knowledge of the onsite domestic wastewater system.

A potential source of funds and cost recovery for the scheme would be through Section 163 of the *Local Government Act 1989* which gives councils the power to levy a 'special rate' where the exercise of the power will be of special benefit to the persons required to pay the special rate. This could potentially provide a useful route to recover additional contributions from relevant households provided with the new services.

However, this route is not applicable as the charge can only be levied in relation to the performance of a function or the exercise of a power of the Council. Councils have no relevant functions or powers regarding the provision of the proposed water or sewerage services.

However, if the provision of these services increases property values within Newbridge, than that should increase rate revenue from the town. That could provide a justification for a capital contribution towards the scheme.

5.7 State Government

Another possible contributor to the scheme would be the State Government. This contribution would be justified on the basis that the scheme generates wider benefits beyond those attributable to the immediate beneficiaries. There are three such potential benefits:

- **Environmental:** the current septic tanks are contributors to the elevated levels of salt and nutrients in the Loddon River. Provision of a public sewerage system would address these issues and generate wider ecosystem benefits in line with explicit policy commitments in the North Central CMA's relevant strategies. This would provide benefits for the ecosystems and also for the regional community who value the River for recreational uses.
- **Public health:** the current reliance on septic tanks and rainwater tanks increases risks to public health from possible exposure to contaminants in the water supply. This applies both to local residents and a wider community of tourists. Provision of a public water supply and sewerage scheme would minimise these risks.
- **Socio-economic:** the scheme would also generate regional socio-economic benefits by reducing the constraints on development within the township imposed because of the inadequacy of the sewerage services. This would generate wider regional benefits beyond those that accrue to local businesses and residents.

These benefits were the rationale for the earlier CTWSSP. Newbridge was included as a priority candidate for inclusion in the program so those benefits can reasonably be attributed in this case. Indeed, this contribution was acknowledged in earlier reviews where the State Government offered to contribute \$400k towards the costs of the scheme.

The latest commitment made by the Government in the *IWM – Coliban Strategic Directions*, is promising that support is being provided by the Government. It is also promising that in the 2019/20 budget, money is being set aside to fund priority projects like *Growing Newbridge Sustainably*.

5.8 Summary

On their own, the Newbridge customers cannot afford to pay for the full capital costs of constructing the new water and sewerage services. Coliban Water is a regulated statutory corporation with high expectations to manage its own financial sustainability and maintain affordable bills for its customers.

Whilst the community and Coliban Water could contribute to the overall cost, without State Government involvement, the project can't proceed.

6. Deliverability

6.1 Assessment and management of risks and sensitivities

The project would be delivered through Coliban Water's well-established, existing procurement, and project management protocols. No additional staff would need to be employed within the corporation and the project would merely form part of the standard capital works program.

Coliban Water is managing a combined capital works program of \$142 million over the next regulatory period, i.e. an average of \$28 million per year over five years. The proposed expenditure for Newbridge of \$6 million would therefore be within the existing scale of other works.

6.2 Risk

The project raises a number of potential risks which would be managed within Coliban Water's standard management controls:

- Insufficient properties agree to sign up to the new scheme. Coliban Water has the power to require all properties that are serviced by the new arrangements to connect to the system.
- Potential construction risks involving impacts on native vegetation and/or assets of significance to aboriginal communities. Surveys will be required to identify any significant native vegetation, habitat or culturally significant locations within the road reserve. The proposed pipeline alignment is preliminary only and may need to be changed to avoid such impacts.
- Provision of suitable land for the sewerage treatment plant, including concerns from neighbouring residents that they don't want it in their backyard

6.3 Readiness and implementation process

6.3.1 Stakeholder engagement

Newbridge sewerage has been of interest to locals for many years. Over the last ten years, regular requests have been made to council and local members of parliament to consider the possibility of sewerage Newbridge.

As part of the development of this version of the business case, Loddon Shire Council formed a project steering committee. The committee consisted of Loddon Shire, Coliban Water and three representatives of the Newbridge Recreational Reserve Committee. The reserve committee appointed the three community representatives to represent the broader interests of the Newbridge residents. Whilst the reserve committee does not necessarily reflect all of the communities interest, the reserve is a centre where many of the active members of the community congregate and participate in various recreational activities.

The three elected representatives reported back to the reserve committee throughout the development of the business case.

During the development of the business case, the project steering committee met on several occasions at key decision points and guided the direction of the final business case.

During the development of the business case, these stakeholders were engaged:

- Loddon Shire council staff
- Loddon Shire councillors
- Coliban Water
- North Central Catchment Management Authority
- The Newbridge Recreational Reserve Committee representatives
- Individual landowners.

6.3.2 Landholder surveys

Upon completion of a draft business case, the project steering committee developed a survey to engage with individual landowners. The survey intended to test if landowners were interested in connecting to both water and sewerage and willing to pay a financial contribution towards the overall cost.

A total of 149 letters and surveys were sent to landowners. Landowners had several weeks to respond to the written survey. They could ring to discuss any of their concerns and had the option to attend a drop-in session at Newbridge in person.

The response rate of 32 %, which is a reasonable rate of return for a survey. The response was a good indication that there was interest from some of the community. Whilst the survey letter indicated if landowners didn't respond to the survey, it would be assumed they are not interested, it is difficult to confirm whether this is the case for all of them. Further work may need to be required to engage with the remaining landowners properly.

The survey results that were received confirmed that the project should only focus on water and sewer on the west side of the Loddon River. There was strong interest from rural landholders in the west adjoining the township zone who wanted to sub-divide their land. However, there are significant sub-divided blocks already undeveloped in the township area, and if schemes are to go ahead, they should focus on the already subdivided blocks first.

The level of interest in sewerage and water was then categorised into those already with a house and those with vacant lots. House owners had mixed opinions, with some wanting to connect to a reticulated sewerage and water scheme. Others had invested significant money in their wastewater management systems, and affordability was also a concern for some residents. As mentioned in several survey responses, building permits are difficult to obtain. Where landowners managed to build, the size of the properties was reduced to 1-2 bedrooms to cater for wastewater management systems on the block.

There is estimated to be 35 vacant lots in the township zone. Of the vacant lots, nine landowners indicated that they intended to build soon. A similar number were hoping to sell. The inability of most blocks to meet building requirements for maintaining sewerage on-site prohibits many of these owners from building. Residents had indicated that extensive growth is occurring in neighbouring townships surrounding Bendigo. The absence of sewerage and water in Newbridge is preventing the type of development that is happening elsewhere.

The general store and hotel are very supportive of a proposal for sewerage and water. The opportunity for accommodation will also increase business activity if suitable sewerage is available.

Summary of landowner surveys

Survey results that were returned indicated some interest in sewerage and water and a willingness to contribute up to \$15,000 each towards the project. Financial constraints and owners who have recently invested in their systems were the majority of respondents that didn't support the project.

Over half of the survey respondents didn't return the survey. It is unsure whether these landowners are against the proposal or will wait for more certainty before committing.

In the event that there is an indication that the government are prepared to invest in the project, it is recommended that a more intensive discussion with landholders be undertaken. Further detailed discussion with residents will confirm an acceptable capital contribution towards the project, taking into account the capacity to pay

The Newbridge township is underdeveloped. The inability to cater for onsite wastewater management is preventing the development of up to 40 blocks (significantly more outside the township boundary). For those residents with older houses and septic tanks, there is an environmental and health concern, given the close proximity to the Loddon River.

There is general support from residents and landowners to provide sewerage and water infrastructure to Newbridge, although further consultation should be undertaken to confirm their capacity and willingness to pay a contribution if external funding is being considered.

6.3.3 Formal scheme

This involves the issue of formal notices under section 268 of the Water Act. Once notices are issued to landowners, they will have a month to object to the scheme in accordance with grounds set out in Section 271 of the Act. Coliban Water then has two months to consider the objections and respond to the objector either rejecting or upholding the objection. If the objection is rejected, the landowner has the opportunity to appeal the rejection at VCAT.

6.3.4 Procurement

Planning, environment and heritage permits associated with the works and the infrastructure for the storage tanks may take some time. The design for this project will be completed by consultants under Coliban Water management. The design and tender preparation will take about six to twelve months, depending on the contract model selected. The work itself should take no more than twelve months to complete. However, the timing of consultation and landowner feedback and formal notice phase cannot be guaranteed and will influence the final completion date.

7. Limitations

This report has been prepared by Grantus for Loddon Shire Council. The services undertaken by Grantus in connection with preparing this report were limited to those specifically detailed in the scoping briefs.

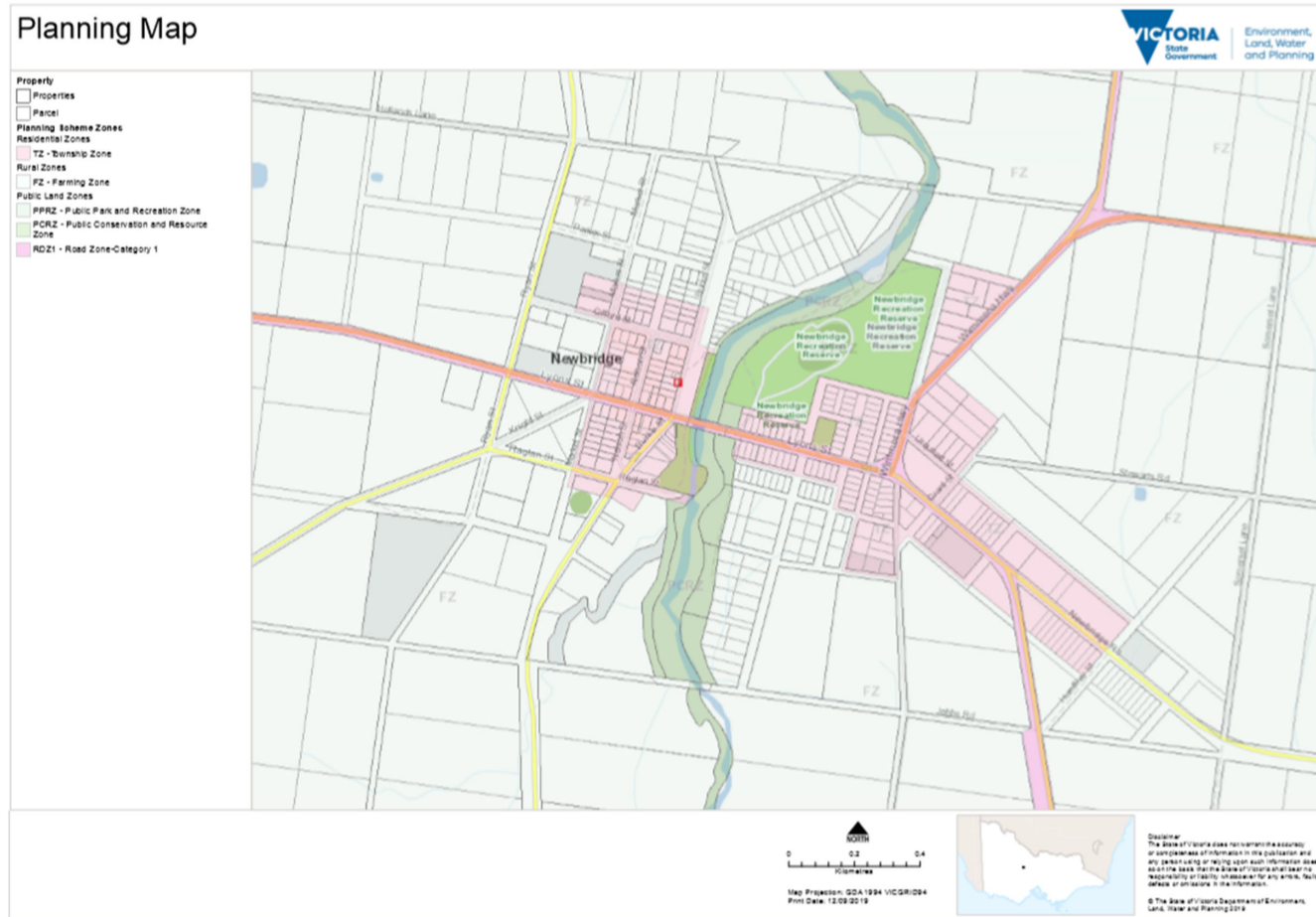
Grantus has prepared this report on the basis of information provided by the Loddon Shire Council and Coliban Water, which Grantus has not independently verified or checked beyond the agreed scope of work. Grantus does not accept liability in connection with such unverified information, including errors and omissions in the report which were caused by errors or omissions in that information.

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To the extent permitted by law, Grantus excludes any warranty, condition, undertaking or term, whether express or implied, statutory or otherwise, as to the condition, quality, performance, merchantability or fitness for purpose of this report.

The opinions, conclusions and any recommendations in this report are based on conditions encountered and information reviewed at the date of preparation of the report. Grantus assumes no responsibility or obligation to update this report to account for events or changes occurring subsequent to the date that the report was prepared.

Appendix A Town layout



Appendix B Schematic of proposed sewerage scheme



Appendix C Alternative options considered

This Annex reviews the alternative options that were considered in selecting the preferred option for service provision.

Sewer

A range of alternative options were considered for the future provision of wastewater management in Newbridge. These options were:

1. Do Nothing
2. Gravity feed to a new WTP
3. Pressure sewer system - transfer to existing treatment facility
4. As for Option 3 but after 10 years adopt Option 1
5. Treatment and reuse at the Recreation Reserve
6. Household treatment, pressure sewer system and irrigation of agricultural land
7. Other options

Option 1 – Do Nothing

The current onsite septic tank solution is the 'do nothing' option. Nearly all of the allotments under consideration are within the Loddon River flood plain and there is insufficient space on individual allotments to contain waste onsite. Continuing this option does not address the environmental risks and constrains growth as the council cannot issue building permits on most blocks.

This option would be exacerbated if the town received a drinking water supplies as it reduces the imperative to conserve water, compared to rainwater-only supply. This tends to result in greater household water use, leading to larger volumes of wastewater being discharged, beyond the intended capacity of the system and disposal area.

Option 2 – Gravity feed to new WTP

A conventional gravity system with a new Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) plant located near to Newbridge. Sewer mains are laid from every allotment that is to be serviced and run to a central pump station which then pumps the waste to the new WRP. This was the preferred option.

Option 3 – Pressure sewer system, truck to an existing system

This system operates under pressure with pumps located on each property. The pump would be connected to the owner's household power supply. The owner will connect their property drains to the pump station and waste will be pumped to the central collection point from which it will be trucked away to an existing system on a regular basis. This option was not favoured by the community as they would pay for the power.

Option 4 – Pressure sewer system, truck to an existing system for 10 years and then construct a WRP.

This option is the same as No 3 above except that it is proposed to construct a WRP after 10 years. There is a risk that trucking waste to an existing system may be unsustainable if growth in Newbridge increases beyond Coliban Water's prediction.

Option 5 – Pressure sewer system, treatment at the recreation reserve and reuse on the recreation reserve.

This collection system involved pumps on landholders' properties, but the waste would then be pumped to a mechanical treatment plant for treatment prior to reuse on the recreation reserve on the east side of the Loddon River. This was considered inappropriate as the reserve is largely in the flood plain.

Option 6 – Household treatment, pressure sewer system and irrigation of agricultural land

This option proposed that wastewater from every house be treated on site and the treated effluent pumped to a WRP. Small household treatment plants are commonly used on larger allotments with the treated waste being reused sustainably on site. Under this option for the smaller lot sizes in Newbridge, treatment plants and a pump would be constructed on each lot and the treated effluent pumped to a winter storage and reuse area. A reuse area would be within 1 km of the town. This option was considered impractical and was not supported by the community.

Option 7 – Other options

In Elmore and Lockington there are Septic Tank Effluent Drainage (STED) systems. A STED system would involve the installation of a similar length of pipe as the gravity system, but pipes can be smaller and at a flatter grade as they carry liquid only. The assessment determined that this type of system would not provide any cost advantage over the gravity system. It therefore was not been considered any further.

Preferred option

A risk assessment utilising Coliban Water's Risk Management Strategy was completed along with an analysis utilising Coliban Water's Multi Criteria Analysis Tool to select a preferred option.

Table C.1 Assessment of sewerage options

Item	Gravity	PSS & truck	PSS Truck WRP *	PSS & Package Treatment *	PSS & Lagoon Treatment *	Gravity & pipeline to Bridgewater
Sewerage System Capex	\$3,126,000	\$1,260,000	\$1,496,000	\$2,412,000	\$2,644,000	\$3,998,549
Owner capex	\$136,000	\$88,000	\$88,000	\$88,000	\$88,000	\$136,000
Sewerage System Opex	\$23,000	\$143,000	\$143,000	\$125,000	\$36,000	\$12,000
Owner Opex	Nil	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	Nil
Sewerage System & Owner NPV	-\$3,148,475	-\$3,588,142	-\$3,091,768	-\$3,661,408	-\$2,774,985	-\$3,885,208
Sustainability Score						
Economic	24	21	24	21	26	19
Environmental	11	14	12	9	11	11
Social	13	6	7	7	8	13
Technical	8	10	11	6	6	7
Total	56	51	53	43	51	50
Rank	1	4	2	6	3	5

* Note the pressurised sewage pump station option was not supported by the local community and the NPV doesn't include the indicative additional costs paid by the landowner.

The analysis assessed the advantages and risks, the estimation of the costs and the acceptability to the community. Discussions with the community in Newbridge indicated a preference for gravity sewer due to its low operating costs. Therefore, the conventional gravity sewer with a WRP located nearby was considered the preferred option.

Additional Option - Conventional Gravity Sewer with pipeline to Bridgewater WRP

Discussions with the community raised an alternative option for review. This was similar to the preferred option, however it involved use of the existing Bridgewater WRP instead of building a new one at Newbridge.

This system would require additional pumps to transfer the sewage 16.3km along a rising main from Newbridge to the Bridgewater WRP. The additional capital cost is estimated to be \$870,000 than Coliban Water's preferred option, but there is a lower operational cost although there can be odour issues in long sewer pipelines.

This option is not supported due to the higher NPV and the risks from operating long sewer transfer systems.

Water

The following drinking water supply options were considered:

1. Do Nothing: Newbridge remains without a reticulated potable water supply
2. Connect to Laanecoorie WTP from Tarnagulla and gravitate water to Newbridge.
3. Connect to Bridgewater water treatment plant (WTP) and pump to Newbridge
4. Connect to the proposed Southwest Loddon Pipeline (rural supply) and construct a local treatment plant to treat the raw water from the pipeline.

Alternative sources of water to those listed above were deemed to be not feasible. These included the treatment of water from the Loddon River and groundwater.

The Laanecoorie and Bridgewater systems both treat water from the Loddon River, upstream and downstream of Newbridge respectively. This water source is variable in quality and during dry periods the River is also relatively saline. It would require a complex treatment process to provide reliable safe drinking water.

Option 1 – Do Nothing

The option to “do nothing” does not address the water security or water quality issues currently faced by the residents of Newbridge. Although having no cost, it does in fact have a cost for residents in the form of periodic deliveries of water during dry periods and bottled water for drinking and cost implications for new developments. For those that drink rainwater, there is a residual health risk associated with potential pathogen contamination of this source without suitable preventative maintenance and/or additional treatment.

Option 2 – Pipeline from Bridgewater/Inglewood system

Option 3 involves supplying Newbridge from the existing water treatment plant at Bridgewater. The relatively long distance from Bridgewater to Newbridge results in higher costs when compared with other options. Also, the Bridgewater WTP already operates at capacity during peak periods. This may require additional works at Bridgewater which has not yet been investigated or costed.

Option 3 – Pipeline from Tarnagulla (Laanecoorie system)

The Laanecoorie WTP has spare capacity and has recently been upgraded to improve treated water quality and reliability. The additional demands of Newbridge can be accommodated within the existing capacity of the treatment plant. The operating costs are also expected to decrease in future as water is sourced from the South West Loddon Pipeline.

Of the options considered, providing water from Tarnagulla, part of the Laanecoorie system, has the lowest total cost as measured by an NPV. It will be a shorter pipeline and the water can be transferred via gravity from Tarnagulla.

This option represents the preferred option.

Option 4 – New Water Treatment Plant (South West Loddon Pipeline)

The South West Loddon pipeline provides a supply of untreated water to rural properties right past Newbridge. A small WTP built at Newbridge would cost less than a pipeline from Tarnagulla. However, a package plant will be relatively complex to operate and more costly to operate.

The table below summarises the assessment of drinking water options.

Table C.2 Assessment of water supply options

Item	Option 2 Pipeline from Bridgewater		Option 3 Pipeline from Tarnagulla (Laanecoore system)		Option 4 New WTP treating water from SW Loddon pipeline	
	(Township)	(Township + east of Loddon)	(Township)	(Township + east of Loddon)	(Township)	(Township + east of Loddon)
CAPEX	\$3.8 M	\$4.3 M	\$1.9 M	\$2.4 M	\$1.6 M	\$2.1 M
OPEX	\$91 k	\$104 k	\$52 k	\$65 k	\$104 k	\$117 k
NPV	-\$4.9 M	-\$5.6 M	-\$2.5 M	-\$3.2 M	-\$3.1 M	-\$3.6 M
Sustainability Score						
Economic	10		30		25	
Environmental	1		4		3	
Social	11		12		10	
Technical	4		10		9	
Total	26		56		47	
Rank	3		1		2	

A pipeline from Tarnagulla servicing either all of Newbridge or just dwellings on the western side of the Loddon River is the preferred option. The capital required for a new reticulated potable water supply system is between \$1.9 million and \$2.4 million depending on the decision to provide service to properties east of the Loddon River.

Appendix D Potential cost sharing arrangements

Total capital cost = \$5.5M

- Sewer \$3.13M
- Water \$2.38M

Community contribution = ~\$1M

- 60 properties @ \$15,000 = \$900k
 - 40 properties
 - 20 lots
- Businesses = \$100k

Coliban Water = \$1M

- ~\$100k/yr for ten years revenue projection

State Government = \$3.5M = 64% of total

- River health
- Public health
- Regional economic and social health

Appendix E Landowner survey

COVER LETTER

<date>

<name>

<address>

Newbridge Sewerage and Water Supply opportunity

I am writing to you as a landowner in Newbridge to seek your interest in contributing towards a permanent sewerage scheme and drinking water supply in your town.

Members of the Newbridge community have, for many years, raised their concerns with the government about the lack of sewerage. There have been several studies and surveys already undertaken but the project has not yet been undertaken.

A renewed attempt has been raised with Loddon Shire Council and Coliban Water by community members.

Just prior to COVID-19, a selection of community members, the Loddon Shire Council and Coliban Water revisited the costs of sewerage. At the request of the community members, costings to supply drinking water to the town were also undertaken. The total cost of the two schemes is estimated at \$5.5 million, making it difficult to request the government to fund all of the project without a contribution from landholders.

Our next step was to contact landholders to determine whether you are interested in sewerage and a drinking water supply and whether you would be willing to pay a financial contribution.

We recognise now might not be the best timing for you as we all are still coming to grips with the impacts of COVID-19. However, without knowing each landholder's interest in a permanent sewerage and water supply in Newbridge, Loddon Shire and Coliban Water will not be in a strong position to ask the government for financial support. We anticipate that the government will be looking for projects ready to stimulate the economy when the pandemic eases. To do this, we feel that it is crucial to understand your level of interest in these projects and whether you would be prepared to contribute towards it.

We have attached a fact sheet to give you as much information as we can. There is also a dedicated contact person you can ring to clarify or discuss your situation. We will also be available from 2 – 6 pm on <date> at the Newbridge Recreational Reserve if you wish to speak to someone in person.

I encourage you to complete and return the attached survey by <date>. Your response will be collated in a way that does not identify individual owners and does not in any way commit you financially or legally. The returned surveys will help us determine whether there is genuine landowner support for the schemes. When responses are received, they will help us determine whether there is enough support to pursue government funding.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the project consultant Simon Coutts on 0427 819 803 for a confidential discussion, or email him at simon@grantus.com.au before <date>.

Kind regards

<name>

<Position>

**Expression of Interest in the supply of
Sewerage and Water Supply to Newbridge
SURVEY**

1. Describe the general purpose and or intended use of the land (Home, vacant, wanting to build soon, wanting to sell, other)

2. If sewer were available on the west of town and water were available, would you connect?
(Please circle your preference/s)

Sewer (West of River only)	Water	Neither
-------------------------------	-------	---------

3. The total estimated cost of the two schemes is \$5.5million. Would you be willing to pay a contribution of no more than \$450 a year (for 20 years) for sewer and \$325 a year (for 20 years) for water towards the project? (Please circle)

Yes	No	Maybe
-----	----	-------

4. If you answered No or Maybe to question 3, are you able to provide some details so that we better understand your response?

5. Is there anything else that you would like to mention that will help support a case for funding?

Name of landowner/s (as shown on Title or rates notice):

**Address of Newbridge property and ALL individual lots:
(if you own multiple lots, please indicate preferences for each lot)**

Signature _____

Your response to this survey is important to us. Any surveys not responded to will be assumed as not supporting the schemes.

Please return the completed survey using the reply-paid envelope to <council> by no later than <date>.

The responses to this survey will be collated in a way that does not identify individual owners and does not lock you into any commitment.

**Newbridge Sewerage and Water Supply
Potential Opportunity
FACTSHEET**

Loddon Shire, Coliban Water and representatives of the Newbridge community have been investigating the feasibility of providing sewerage services and a drinking water supply to the Newbridge township.

We are now seeking input from the Newbridge community. In particular, we are seeking input from landowners to determine if there is sufficient support to sewer your town and provide it with drinking water.

Background

Newbridge was identified by the government as a priority town for sewerage over ten years ago based on public health and environmental issues. Even before then, a local group of residents have been actively advocating for sewerage in Newbridge.

With recent developments in rural water supply arrangements in the region, there has now been a renewed push from some residents to request that the Loddon Shire Council and Coliban Water investigate the feasibility of a drinking water supply to the town as well as sewerage.

We have taken information from previous studies on sewerage the town and recently updated figures. The most cost-effective and acceptable solution for the two schemes is expected to cost \$5.5 million. This means that if it is to proceed, significant funding and some landholder contributions would be required.

Coliban Water has undertaken a detailed review of the options available to supply both water and sewerage services. Several community representatives were involved in the selection of preferred options. No actual location of water or sewerage treatment facilities has been determined at this stage.

Why are sewerage and water needed at Newbridge?

Newbridge is reliant on rainwater tanks for drinking water supply and septic tanks for wastewater management. The current arrangements pose increased risks across a range of outcomes:

- Adverse environmental impacts on the Loddon River from poorly managed wastewater leakage from the septic tanks and over-flow in flood events
- Public health impacts from poorly managed wastewater and contaminated drinking water
- Economic and social impacts through constraints on building developments in the town and opportunities to grow

The circumstances are likely to be different for each landowner. Get in touch with us if you would like to discuss your concerns in detail.

Which area of Newbridge could the sewer scheme cover?

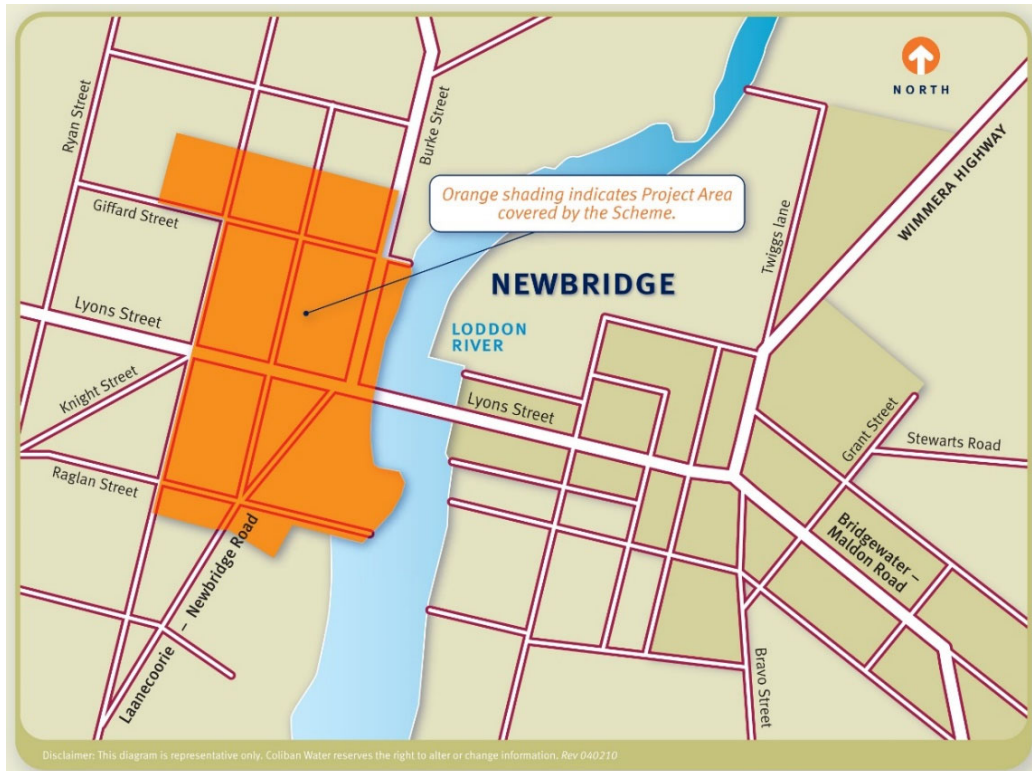
The area of the township west of the Loddon River is being considered for sewer. This is because it has a higher level of risk to human health and the health of the Loddon River. Sewering both sides would add considerable more costs.

The Newbridge Recreational Reserve may also be investigated because it is close to the Loddon River.

Where would a sewerage reclamation plant be located?

The exact location of the reclamation plant would be determined once funding was announced. Coliban Water will construct the plant in a position that meets regulations for flood, noise, odour and other planning requirements. Coliban Water will also be required to obtain necessary permits, undertake more detailed design and comply with strict environmental requirements.

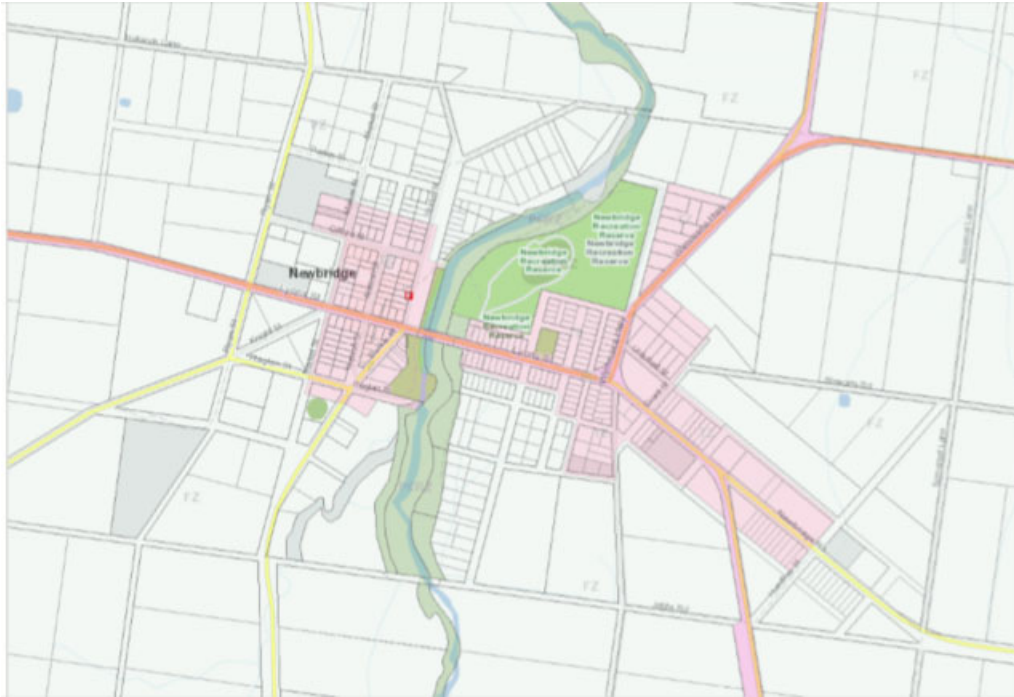
The area proposed to be covered by sewerage scheme



Which area of Newbridge will the water supply cover?

Water supply would be provided from the Laanecoorie water treatment plant via a pipeline from Tarnagulla and delivered to each property within the Township Zone, on both sides of the river (highlighted in pink below).

The area proposed for drinking water (highlighted in pink)



How have the properties for the scheme been chosen?

The area chosen for sewerage on the west side of the Loddon River is within the Township Zone, as defined by the Loddon Shire Planning Scheme. This area contains properties that are currently serviced by septic tanks for wastewater disposal.

Unserviced blocks are typically less than 10,000m², which is the minimum requirement to meet Environment Protection Authority requirements for building a new house to meet on-site wastewater disposal.

The allotment sizes on the east side of the river are typically larger and further away from the river, therefore presenting a lower risk of a potential impact on the Loddon River.

The area chosen for water is within the Township Zone, as defined by the Loddon Shire Planning Scheme.

What does it mean for me if I own land or property in the Township Zone?

If overwhelming support is received by the Newbridge landholders, Loddon Shire Council and Coliban Water will pursue the government to fund as much as possible to support these schemes.

The overall scheme is estimated at \$5.5m. Landholders are being asked whether they would contribute financially toward these costs for a permanent sewer and drinking water supply

The **maximum** residential capital contribution would be \$750 per year for 20 years, or:

- Sewer \$8,500 (or \$425/yr)
- Water \$6,500 (or \$325/yr)

The payment would be required when you connect to the finished scheme, and the option to pay off the contribution may incur a low-interest increase.

Landowners would pay for works on their own land needed to connect to the schemes.

Once a property is connected, they will become Coliban Water customers and pay usage and access charges. The service fees for 2019/20 are:

Sewer - \$684/yr

Water - \$227/yr plus \$2.23/kilolitres usage charge

What does it mean for me if my property is part of the new schemes?

If you already have an existing house serviced by a septic tank or other on-site wastewater system you will be required to connect to the new scheme. This means that you will need to redirect your plumbing to the new system.

You will also need to arrange for a water supply connection.

I own vacant land within the area being investigated. Will I have to pay?

If the scheme proceeds and property is built on the land within ten years of the scheme being in place, the landowner at the time will be required to pay the same capital contribution, plus any additional costs to connect at the time.

After ten years, landowners who build on vacant land will pay a *New Customer Contribution* fee to Coliban Water, plus any works to extend or connect to the sewer or water supply.

Vacant land is not charged an annual access fee until the landowner connects and starts using the service.

My property is outside the Township Zone. Can I become part of the schemes?

These will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but registering interest at this stage will help with the final design and cost estimates to determine whether extending the scheme in certain areas is viable and wanted by landowners.

How was the capital contribution charge determined?

The request for sewerage in Newbridge has been driven by residents of Newbridge for over ten years. Coliban Water, Loddon Shire and the state government currently have no budget allocated for sewer or water services to Newbridge.

A business case is being put together to seek government funding. The main focus is demonstrating that there will be benefits to the quality of the Loddon River, opportunities for regional growth and land valuations are expected to increase.

The business case is asking the government to find funds to contribute to the majority of costs.

The landowner contribution has considered factors such as affordability and potential property price increases. A contribution from landowners is expected to demonstrate the commitment from the region and send a message to the government that the landholders support the schemes.

If there is overwhelming support for the scheme, and a general willingness to pay a contribution, this will significantly improve the chances of government supporting the project.

Will this scheme increase the value of my land and result in my Council rates increasing?

It is reasonable to expect that a water and sewerage scheme will increase the value of properties.

There is however no direct relationship between the amount of the increase in a property's value and the amount of the increase in rates. Valuations are determined on the property values across the entire municipality.

However, as valuations are influenced by the market (property sales), if there is an increase in sales and prices in Newbridge and the municipality, then rates increases are likely to be seen over time.

What's next?

Landowners are being asked to return a completed survey using the reply-paid envelope to the Loddon Shire. This is a crucial step to listen to what the landowners want. Your response will help us determine whether to request government funding.

If the schemes are funded, will it be compulsory to connect?

Yes. Any land that has a dwelling already on the land will be expected to pay and connect to water and sewer. The exception will be if a septic tank meets the Environmental Protection Authority's requirements for on-site reuse.

The schemes will not be economical if only half the landowners choose to connect.

Owners of vacant land can opt to defer paying the capital contribution until they develop the land, but may be required to pay additional connection costs, when or if they decide to build in the future.

What if I don't want my land connected?

Then let your intentions be known now. There is little value in presenting a case to the government for funding that is not supported by the landowners.

Newbridge has a relatively low number of properties, and that is one of the reasons why it has not received water and sewerage services, yet.

Whilst there are powers under legislation to force landowners to connect, it is not the intention of Loddon Shire or Coliban Water to pursue funding if an insufficient number of landowners are not in support of the proposed water and sewer schemes.

What if I want to connect but can't afford it?

Capital contributions can be paid off over 20 years, and there may be further provisions for landowners in financial hardship. Please indicate your concerns when responding.

What do I need to do?

Each landowner will receive the same letter, fact sheet and reply-paid envelope with a survey to complete.

Landholders are asked to complete the survey and return it in the reply-paid envelope indicating your level of interest in connecting your land to water and/or sewer.

Non-returns will be considered as not supporting the schemes.

Based on the responses received, the Loddon Shire, Coliban Water and the Newbridge community representatives will determine whether to proceed to the government with a business case. If there is sufficient support, then funding will be pursued.

There is still no guarantee that the government will support the business case, even if the community fully support it. There is also no indication as to a timeframe for a response from the government at this stage.

Landowners will be informed by letter as to whether the business case will proceed or not.

What are businesses contributions?

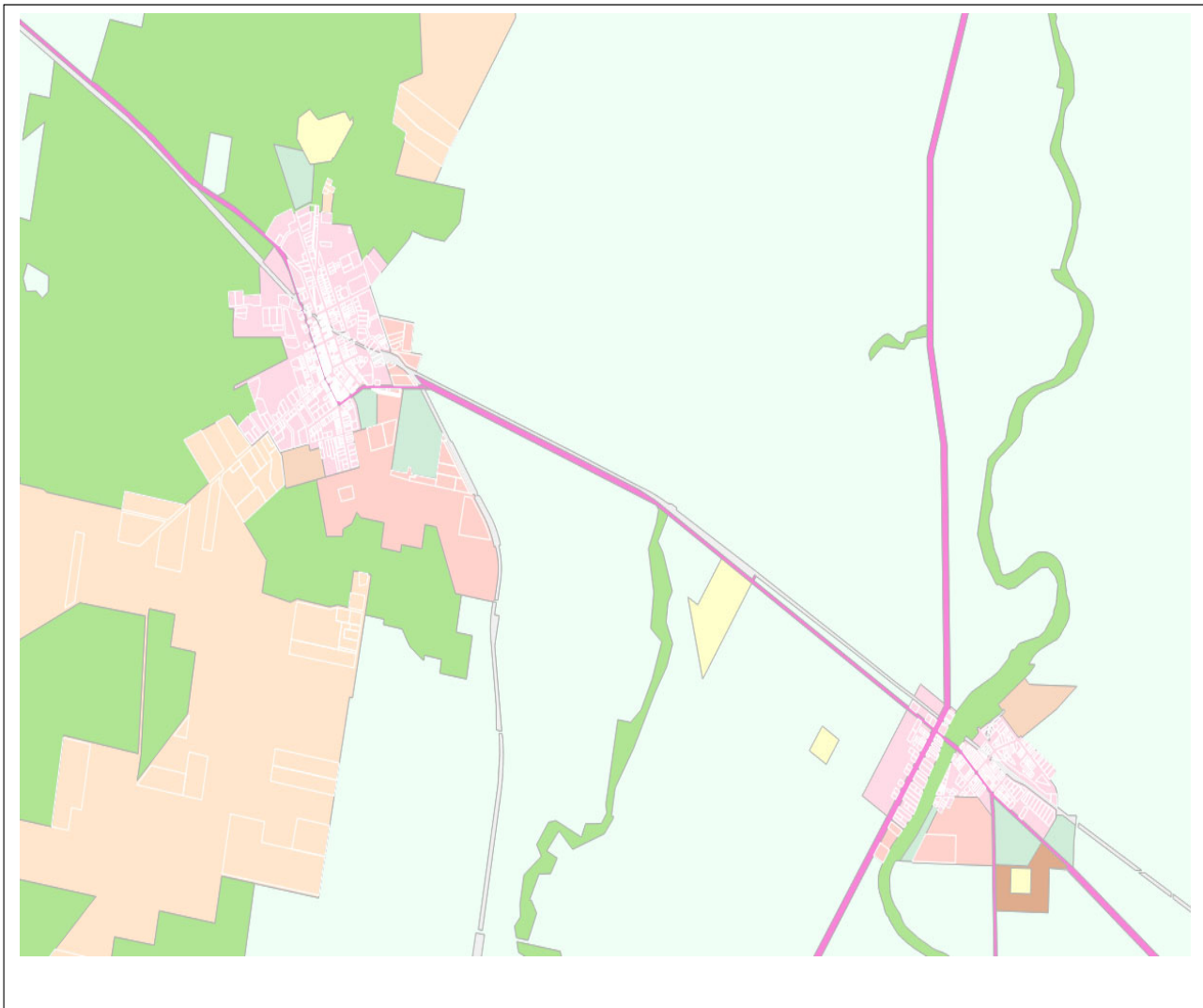
Businesses that own the land are encouraged to contact us to discuss your circumstances.

I am a tenant, what does this mean for me?

Contributions towards the schemes will be borne by the landowner. Many tenancy agreements require the tenant to only pay for the water that they use, the landlord pays the rest. Check with your landlord about likely arrangements if concerned.

Further information

Landowners wishing to discuss the opportunity through a private and confidential discussion can contact the project manager Simon Coutts from Grantus on 0427 819 803 or via email at simon@grantus.com.au.



SETTLEMENT STRATEGY 2019-2034



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Signed by Chief Executive Officer

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Strategic documents are amended from time to time, therefore you should not rely on a printed copy being the current version. Please consult the Loddon Shire website to ensure that the version you are using is up to date.

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.

CONTENTS

1	PURPOSE	1
2	BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	1
3	RISK ANALYSIS	1
4	BACKGROUND	1
	4.1 Loddon Shire.....	1
	4.2 Historical settlement.....	2
5	METHODOLOGY	2
6	STRATEGIC CONTEXT	2
	6.1 Loddon Shire Council Plan 2017-2021	2
	6.2 Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy	3
	6.3 State Planning Policy Framework	3
	6.4 Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan (2015-2018)	3
	6.5 Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (2014).....	4
7	ISSUES AND TRENDS	5
	7.1 Population change	5
	7.1.1 Population decline	5
	7.1.2 Population aging.....	6
	7.1.3 Migration.....	6
	7.1.4 Employment.....	7
	7.1.5 Households.....	7
	7.2 Urban land and housing supply.....	8
	7.2.1 Housing supply	8
	7.2.2 Residential development opportunities.....	8
	7.2.3 Development trends	9
	7.4 Agriculture	11
	7.5 Natural values	11
	7.6 Bendigo	12
	7.7 Infrastructure	13
	7.7.1 Water and sewerage system	13
	7.7.2 Road network	13
	7.7.3 Other.....	14
	7.8 Flooding	14
	7.9 Bushfire	14
	7.10 Climate change	14
	7.11 Physical and social amenity	14
	7.12 Community consultation.....	15
	7.13 Growth potential of Loddon Shire towns	16
8	STRATEGY	17
	8.1 Priority growth towns.....	19
	8.1.1 Boort settlement structure plan.....	20

8.1.2 Bridgewater settlement structure plan	22
8.1.3 Inglewood settlement structure plan	24
8.1.4 Pyramid Hill settlement structure plan	26
8.1.5 Wedderburn settlement structure plan	27
8.2 Potential new growth opportunity	29
8.2.1 Newbridge settlement structure plan	30
8.3 Existing small townships	31
8.3.1 Dingee settlement structure plan	32
8.3.2 Eddington settlement structure plan	32
8.3.3 Korong Vale settlement structure plan	33
8.3.4 Laanecoorie settlement structure plan	33
8.3.5 Mitiamo settlement structure plan	34
8.3.6 Serpentine settlement structure plan	34
8.3.7 Tarnagulla settlement structure plan	35
8.4 Rural living	36
9 COSTING AND FUNDING OF ACTIONS	37
APPENDIX 1: Streamlining for Growth	42
Loddon Shire Towns Housing and Population	42
Summary – 2016 Census	42
APPENDIX 2: Streamlining for Growth	65
Loddon Shire Towns Housing and Public Realm Audit	65
APPENDIX 3: Community Consultation Summary	84
APPENDIX 4: Township maps	88

LIST OF TABLES

Figure 1 Loddon Shire location	2
Figure 2 Loddon Mallee South Future Growth Framework Plan	4
Figure 3 Population change (ABS - 1981-2016) Loddon Shire primary urban areas	6
Figure 4 Age and gender structure Loddon Shire 2016	6
Figure 5 Household type Loddon Shire primary urban areas	8
Table 1 Vacant land parcels by zone	9
Table 3 Rural living estimated growth capacity	11
Figure 7 Regional natural values	12
Table 4 Water and sewer provision, Loddon Shire urban areas	13
Table 5 Loddon Shire Towns – opportunity for growth	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Loddon Shire Council's vision is to be a prosperous, vibrant and engaged community¹. A strategic objective of the Council Plan (2017-2021) is to grow and invigorate Loddon's population. A key action nominated to support this objective is the preparation of a settlement strategy to provide a suitable supply of residential land in and around towns.

The Loddon Shire Settlement Strategy focusses on the role that land use planning can play in population growth. The planning system supports growth through the provision of suitable land for housing, as well as ensuring land is provided for jobs and industry. Beyond the planning system, Council is also able to encourage growth through support for economic development and ensuring towns and communities are attractive places to live.

The key strategic directions of this strategy are for Council to:

- promote growth in Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn, taking advantage of all available development opportunities to fully develop the existing urban footprint
- accommodate new development in smaller settlements where effluent can be managed
- support a range of residential forms including rural living and medium density.

This strategy builds on and links to existing programs that seek to encourage population growth through enhancing the amenity of the Loddon Shire townships and encouraging economic development. Many activities already committed to by Council support population growth and this is recognised by this strategy. The table in Section 9, Costing and Funding of Actions, identifies a number of targeted projects specific to this project to support growth in appropriate locations.

A review and analysis of population characteristics and change based on the results of the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census has been conducted and the full report is included in Appendix 1. The trends indicated within this report show a declining population although recent data suggests the population has stabilised.

Despite trends of population decline, there has been new housing development in the Loddon Shire. Overall, the data suggests strong clustering in and around Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn, with a particular trend towards the towns in the southern part of Loddon Shire. This clustering has become more apparent in the later years – since about 2011. This is borne out by the data collected in the field study, where data collectors noted a number of new dwellings in each town, including relatively new multi-unit developments. Clustering of more recent developments in rural living areas of the south of the Loddon Shire is also evident.

Demand for residential development has also been demonstrated in the approval of a number of urban subdivisions within the towns of Boort, Bridgewater and Inglewood. Over the last two years, 17 new urban lots have been created.

The following table demonstrates the trend in the demand for residential developments across Loddon Shire.

¹ Council Plan 2017-2021, Loddon Shire Council

Loddon Shire new housing development by zone²

Locality	2006-2008	2009-2011	2012-2014	2015-2017	Total
Boort TZ	2	9	5	3	19
Bridgewater TZ	1	6	3	4	14
Bridgewater LDRZ				1	1
Inglewood TZ	4	2	10	11	27
Inglewood LDRZ			2	1	3
Inglewood RLZ		2		1	3
Pyramid Hill TZ	2	3		3	8
Wedderburn TZ	3	7	10	5	25
Wedderburn LDRZ					0
Wedderburn RLZ	2	5	7	7	21
Other TZ	4	2	5	5	16
Other RLZ	1		2		3
Rural Balance	20	37	60	44	161
Total	39	73	104	85	301

This strategy seeks to facilitate population growth and build on existing communities to support their viability and maximise infrastructure investment. This strategy provides for a range of residential forms across the Loddon Shire while also protecting the opportunity for the agricultural sector to readily operate and expand, managing Council's infrastructure liability and preserving the unique landscape and amenity of Loddon Shire.

The aim of this strategy is to support *vibrant communities in a productive agricultural landscape*.

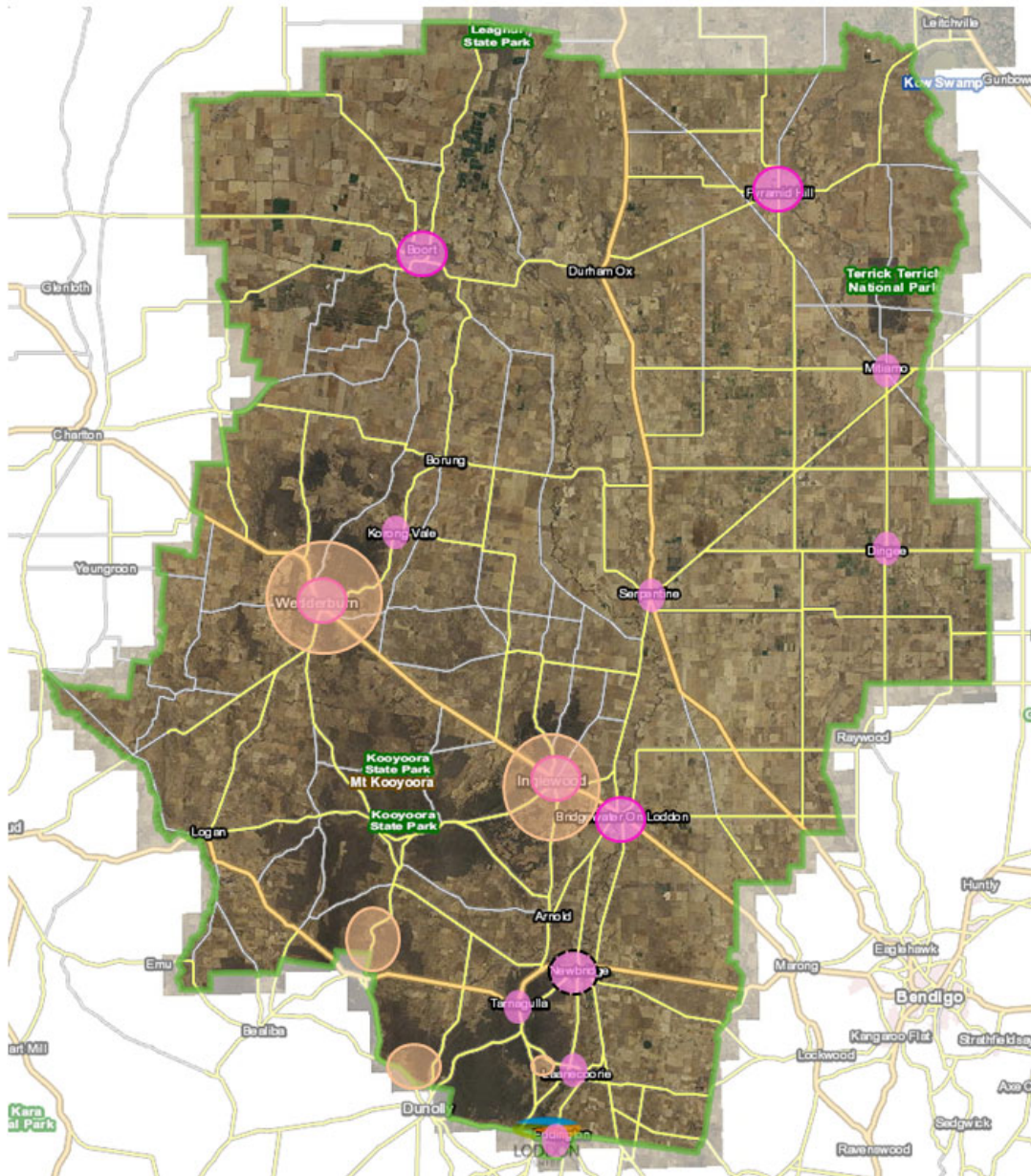
This strategy is framed by the following objectives:





- Provide for and encourage residential **growth** in the existing well serviced towns.
- Support a **diversity** of residential opportunities across the Loddon Shire including conventional residential, medium density and rural living.
- Protect the opportunity for the **agricultural sector** to operate and expand relatively unhindered as it is the driver of economic growth.
- Maximise the use of **existing infrastructure**, including roads, community and sporting facilities.
- Attract and retain residents through enhancing the physical and social **amenity** and encouraging **connection** and **attachment**.
- Encourage **sustainable** urban forms, including walkable towns and urban consolidation.
- Protect the **environmental** assets of the Loddon Shire, including native vegetation and waterways for their contribution to amenity, tourism value and agriculture.

The Loddon Shire Settlement Structure Plan illustrates the locations where Council seeks to encourage residential development.

² New dwelling approvals and may include some additions and alterations due to classifications.

LODDON SHIRE SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE PLAN



	<p>Priority growth towns – support urban consolidation and provide for urban expansion when required.</p>
	<p>Potential new growth opportunity – opportunity for new growth subject to the provision of sewer and water.</p>
	<p>Existing small townships – support ongoing residential development on existing Township zoned land subject to satisfactory effluent disposal.</p>
	<p>Rural living communities – support consolidation and ongoing supply in accordance with State planning policy.</p>

1 PURPOSE

Loddon Shire Council's vision is to be a prosperous, vibrant and engaged community³. A strategic objective of the Council Plan (2017-2021) is to grow and invigorate Loddon's population. A key action nominated to support this objective is the preparation of a settlement strategy to provide a suitable supply of residential land in and around towns.

The Settlement Strategy aims to maximise the potential for population and housing growth in the Loddon Shire. Based on an understanding of capacity and suitability, it identifies the localities in the municipality where Council is planning for people to live and proposes actions to promote development and growth.

This strategy focusses on the role that land use planning can play in population growth. The planning system supports growth through the provision of suitable land for housing, as well as ensuring land is provided for jobs and industry. Beyond the planning system, Council is also able to encourage growth through support for economic development and ensuring towns and communities are attractive places to live.

2 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

This strategy builds on and links to existing programs that seek to encourage population growth through enhancing the amenity of the Loddon Shire townships and encouraging economic development. Many activities already committed to by Council support population growth and this is recognised by this strategy. The table in Section 9, Costing and Funding of Actions, identifies a number of targeted projects specific to this project to support growth in appropriate locations.

3 RISK ANALYSIS

Settlement planning is critical to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of residential land in suitable locations to accommodate growth. Settlement planning will support the efficient use of infrastructure and can minimise impact on the agricultural economy.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 Loddon Shire

Loddon Shire is located to the north west of the regional city of Bendigo. It has a total area of almost 6,700 square kilometres, and a population of approximately 7,500 people.

Loddon Shire is a community of communities, with the population dispersed across farming areas, rural living clusters, townships and villages. These towns and communities are proud, resilient and self-sufficient, each playing a vital role within their respective districts.

³ Council Plan 2017-2021, Loddon Shire Council
Page 1 of 40



Figure 1 Loddon Shire location

4.2 Historical settlement

The Dja Dja Wurrung are recognised as the Traditional Owners of much of the Loddon Shire.

European settlement of the Loddon Shire area commenced with pastoral occupation during the 1840s following Major Mitchell's exploration in 1836. The discovery of gold in 1852 dramatically changed settlement, and resulted in the development of most of the towns in the south of the Loddon Shire, including Wedderburn, Inglewood and Tarnagulla.

Development of irrigation in the north of the Loddon Shire provided for greater investment in agriculture, and supported the associated growth of towns such as Boort and Pyramid Hill.

5 METHODOLOGY

Development of this settlement strategy has involved:

- a workshop with community leaders to determine their vision for their communities and the Loddon Shire as a whole
- an audit of housing, vacant land and the public realm to assess the supply of housing, development options and opportunities to enhance connection and amenity
- a review of population and development data to determine trends and predict future opportunities
- community consultation via community drop in sessions and written submissions.

6 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

6.1 Loddon Shire Council Plan 2017-2021

Loddon Shire Council's vision is to be a prosperous, vibrant and engaged community. The Council Plan identifies that Council has committed to strive to grow and invigorate Loddon's population, with the preparation of a Settlement Strategy to provide a suitable supply of residential land in and around towns being nominated as an action to support growth.

6.2 Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy

Population growth is also at the heart of the Economic Development Strategy, along with agriculture and tourism. Affordable land, lifestyle properties and enhanced liveability are identified as key opportunities in the Economic Development Strategy.

6.3 State Planning Policy Framework

The State Planning Policy Framework requires that Council is to anticipate and respond to the housing needs of the existing and future communities. It is to facilitate sustainable development that takes full advantage of existing settlement patterns and investment in transport, utility, social, community and commercial infrastructure and services.

The State Settlement Strategy seeks to deliver choice through a network of settlements, linked through transport, digital telecommunications and service provision and retail relationships. Growth will be focused in Melbourne and regional cities, including Bendigo; however growth of smaller townships is supported where infrastructure is available or can be provided in a cost effective and sustainable manner. The ongoing liveability of towns that are struggling to retain population should be protected through maintaining service provision and dispersed settlement is to be avoided to protect agricultural land and environmental assets.

6.4 Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan (2015-2018)

The Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan identifies that the growth and diversification of agriculture and food production is a key direction for the ongoing viability of the region. Bendigo will maintain its role as a regional centre, but small towns in the region need to be supported to provide an appropriate standard of living.



Figure 2 Loddon Mallee South Future Growth Plan

6.5 Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (2014)

The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan aims to focus growth on existing settlements with capacity to expand. It supports the role of small towns and settlements and particularly identifies support for growth of Inglewood and Bridgewater due to their proximity to Bendigo. It further identifies the role of the rural areas for agriculture, and the need to manage settlement to protect this activity.

7 ISSUES AND TRENDS

This section of the report identifies key issues that will influence the direction of the Settlement Strategy. These issues include existing trends that can be extrapolated to provide an understanding of what might happen in the future, as well as constraints and opportunities that will determine the capacity and suitability of towns and settlements to attract and accommodate growth.

The Victorian Planning Authority has supported Council in the development of this strategy through the funding of research into population change, and housing and land supply through the Streamlining for Growth program. This research included an analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data, Council building approval data and an on ground assessment of housing condition in the five larger towns. These reports are included in Appendix 1 and 2, with the key findings included below.

7.1 Population change

A review and analysis of population characteristics and change based on the results of the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census has been conducted and the full report is included in Appendix 1.

This research revealed the following population trends and characteristics in Loddon Shire.

7.1.1 Population decline

Loddon Shire has experienced population decline of approximately 1,000 people since 1996. In 1996 there were 8,555 residents and this declined to 7,512 residents in 2016 (ABS Place of Usual Residence 2016). However, between 2011 and 2016, population stabilised, with a slight increase from 7,296 in 2011. The most recent Victorian Government population projections suggest a continued slow decline in population. Population decline in Loddon Shire is associated with aging, agricultural restructure, population centralisation into larger urban centres and global economic trends leading to employment loss. These factors are largely beyond the influence of local government. However, this decline and the effect of these influences are not consistent across the Loddon Shire. In the south east of Loddon Shire, population decline and aging is less evident indicating an influence associated with the proximity to the regional centre of Bendigo. Inglewood, in particular, has experienced an increase in population since 2006 following a period of decline, and a positive annual average change in children under 14 years. Other towns are showing a loss in this age group over the last ten years.

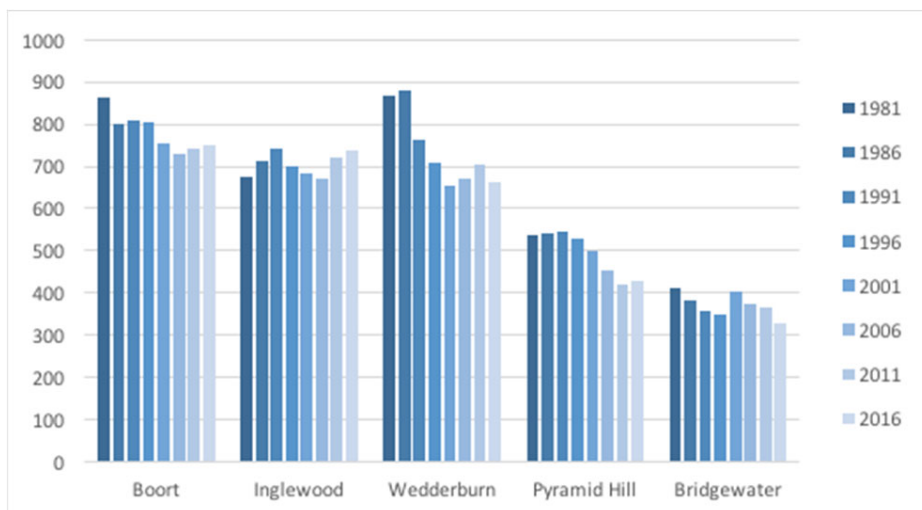


Figure 3 Population change (ABS - 1981-2016) Loddon Shire primary urban centres

7.1.2 Population aging

A significant proportion of the Loddon Shire population is aged over 50 years. This is consistent with age structures in many communities in North West Victoria. As Figure 4 indicates, the population retains school-aged children, but young adults remain a very small part of the population structure. This has ongoing implications in terms of growth as the young adult cohort drive population growth and housing development. Again, this trend is less evident in some towns.

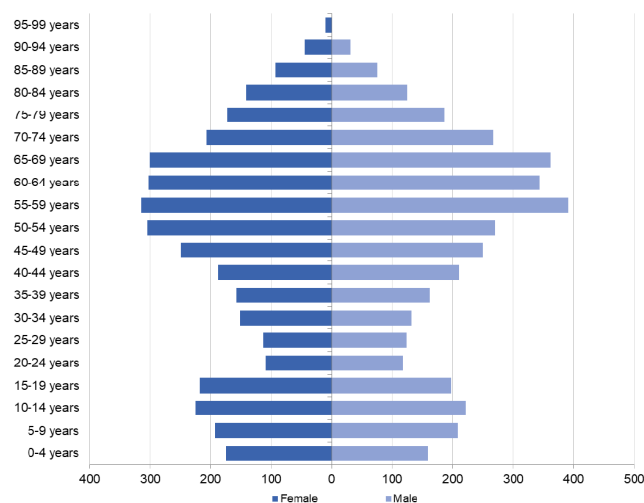


Figure 4 Age and gender structure Loddon Shire 2016

7.1.3 Migration

Loddon Shire experienced net outward migration of 108 people between 2011 and 2016, with 1,215 people leaving and 1,107 moving into Loddon Shire. Outward migration was most evident through migration to Bendigo, with some movement to Melbourne and to the surrounding regional local government areas including Campaspe, Swan Hill and Gannawarra. Inward migration was mostly from Bendigo and Melbourne. Overall, there was a net loss of people to Bendigo amongst younger age groups and net gain of people in older age groups from diverse locations, including metropolitan Melbourne and larger regional centres. Migration trends

suggest school leavers leaving to seek further education and employment and inward migration based on those seeking affordable housing options.

In 2016, nearly 14% of the Pyramid Hill population was born in Philippines (ABS Census). Opportunities of employment in intensive agriculture have attracted these residents, who have become valued members of the community. It is believed that this community has continued to grow and they now comprise a greater proportion of the local population.

The motivations for migration vary with age and life stage, with education, work-lifecycle and household formation/dissolution the main drivers. Notwithstanding the dominance of just a few economic factors in driving migration, surveys of those who have actually moved from Melbourne to regional Victoria have found a complex mix of factors. According to the 2009 RDV Relocated Residents survey, the main personal drivers for relocation are family (48%), employment (44%) and lifestyle (27%).

7.1.4 Employment

Nearly all employment sectors are declining, with growth notable in mining (from a very small base), finance and health services. While most of the local workforce lives locally, almost 30% live elsewhere, mostly in Greater Bendigo. Similar numbers of Loddon residents commute out of the Shire for work.

Agriculture, manufacturing, education and health care have some of the highest levels of employees commuting into Loddon Shire from elsewhere. Some of the key employment options within the Loddon Shire include healthcare (Boort and Inglewood hospitals and aged care facilities), education (nine schools, including four with secondary years), Local Government (Loddon Shire) and agribusiness including Laucke, Southern Stockfeeds, Hazeldenes, Kia Ora, Loddon Valley Eggs and Scato Plus.

7.1.5 Households

Patterns of household formation are central to considering land use and settlement. At the 2016 census, Loddon Shire had 2,957 households, fewer than the 3,133 households recorded in 2006. The average household size in 2016 was 2.2 persons, a decline from 2.3 persons in 2006.

The ageing of the population is reflected in the decline in family households with children and an increasing share of lone person households. These are trends apparent generally in Australia, but they are more evident in rural areas.

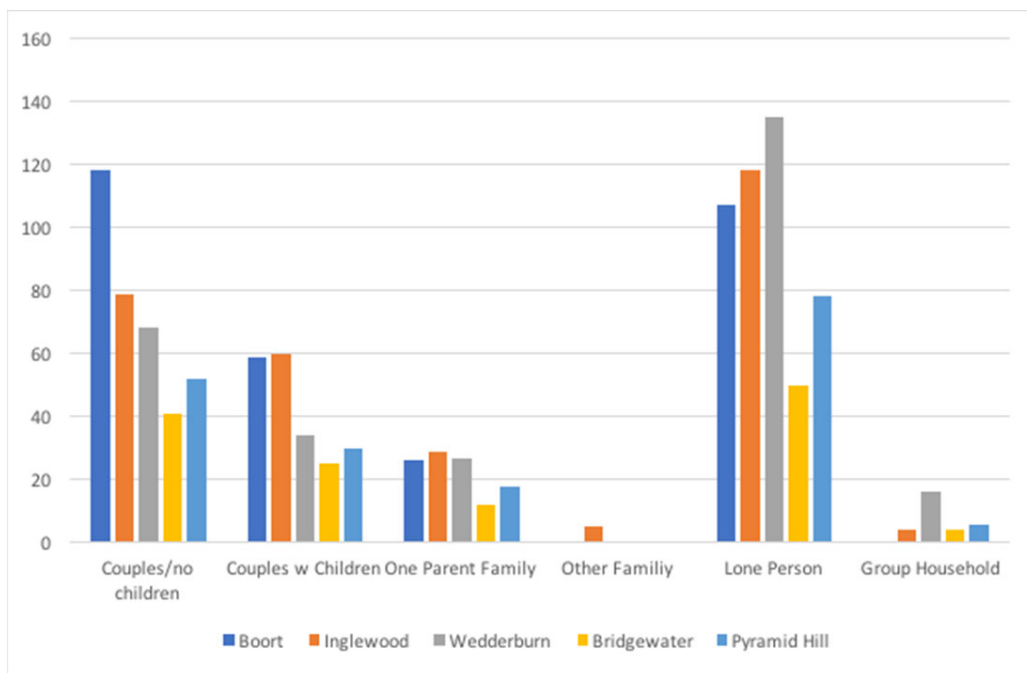


Figure 5 Household type Loddon Shire primary urban areas

7.2 Urban land and housing supply

7.2.1 Housing supply

The towns of Loddon Shire are dominated by single storey, stand-alone dwellings. While this pattern of dwelling structure is typical in small towns across Victoria, it is clear that the household structures and age cohorts increasingly dominant in Loddon Shire (and other communities) less typically comprise ‘family’ households. Consequently, scope for housing choice, particularly for older people appears limited and may affect decisions about remaining in Loddon Shire or moving to Loddon Shire.

Housing quality varies, and despite this being a relatively subjective measure, it is evident that there are large amounts of housing that have seen minimal investment over many years and, in some instances, have potential for renewal or removal. This has implications in terms of the suitability and sustainability of the existing supply, as well as the impacts on the amenity and presentation of the township areas. The opportunity for redevelopment of sites with low quality housing contributes to the land supply levels in the towns.

The ABS 2016 Census also suggests that there are high levels of vacant housing in Loddon Shire with 20% of all dwellings deemed unoccupied. While the figure is slightly lower in Boort and Inglewood, and slightly higher in Wedderburn, there appears to be a significant proportion of housing stock currently vacant.

7.2.2 Residential development opportunities

There are considerable residential development opportunities on existing vacant lots, both smaller and larger, within the urban and rural living areas of Loddon Shire as indicated in Table 1 below. The traditional low density of development in Loddon towns provides a significant opportunity for infill in the form of further subdivision of existing residential lots, as well as multi-unit developments on larger vacant parcels where sewerage has been provided. Although not all lots are available or suitable for residential development, existing vacant lots are estimated to offer opportunities for at least 500 new single dwellings in the five larger towns and considerably

more multi-unit developments or should the land be further subdivided to provide for additional standalone dwellings. There is also some existing opportunity for the development of new small housing estates, however these do require the addition of new infrastructure. Smaller towns and rural living areas also offer opportunities for new housing.

Table 1 Vacant land parcels by zone⁴

Town	Zone	Lots	Area (ha)
Boort	Township	143	32.4
Bridgewater	Township	123	31.4
	Low Density Residential	4	25
Dingee	Township	13	3.5
Eddington	Township	70	40
Inglewood	Township	158	54.3
	Low Density Residential	41	95.7
	Rural Living	82	844.5
Laanecoorie	Township	11	6
Mitiamo	Township	11	7
Newbridge	Township	40	12
Pyramid Hill	Township	71	9.1
Serpentine	Township	22	150
Tarnagulla	Township	49	4.5
Wedderburn	Township	110	27.5
	Low Density Residential	25	20.5
	Rural Living	265	1110

Accompanying maps are included in Appendix 4.

7.2.3 Development trends

Despite trends of population decline, there has been new housing development in the Loddon Shire. Overall, the data suggests strong clustering in and around Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn, with a particular trend towards the towns in the southern part of Loddon Shire. This clustering has become more apparent in the later years – since about 2011. This is borne out by the data collected in the field study, where data collectors noted a number of new dwellings in each town, including relatively new multi-unit developments. Clustering of more recent developments in rural living areas of the south of the Loddon Shire is also evident.

Demand for residential development has also been demonstrated in the approval of a number of urban subdivisions within the towns of Boort, Bridgewater and Inglewood. Over the last two years, 17 new urban lots have been created.

⁴ These figures are indicative only and don't represent a detailed assessment of the capacity of each lot.
Page 9 of 40

Figure 6 Loddon Shire residential building approvals 2006-2017⁵

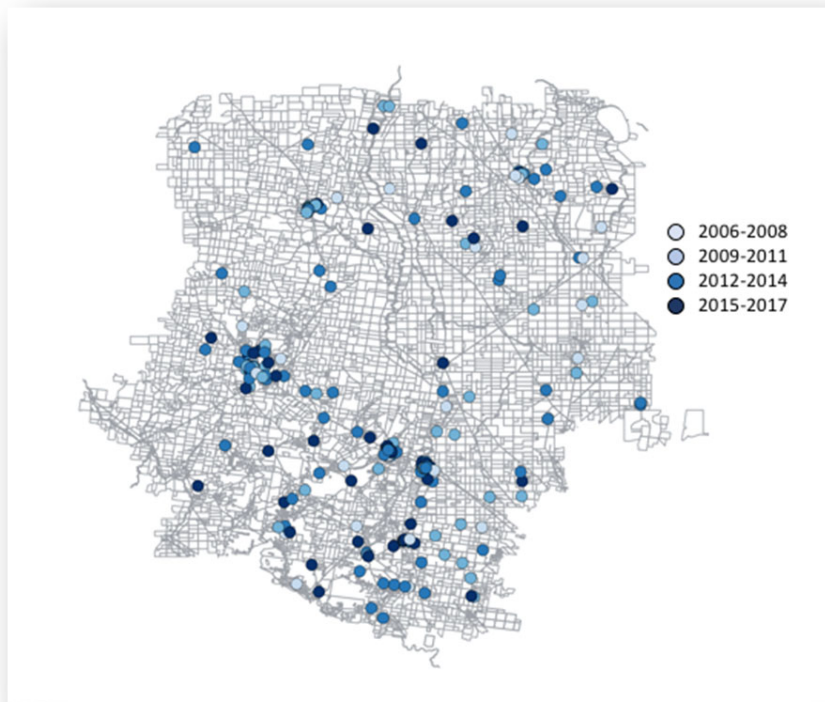


Table 2 Loddon Shire new housing development by zone⁶

Locality	2006-2008	2009-2011	2012-2014	2015-2017	Total
Boort TZ	2	9	5	3	19
Bridgewater TZ	1	6	3	4	14
Bridgewater LDRZ				1	1
Inglewood TZ	4	2	10	11	27
Inglewood LDRZ			2	1	3
Inglewood RLZ		2		1	3
Pyramid Hill TZ	2	3		3	8
Wedderburn TZ	3	7	10	5	25
Wedderburn LDRZ					0
Wedderburn RLZ	2	5	7	7	21
Other TZ	4	2	5	5	16
Other RLZ	1		2		3
Rural Balance	20	37	60	44	161
Total	39	73	104	85	301

7.3 Rural living

Loddon Shire has a strong tradition of rural living in the southern parts of the municipality. The opportunity to live on larger lots in a forested or agricultural landscape is an important part of the attraction and liveability of the area. However this form of land use comes at a cost in terms of

⁵ New dwelling approvals and may include some additions and alterations due to classifications.

⁶ New dwelling approvals and may include some additions and alterations due to classifications.

servicing and the potential impact on agriculture and the environment. The location and extent of rural living needs to be carefully managed to ensure that while this form of land use is supported, it is done so in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner.

There is land zoned Rural Living around Inglewood, Wedderburn, Dunolly, Laanecoorie and Tarnagulla. There is also land at McIntyre that, although zoned Farming, was developed and functions as a rural living community. The supply of Rural Living zoned land in Loddon Shire was significantly enhanced in 2016 with the approval of amendment C36 to the Loddon Planning Scheme. This amendment recognised a number of the existing rural living developments in the municipality, and rezoned them from Farming Zone to Rural Living Zone.

Table 3 provides an estimate of the capacity for new development within existing rural living areas.

Table 3 Rural living estimated growth capacity

District	Approximate growth capacity	
	Dwellings ⁷	Years supply ⁸
Dunolly	50	20
Inglewood	90	20
Laanecoorie	10	5
McIntyre	50	20
Wedderburn	200+	30+

7.4 Agriculture

Agriculture is the economic foundation of the Loddon Shire. It provides over 1,000 jobs (almost half of local employment) and produces over \$300m worth of productivity. The opportunity to operate and expand relatively unhindered is fundamental to the ongoing viability of agriculture. The ability to accommodate intensive animal businesses and the required buffers because there is minimal housing development in the rural areas is a competitive advantage of Loddon Shire. Over the last five years approval has been granted for a number of large intensive poultry, egg and pig production facilities.

The north of the Loddon Shire has access to irrigation, and considerable investment has been made in this infrastructure in recent years. The large properties in the south of the Loddon Shire are well suited to wool, prime lamb and cereal production. The South West Loddon Pipeline will enhance agricultural viability and opportunities in the south of the municipality.

Settlement needs to be planned to protect agricultural activity, and opportunities for new intensive agriculture development proposals.

7.5 Natural values

The Loddon Shire includes some significant natural values including remnant grasslands, forest areas and water bodies. These natural values make an important contribution to the amenity of the municipality and are a tourist attraction. Settlement should avoid areas of high natural value. Figure 7, below, indicates the relatively high contribution of natural values in Loddon Shire compared to adjoining municipalities to the northwest.

⁷ Based on number of vacant lots

⁸ Based on average building approvals (new dwellings) per year 2006-2017

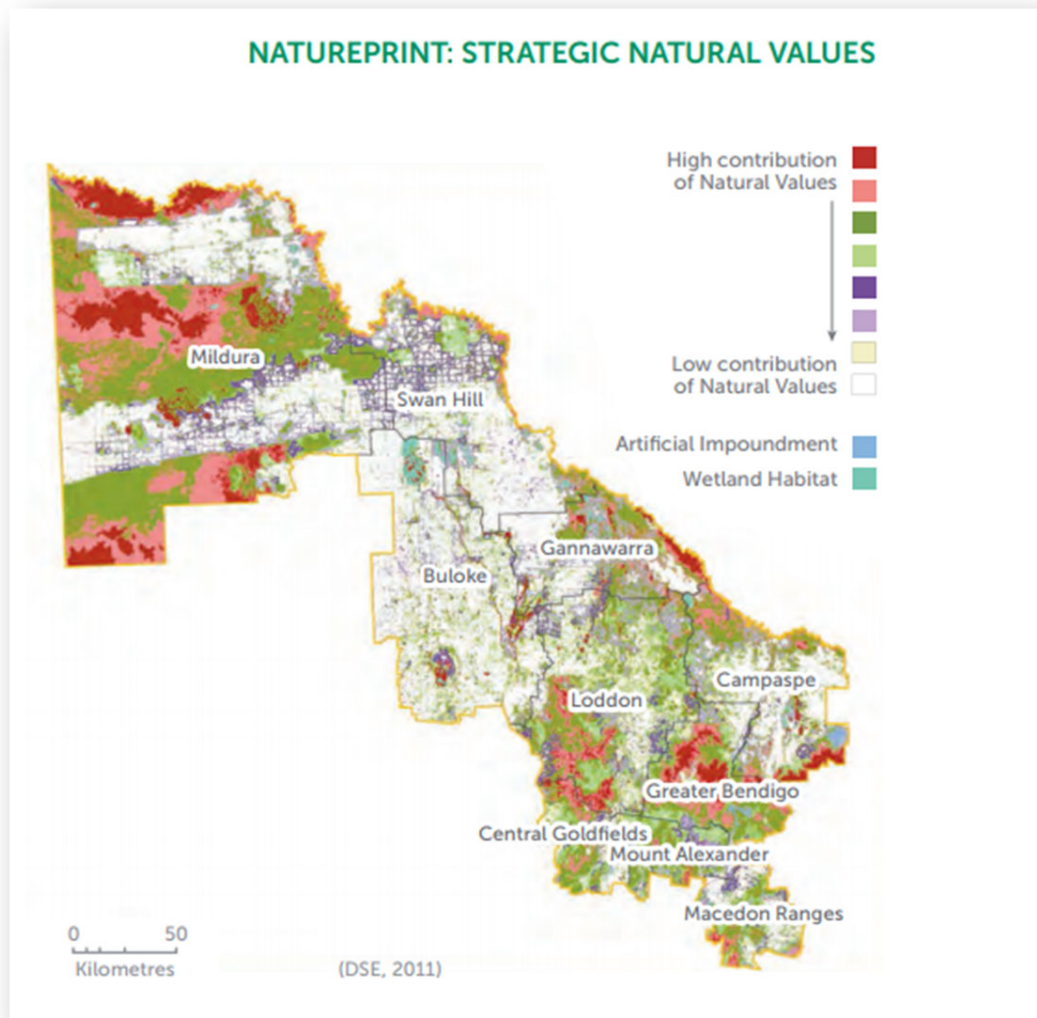


Figure 7 Regional natural values

7.6 Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo is the adjoining municipality to the southeast of Loddon Shire. This regional city is showing strong growth, with its residential strategy aiming to accommodate up to 200,000 people over the next 20 years. This is an almost doubling of its current population.

Loddon Shire could benefit from this strong growth through being able to offer more affordable housing, in smaller communities within reasonable proximity to Bendigo. This strong growth in the Bendigo region is expected to deliver residential, economic and employment growth within Loddon Shire for those areas within commuting distance of Bendigo.

7.7 Infrastructure

7.7.1 Water and sewerage system

Within the Loddon Shire, urban reticulated water and the sewerage system are provided by Coliban Water.

Table 4 below sets out those towns with access to reticulated treated water and, in some cases, sewerage system in the Loddon Shire.

Table 4 Water and sewerage system provision, Loddon Shire urban areas

Town	Water	Sewerage System
Boort	✓	✓
Bridgewater	✓	✓
Inglewood	✓	✓
Korong Vale	✓	X
Laanecoorie	✓	X
Pyramid Hill	✓	✓
Serpentine	✓	X
Tarnagulla	✓	X
Wedderburn	✓	✓

A number of other smaller towns, such as Dingee and Mitiamo, have untreated reticulated water, and no sewerage system.

The lack of a sewerage system is a significant limitation in terms of urban growth as lots must be able to treat and contain wastewater within the boundary of the property. Generally lots will need to be greater than 0.4ha to be able to adequately treat and retain waste water for a normal family dwelling, subject to soil conditions and other environmental considerations.

7.7.2 Road network

Council maintains nearly 5,000km of roads at an annual cost of around \$7 million, including capital renewal. Ongoing financial constraints on local government require that Council aim to minimise the extent of its road network to ensure financial sustainability.

Financial Costs of Settlement Patterns in Rural Victoria (Final Report June 2013) concluded that dispersed residential development (despite its more basic standard) generates considerable cost to local government and tends to be the most expensive form of development to councils in the long term. In contrast, infill development, that is development which takes place on vacant parcels of land within existing infrastructure networks, generates considerably less cost to local government. Greenfield development and its high level of infrastructure provisioning (typically paid for by developers) lumps councils with significant ongoing costs. The findings suggest that councils should consider financial implications in setting settlement policy as the effects of incremental dispersed development over time can be quite detrimental to council budgets, particularly in councils where there is limited growth otherwise.

Within Loddon Shire, not all rural roads are constructed to an all-weather standard, and as the planning scheme requires that the use and development of land for a dwelling is dependent on all-weather access, some proposals will require the applicant to upgrade their access at their cost. Although the developer pays to upgrade the road, it falls to Council to take on the maintenance. The cost of the provision of this infrastructure can discourage new development.

New settlement should be focussed in and around existing towns and the existing all-weather road network and any proposals that require the construction of new roads, even at the cost of the developer, should be minimised.

7.7.3 Other

Other significant infrastructure within Loddon Shire includes the Inglewood and Boort hospitals, and their associated aged care facilities and a number of primary and P-12 schools. Access to these services supports population growth and provides local employment.

7.8 **Flooding**

Significant parts of the Loddon Shire are subject to flooding.

The Bridgewater Township was extensively affected in the 2010 - 2011 floods, with many dwellings damaged. The opportunities for growth and development of certain parts of this town will be constrained by flood risk, however there remains opportunity for growth outside of these areas.

In seeking to avoid future flood risk, the North Central Catchment Management Authority (as the floodplain manager), will work with Council to manage both subdivision and development of land that has been identified as flood prone. Land that is not flood prone but relies on access that is subject to significant flood risk may also be subject to restrictions on development due to the risk to life and safety of residents trying to leave the property during a flood event. Flood prone land may be managed by imposing a minimum floor level on a proposed dwelling, preventing the further subdivision of land or by preventing development of a site all together.

Boort, Serpentine, Wedderburn, Inglewood and Pyramid Hill have some limitations due to the risk of flooding, however they are not as extensive or limiting as is the case at Bridgewater.

7.9 **Bushfire**

Bushfire risk will limit the growth of some fringe areas of Inglewood and Wedderburn due to their proximity to State forest. State Planning Policy requires that population growth be directed to low risk areas. Any development of existing urban zoned land for residential development will require a risk based design that seeks to minimise this threat to human life. This may involve buffers and lower development density, as well as building design and materials, to address fire risk.

7.10 **Climate change**

The predicted temperature increase as a result of climate change will have an impact on the amenity and liveability of Loddon towns in summer, in particular in aging and poor quality housing stock. New residential development must be well designed and energy efficient, with trees preserved where possible to ensure shade, to respond to this risk.

7.11 **Physical and social amenity**

High physical amenity is recognised as an influencing factor in the decision to relocate to a rural area. While all towns in the Loddon Shire have characteristics that contribute to a level of amenity, primarily their rural setting, access to water in an otherwise dry landscape is a particularly attractive attribute of Bridgewater, Boort, Laanecoorie, Newbridge and Eddington. The unique heritage character of the main street in Inglewood makes a significant contribution to the amenity of that town.

However, it has also been recognised that physical amenity can prove insufficient if other needs are not met. The opportunity to meet and connect through community groups, events and even

Page 14 of 40

the opportunity to walk within a community, contribute significantly to the social amenity of a town and provide a reason for residents to remain or return.

7.12 Community consultation

Community consultation was conducted through drop in sessions advertised in local papers and electronic platforms. Written submissions were also invited.

The key messages from the community consultation were:

- growth is supported
- township character must be preserved
- need to enhance amenity and services
- housing suited to older residents is required
- new industry and employment, including growth and diversification of agriculture, is required to attract population.

Details of the community consultation are included in Appendix 3.

7.13 Growth potential of Loddon Shire towns

Table 5 Loddon Shire Towns – opportunity for growth

	Land supply	Proximity to major regional centre	Infrastructure availability	Free from environmental constraints (e.g. Flooding, bushfire)	Amenity	Existing growth trends	Housing suitability (size, quality)
Inglewood	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Boort	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Bridgewater	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Wedderburn	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Pyramid Hill	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Eddington	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓
Dingee	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓
Newbridge	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓
Serpentine	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Laanecoorie	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓
Mitiamo	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓
Tarnagulla	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Korong Vale	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 5 provides a relative comparison of the Loddon Shire towns in terms of their suitability and potential for growth based on existing conditions. These drivers or requirements for growth have been discussed in this section of the report and provide an understanding of, firstly, the capacity of the township for growth (infrastructure, land supply) and secondly, the likelihood of the town attracting growth (access to employment, amenity).

Inglewood ranks strongly due to its proximity to Bendigo, level of infrastructure (water, sewerage, hospital and aged care facility) and amenity associated with its heritage character.

Boort also has high levels of infrastructure (including a hospital and P-12 school), high amenity associated with the lake, but distance to Bendigo does have some effect on its ability to attract growth. Limited infrastructure and flooding issues affects Bridgewater’s suitability for growth, despite its strong amenity associated with the Loddon River.

The proximity to Bendigo can be counteracted to some extent through the support and encouragement of local employment options. This can include further development of the tourism and agricultural industry with this being considered in the new Tourism and Economic Development Strategy that is currently being prepared. However provision of local employment needs to be partnered with appropriate housing options, in particular quality housing, and township amenity in terms of presentation and social connection, to best position Loddon Shire to attract new residents.

Some of the requirements of growth can be changed through government investment (e.g. Infrastructure); however the cost of this is likely to be significant. For example the provision of reticulated water and sewerage at Newbridge, which is currently the subject of an economic assessment.

8 STRATEGY

The Loddon Shire has considerable capacity for residential growth. The Loddon Shire Settlement Strategy recognises that there is an existing substantial supply of vacant residential land, and that generation of demand must accompany provision of land in the pursuit of growth. Demand can be encouraged through economic development and enhanced physical and social amenity. This strategy links a range of Council responsibilities and priorities, including land supply, infrastructure provision and economic development to support sustainable settlement planning.

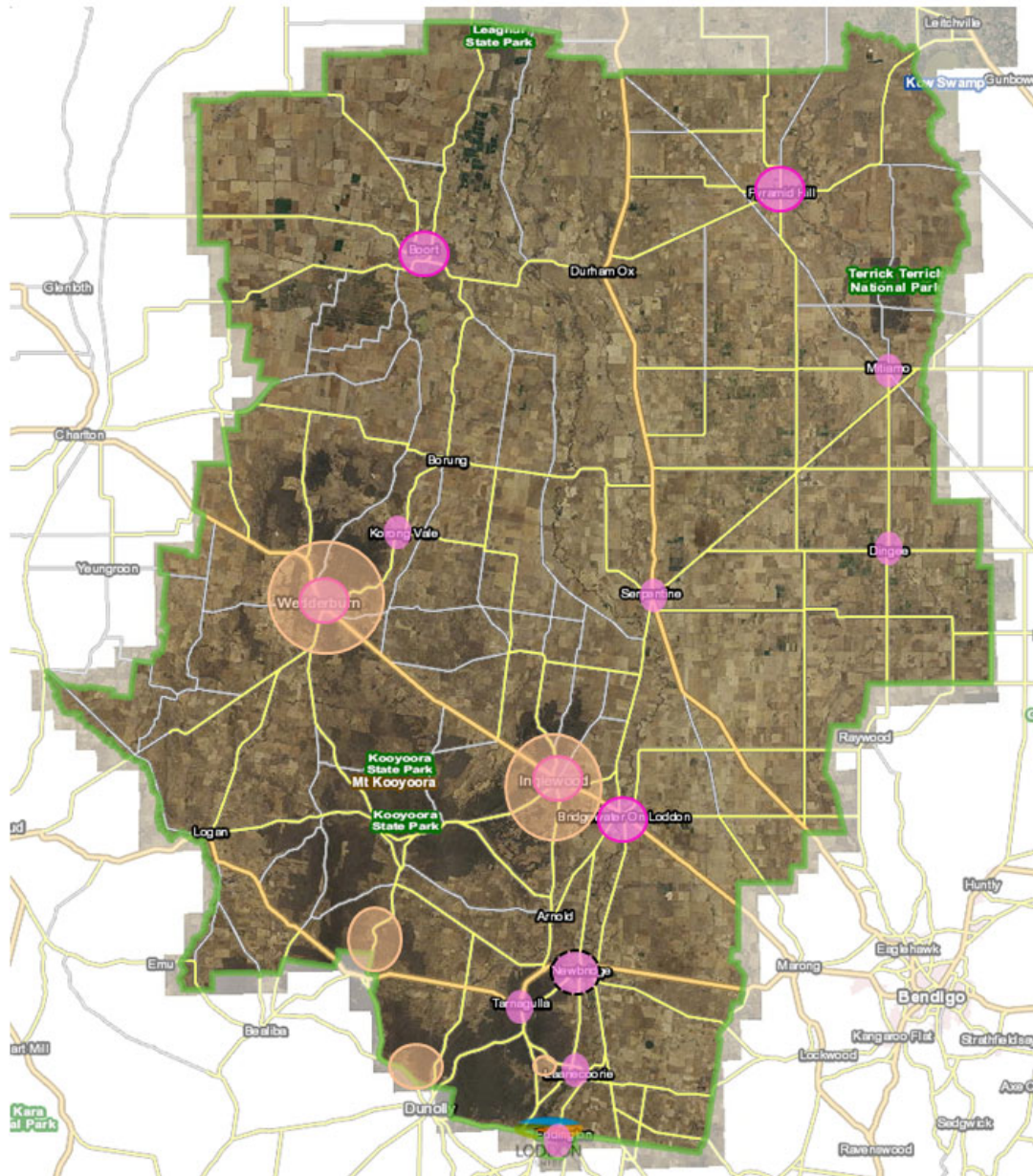
This strategy seeks to facilitate population growth and build on existing communities to support their viability and maximise infrastructure investment. This strategy provides for a range of residential forms across the Loddon Shire while also protecting the opportunity for the agricultural sector to readily operate and expand, managing Council's infrastructure liability and preserving the unique landscape and amenity of Loddon Shire.





This strategy aims to support *vibrant communities in a productive agricultural landscape*.

This strategy is framed by the following objectives:

- Provide for and encourage residential **growth** in the existing well serviced towns.
- Support a **diversity** of residential opportunities across the Loddon Shire including conventional residential, medium density and rural living.
- Protect the opportunity for the **agricultural sector** to operate and expand relatively unhindered as it is the driver of economic growth.
- Maximise the use of **existing infrastructure**, including roads, community and sporting facilities.
- Attract and retain residents through enhancing the physical and social **amenity** and encouraging **connection** and **attachment**.
- Encourage **sustainable** urban forms, including walkable towns and urban consolidation.
- Protect the **environmental** assets of the Loddon Shire, including native vegetation and waterways for their contribution to amenity, tourism value and agriculture.

LODDON SHIRE SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE PLAN



	<p>Priority growth towns – support urban consolidation and provide for urban expansion when required.</p>
	<p>Potential new growth opportunity – opportunity for new growth subject to the provision of sewer and water.</p>
	<p>Existing small townships – support ongoing residential development on existing Township zoned land subject to satisfactory effluent disposal.</p>
	<p>Rural living communities – support consolidation and ongoing supply in accordance with State planning policy.</p>

8.1 Priority growth towns

New residential development, at a range of densities, will be encouraged within the towns of Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn. The relative low density of development in the towns, along with multiple vacant parcels, provides significant opportunities for consolidation of the existing urban footprint and increased densities in key locations and this opportunity will be promoted.

These towns have the greatest range of infrastructure and therefore provide the most sustainable and economically efficient option for growth. In particular, the availability of reticulated sewerage provides a significant advantage to these towns over others in the Loddon Shire.

Based on current development rates, these five towns currently offer significant capacity for new residential development through the use of existing vacant lots and redevelopment or restoration of older housing, with future opportunities for urban expansion should the rate of development increase. Infill development in the form of further subdivision of existing urban lots (creating lots smaller than 300m² may be possible) delivers a significant opportunity to local residents and Council. Residents are able to subdivide and sell underutilised land within the Township zone for residential development and a higher density of development will provide for a more efficient urban form and infrastructure use. This strategy will deliver the following growth opportunities.

Town	Approximate growth capacity - dwellings ⁹		
	Short term (currently zoned TZ) ¹⁰	Years supply ¹¹	Long term (subject to rezoning)
Boort	70	30	500+
Bridgewater	TZ 200+ LDRZ ¹² 70+	100+ 70+	500+
Inglewood	TZ 200+ LDRZ 200+	70 100+	400+
Pyramid Hill	80	80	300+
Wedderburn	TZ 300+ LDRZ 40	100 40+	200+

⁹ At 15 lots / hectare and based on structure plan

¹⁰ Township Zone

¹¹ Based on average building approvals (new dwellings) per year 2006-2017

¹² Low Density Residential Zone

8.1.1 Boort settlement structure plan



★	Existing residential growth opportunity – approximate yield of 50-60 lots from these three sites.
➡	Future residential growth opportunity (subject to flood management, environmental and heritage considerations).

The key strategic objectives for Boort are:

- Focus residential growth around the lake and town centre.
- Enhance visual and physical links to the lake.
- Support medium density housing.
- Support residential development of vacant land within the existing urban footprint – in particular opposite the caravan park and the former primary school site.
- Protect light industrial expansion opportunities.

To achieve these objectives, Council will:

- Investigate development opportunities and interest for former primary school site and McMillans Rd land, including discussions with land owners.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to upgrade the main street and lake environs.
- Construct a flood levee to protect residential areas and future growth area on the east side of town.
- Investigate alternative zoning opportunities for land to the west of the railway line.

8.1.2 Bridgewater settlement structure plan



★	Existing residential growth opportunity – approximate yield of 200+ lots from these sites.
➡	Future residential growth opportunity (subject to flood management, environmental and heritage considerations).

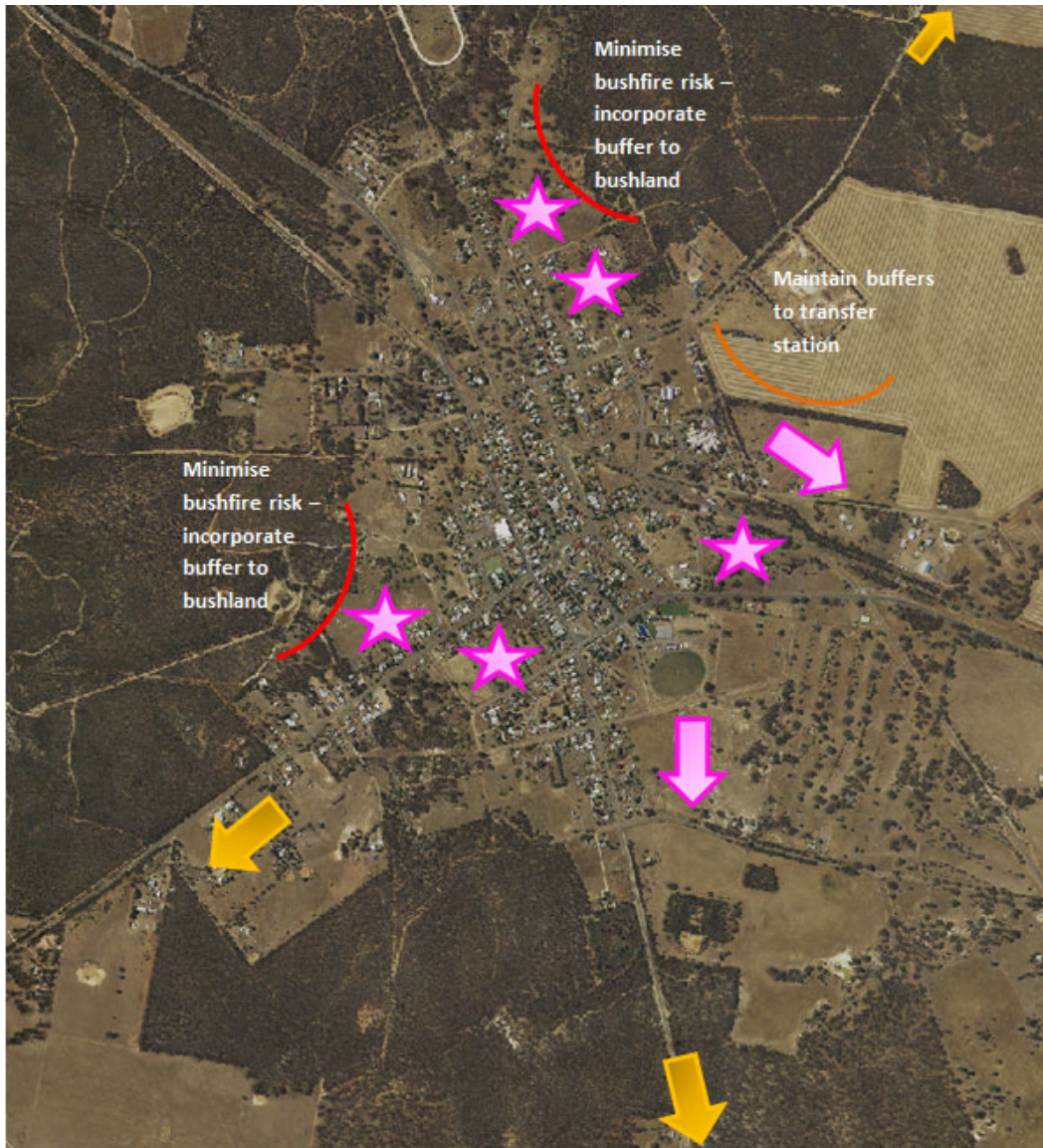
The key strategic objectives for Bridgewater are:

- Enhance the visual and physical links to the Loddon River.
- Support residential development of key Township zoned sites.
- Maximise development opportunities on land south of Sugargum Drive.
- Protect existing industry.
- Minimise flood risk to residents and infrastructure.

To achieve these objectives Council will:

- Update flood controls based on recent mapping.
- Discuss the potential to increase development density of Sugargum Drive land with Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).
- Continue to investigate opportunities to upgrade the main street and river environs.
- Complete the foreshore development project.
- Support community and tourism uses on the Loddon River.

8.1.3 Inglewood settlement structure plan



★	Existing residential growth opportunity – approximate yield of 200+ lots from these sites.
➡	Future residential growth opportunity.
➡	Rural living

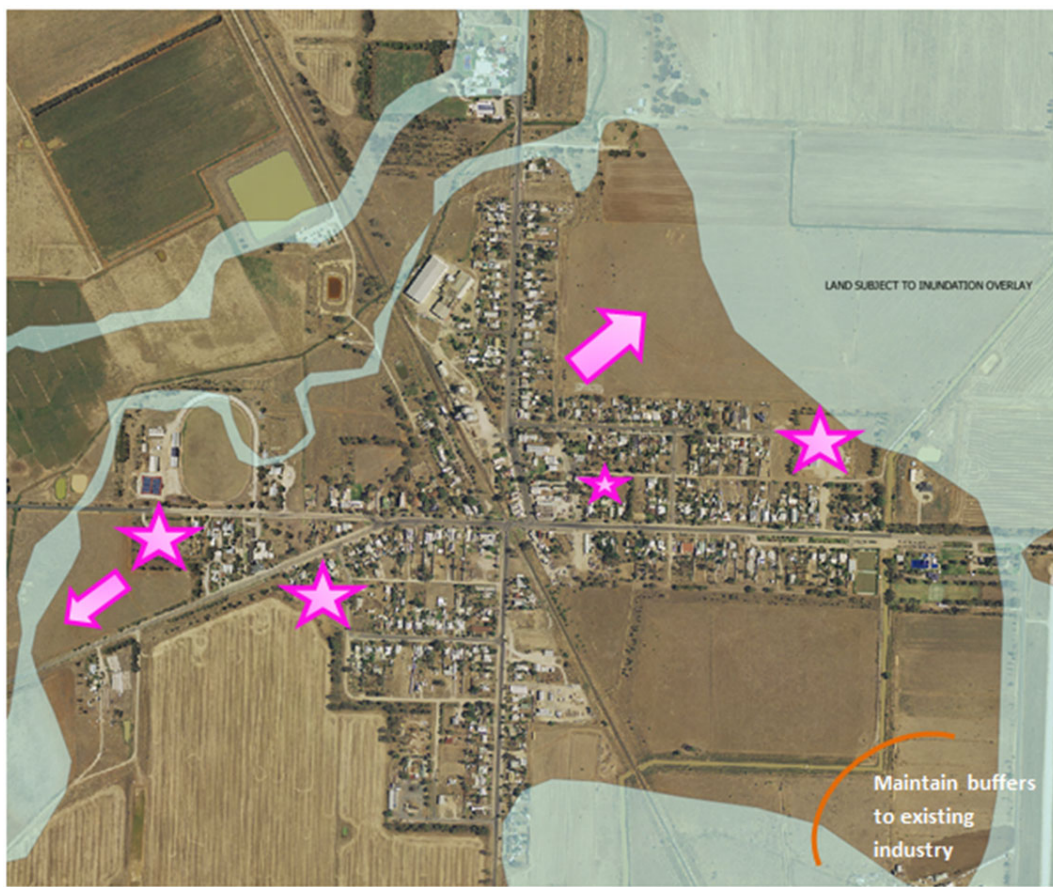
The key strategic objectives for Inglewood are:

- Focus residential growth around town centre.
- Support infill residential development, including medium density.
- Protect the heritage character.
- Support the development of rural living areas surrounding the town.

To achieve these objectives Council will:

- Continue to encourage DELWP to dispose of Crown land parcels that are suitable for development within the existing Township Zone.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to upgrade the main street.
- Develop and implement the Heritage Framework to provide interest free loans to assist with the restoration of heritage properties.
- Investigate options to upgrade Wet Lane / Walker Lane to all weather standard to open up this area of Rural Living Zone land.

8.1.4 Pyramid Hill settlement structure plan



★	Existing residential growth opportunity – approximate yield of 80 lots from these sites and other infill.
➔	Future residential growth opportunity.

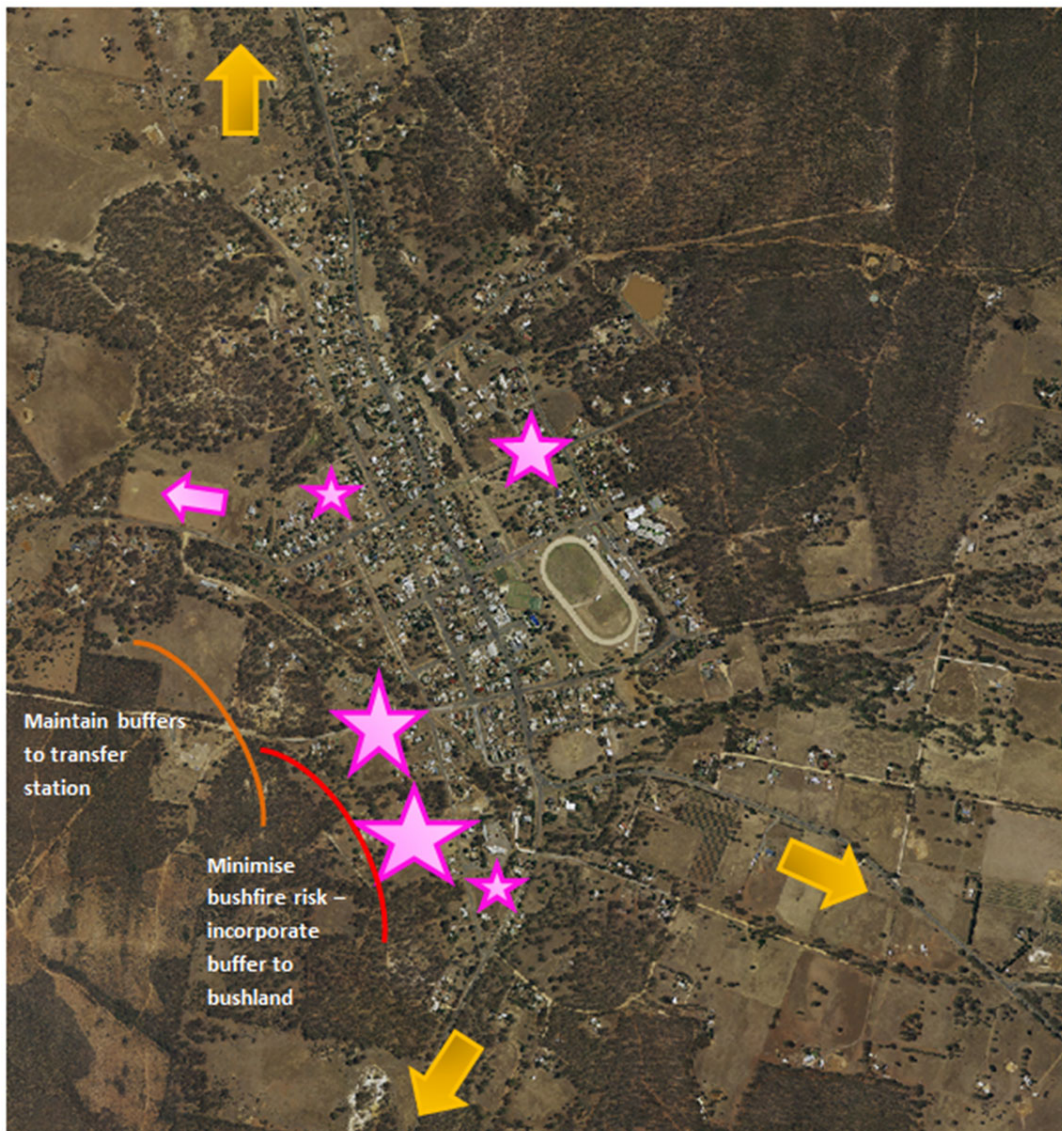
The key strategic objectives for Pyramid Hill are:

- Focus residential growth around town centre.
- Support urban consolidation, including medium density.
- Protect and enhance physical and visual links to the hill.

To achieve these objectives Council will:

- Investigate opportunities to subdivide and/or dispose of Council owned vacant land in Pyramid Hill.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to upgrade the main street.
- Investigate the future use vacant land to the north of Council’s depot site.

8.1.5 Wedderburn settlement structure plan



★	Existing residential growth opportunity – approximate yield of 200+ lots from these sites and additional urban consolidation.
➡	Future residential growth opportunity.
➡	Rural living

The key strategic objectives for Wedderburn are:

- Support consolidation of the existing urban footprint with residential development at a range of densities.
- Upgrade pedestrian linkages throughout the town.
- Support quality development of rural living land.

To achieve these objectives Council will:

- Continue to investigate development of Stage 2 of Ridge Street residential development.
- Consider opportunities for residential development of other Council land, including the vacant land at the southern end of the depot site and land is Reef Street.
- Investigate opportunities to enhance the amenity and presentation of Ridge St in the vicinity of the Council residential development and the Council Depot.
- Continue to build on walking and bike tracks in and around town. Utilise information from the Public Realm Audit (refer Appendix 1).
- Develop and implement a Heritage Framework to provide interest free loans to assist with the restoration of heritage properties.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to further enhance High Street.

8.2 Potential new growth opportunity

The town of Newbridge has been identified as having unique qualities that could stimulate new growth and development. The high amenity location of Newbridge on the Loddon River, along with proximity to Bendigo, is considered to be a growth opportunity. This opportunity cannot be realised without reticulated sewerage and water. The cost of this infrastructure is a significant constraint and a Water and Sewerage Economic Assessment is currently being prepared to explore the feasibility of installation.

Town	Approximate growth capacity - dwellings		
	Short term (currently zoned TZ) ¹³	Years supply ¹⁴	Long term (subject to sewer/water) ¹⁵
Newbridge	20	10	80+ (existing TZ) 500+ (rezoning)




¹³ At 2.5 lots / hectare (to meet effluent disposal requirements)

¹⁴ Based on average building approvals (new dwellings) per year 2006-2017

¹⁵ At 15 lots / hectare

8.2.1 Newbridge settlement structure plan



	Existing residential growth opportunity – subject to effluent disposal requirements and management of flood risk.
	Future residential growth opportunity subject to the installation of reticulated sewer.
	Review zoning due to flood risk

The key strategic objectives for Newbridge are:

- Support the growth of the town subject to wastewater disposal requirements.
- Minimise flood risk to the community and infrastructure.
- Protect the river environs and enhance links between residential areas and the river.

To achieve these objectives Council will:



- Work with the community to lobby Coliban Water and government to provide reticulated sewer and water for Newbridge.
- Update flood mapping to accurately identify risk.

8.3 Existing small townships

New residential development will be supported in the existing township area of the smaller towns where it can be demonstrated that effluent can be managed in accordance with relevant legislation. In the absence of reticulated sewer, expansion of the urban area cannot be supported. The extent of the urban area in some towns (Serpentine, Laanecoorie and Newbridge) should be reviewed due to flood risk.

Town	Approximate growth capacity	
	Dwellings ¹⁶	Years supply ¹⁷
Dingee	5	5+
Eddington	70	50
Korong Vale	15	15 +
Laanecoorie	13	10+
Mitiamo	15	15+
Serpentine	40 (outside LSIO ¹⁸)	40
Tarnagulla	6	5

Key for small townships structure plans

	Existing residential growth opportunity – subject to effluent disposal requirements.
	Review zoning due to flood risk

¹⁶ At 2.5 lots / hectare

¹⁷ Based on average building approvals (new dwellings) per year 2006-2017

¹⁸ Land Subject to Inundation Overlay

8.3.1 Dingee settlement structure plan



8.3.2 Eddington settlement structure plan



8.3.3 Korong Vale settlement structure plan



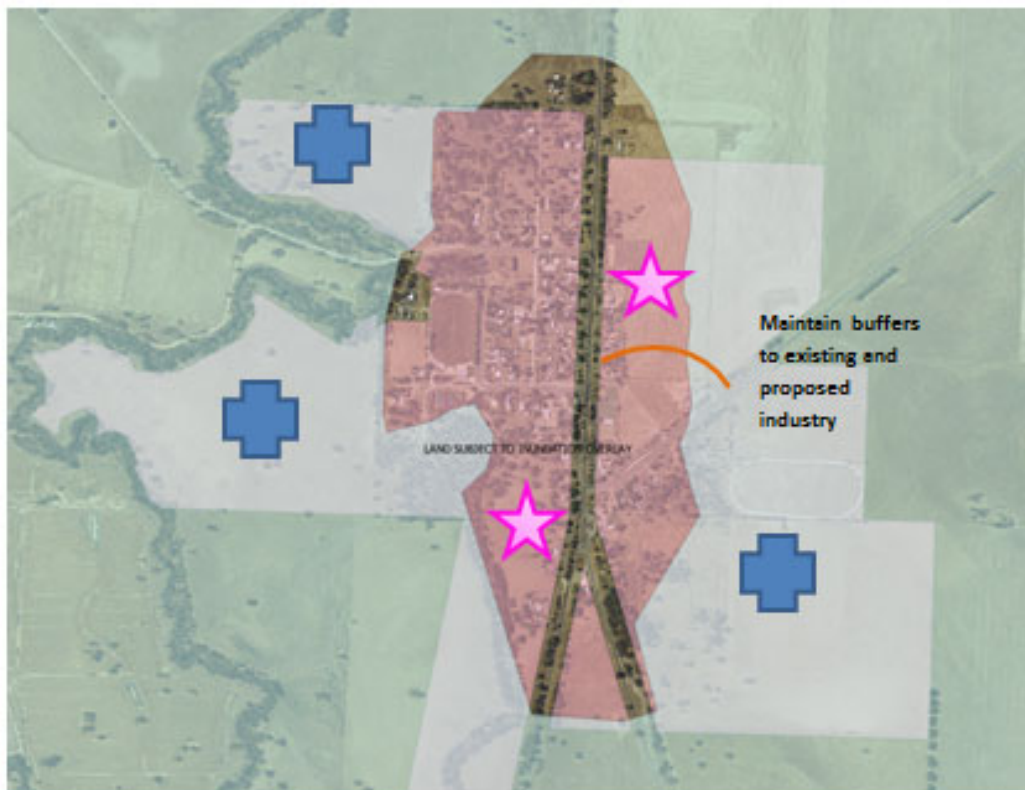
8.3.4 Laanecoorie settlement structure plan



8.3.5 Mitiamo settlement structure plan



8.3.6 Serpentine settlement structure plan



8.3.7 Tarnagulla settlement structure plan



8.4 Rural living

Rural living will continue to be supported as a valuable part of the residential opportunities in the Loddon Shire. The opportunity to live on a hobby farm or in a bush setting attracts many new residents to Loddon Shire. Building on existing rural living communities will ensure that the cost associated with this form of land use, including infrastructure provision and loss of agricultural land, will not outweigh the benefits.

District	Approximate growth capacity	
	Dwellings ¹⁹	Years supply ²⁰
Dunolly	50	20
Inglewood	90	20
Laanecoorie	10	5
McIntyre	50	20
Wedderburn	200+	30+

The key strategic objectives for the rural living areas are:

- Support the ongoing development of the existing rural living areas.
- Minimise rural living housing elsewhere.

To achieve these objectives Council will:

- Investigate an amendment of the Schedule to the Rural Living Zone to reduce the permit trigger size for dwellings and minimum subdivision size to facilitate development and enhance supply without expansion of the rural living footprint.
- Develop a local planning policy that recognises the role and function of the McIntyre rural living area.
- Investigate options to upgrade Wet Lane / Walker Lane, Inglewood to all weather standard to open up this area of Rural Living Zone land.

¹⁹ Based on number of vacant lots

²⁰ Based on average building approvals (new dwellings) per year 2006-2017

9 COSTING AND FUNDING OF ACTIONS

Action	Cost of project	Total expected funding	Net cost to Council	Proposed funding source	Completion timeframe
Overall					
Incorporate the settlement objectives into the planning scheme structure plans for the growth towns.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	June 2021
Promote the opportunity for further subdivision of Township zoned lots (including those already developed) within the key growth townships.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	March 2020
Undertake detailed investigation of identified residential growth opportunities in the priority towns to determine yield and estimated development cost.	\$50,000	Nil	\$50,000	Council	December 2020
Undertake research and develop policy to define the value of Council participating in residential land development.	\$75,000	Nil	\$75,000	Council	June 2021
Undertake an Industrial Land Strategy to support job creation in the municipality.	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	TBC	December 2020
Develop and implement a Heritage Framework to provide interest free loans to assist with the restoration of heritage properties to enhance the character, amenity and presentation of heritage towns.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	August 2020

Action	Cost of project	Total expected funding	Net cost to Council	Proposed funding source	Completion timeframe
Key Growth Towns					
Boort					
In conjunction with Executive and Commercial Services, investigate development opportunities and interest for former primary school site and McMillans Rd land, including discussions with land owners.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	Ongoing
Bridgewater					
Update flood controls based on recent NCCMA mapping.	\$100,000	\$80,000	\$20,000	State Government	August 2020
Discuss the potential to increase development density of Sugargum Drive land with DELWP.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	Ongoing
Inglewood					
Encourage DELWP to dispose of Crown land parcels that are suitable for development within the existing Township Zone.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	Ongoing
Pyramid Hill					
Investigate opportunities to subdivide and/or dispose of Council owned, vacant land in Pyramid Hill	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	Ongoing
Investigate future use of the north of Council depot site.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	Ongoing
Wedderburn					
Investigate development of Stage 2 of Ridge Street residential development.	\$15,000	Nil	\$15,000	Council	July 2020
Investigate development	N/A	N/A	Within existing	N/A	Ongoing

Action	Cost of project	Total expected funding	Net cost to Council	Proposed funding source	Completion timeframe
opportunities to enhance the amenity of Ridge St in the vicinity of the new residential development.			resources		
New Growth Opportunities					
Newbridge					
Continue to work with Coliban Water and the community to investigate options, cost and funding sources for reticulated sewerage and water for Newbridge.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	Ongoing
Update flood mapping to accurately identify risk.	Currently in discussion with NCCMA. Likely to be predominantly funded by State Government.				2021-2025
Existing Small Townships					
Investigate restructure of small lots outside the Township Zone at Korong Vale.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	June 2021
Review zoning of flood prone land in Laanecoorie, Newbridge and Serpentine.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	December 2022
Rural Living					
Investigate an amendment to the Schedule to the Rural Living Zone to reduce the permit trigger for dwellings and the minimum lot size for subdivision to facilitate development and enhance the rural living land supply.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	June 2023
Develop a local planning policy that recognises the role and function of the McIntyre rural living area.	N/A	N/A	Within existing resources	N/A	June 2021
Investigate options to upgrade Wet	N/A	N/A	Within existing	Assets and	June 2020

Action	Cost of project	Total expected funding	Net cost to Council	Proposed funding source	Completion timeframe
Lane / Walker Lane to all weather standard to open up this area of Rural Living Zone land.			resources	Infrastructure Department	

N/A – Not applicable.

**APPENDIX 1: Streamlining for Growth
Loddon Shire Towns Housing and Population
Summary – 2016 Census**

Streamlining for Growth

Loddon Shire Towns Housing and Population Summary – 2016 Census



Prepared by Loddon Shire and La Trobe University

Funded by the Victorian Planning Authority



Loddon Population Profile

This Population Profile is specifically intended to support the 'Streamlining for Growth' Project, funded by the VPA. This project is part of a strategic exercise exploring housing needs in Loddon Shire, particularly in the five largest urban centres; Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn.

Loddon Shire is an area dominated by agricultural land use and includes a number of small towns and rural districts. It sits within a large area of north-western Victoria that has experienced population stability, as well as population loss, over several decades. The patterns of change have been uneven, and these reflect issues of agricultural systems, proximity to larger regional centres and specific local conditions.

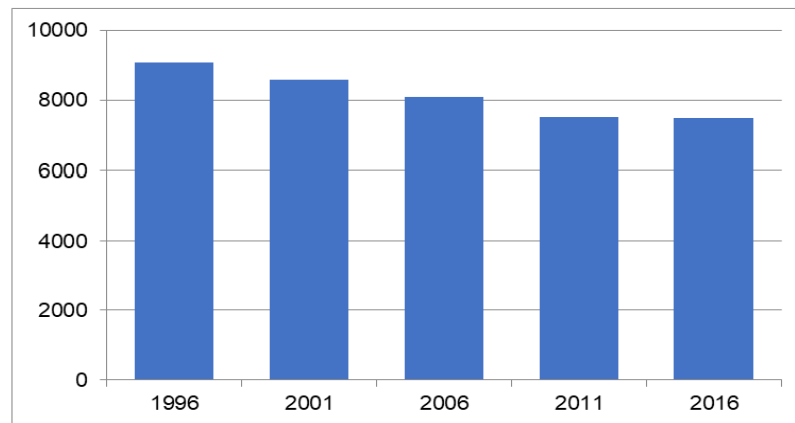
Characteristic demographic patterns include population ageing, rural population loss coupled with agricultural restructure and a reduction in farm numbers, and the centralisation of population into larger centres within the region - all outside of Loddon Shire. However there also evidence of growth, especially in the south of Loddon, where the expanding urban imprint of Bendigo is increasingly evident. Within these broader patterns some distinct features of change apply demographically and geographically, and these suggest implications for housing, land use and community planning. In conjunction with the town housing audit work accompanying this report, it is evident that housing diversity and housing need are mismatched in a number of locations, even within a context of slow or low population change. Consequently, the characteristics of change and of extant populations should be considered within the content of housing supply and its characteristics, especially where population mobility may be driven by local housing options and affordability.

This profile provides a review and analysis of population characteristics and change with a focus on the recently released results of the 2016 census. The profile is in two parts: firstly general population characteristics are profiled, secondly an analysis of these factors at a localised level are offered.

Population Change and Features

Population decline is the critical defining feature of the demography of Loddon Shire. Figure 1 shows a slow, population decline since 1996 which has slowed between 2011 and 2016 with only a slight recent population decrease. The most recent Victorian Government population projects suggest a continued slow decline in population, and while Loddon Shire has actively sought to address the impacts of this through community and economic planning, the structural basis for this trend is likely to remain. However, it is also apparent that in some localities within the Shire, these longer-term trends are less influential than exurban growth emanating from Bendigo.

Figure 1: Loddon Shire Population 1996-2016

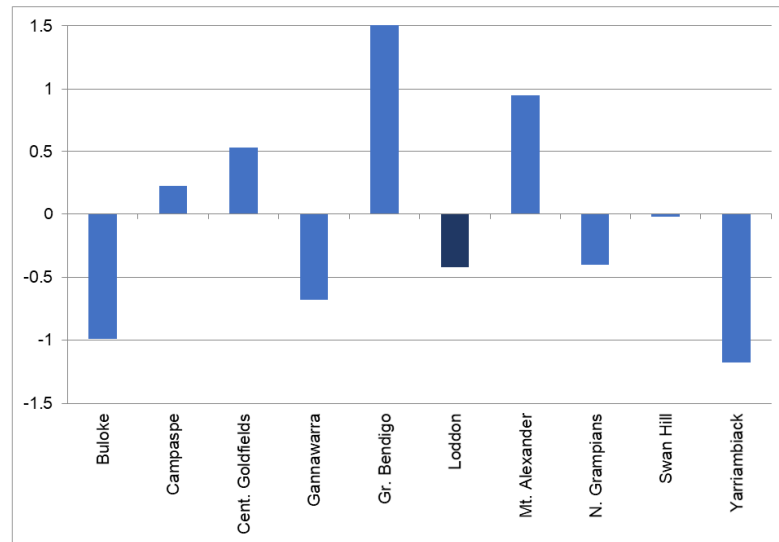


Source: ABS Counting Persons, Place of Usual Residence

This is broadly consistent with regional trends. Figure 2 provides comparative population change data for a number of regional Local Government Areas. Those areas with larger urban centres (Bendigo, Castlemaine, Echuca and Maryborough) are experiencing growth, while those areas characterised by agricultural production and smaller towns are experiencing decline.

Within these examples, trends include the centralisation of population into urban Echuca and Swan Hill, and growth focussed on locations near large urban centres – and increasing focus on Melbourne commuting even as far north as Castlemaine. Some areas of Loddon Shire offer good levels of access to urban Bendigo, but as discussed below, commuting flows go both ways.

Figure 2: Average Annual Change (Regional LGAs) 2006-2016 -%



The age structure of Loddon is striking, and consistent with recent census results (over several decades). It is also consistent with age structures in many communities in NW Victoria. As Figure 3 indicates, the population retains school-aged children, but young adults remain a very small part of the population structure.

The bulge in over 55 year olds is interesting as, at least in the 55-70 year age groups, has a gender mis-match, skewed to men. In older age groups this is (as is typical in most communities) skewed to women.

The broader implications of this structure for housing are discussed below in the description of household structures.

Figure 3: Age and Sex Structure, Loddon LGA, 2016

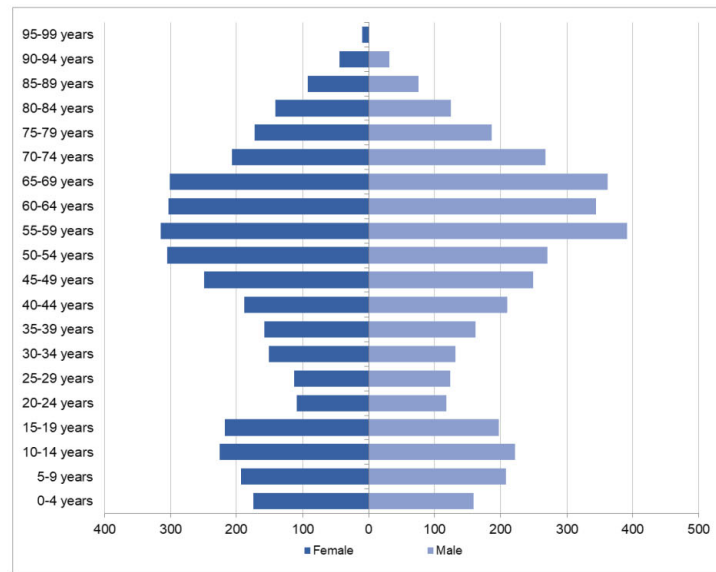
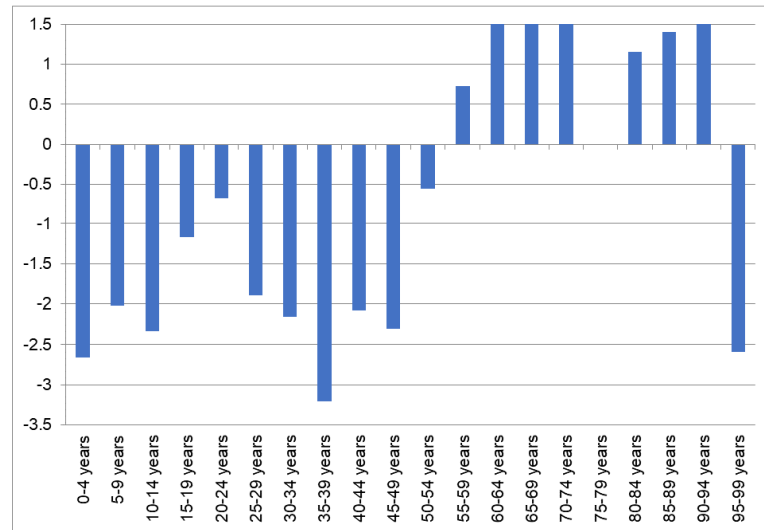


Figure 4 below indicates this pattern since 2001. There has been a decline in all age groups below 50 years and high rates of increase of the population aged 55-64 years, as well as amongst those aged on 80 years. Interestingly, the large decline in those aged 30-34 suggests a pattern beyond the traditional loss of those at school leaving age.

The growth in pre and post retirement age groups is significant. It is not simply an artefact of ageing, but also of active migration in these age groups.

The large proportional decline in those aged over 95 years should not be regarded as significant as the population numbers in this age group are small.

Figure 4: Average Annual Change (Age Groups) 2006-2016 -%

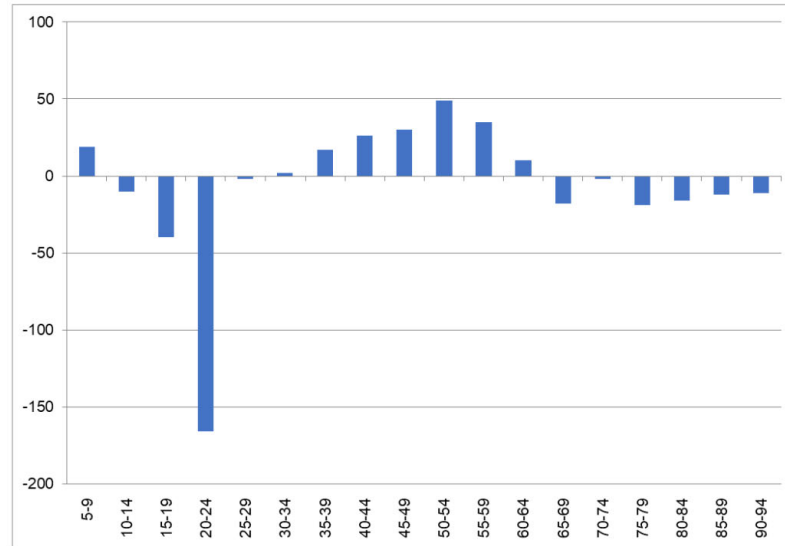


Loddon experienced net outward migration of 108 between the 2011 and 2016, with 1,215 people leaving and 1107 moving into Loddon. Outward migration was most evident through migration to Bendigo, with then some movement to Melbourne and to the surrounding regional LGAs including Campaspe, Swan Hill and Gannawarra.

Inward migration was mostly from Bendigo and Melbourne. Overall there was a net loss of people to Bendigo amongst younger age groups and net gain of people from in older age groups from diverse locations, including metropolitan Melbourne and larger regional centres.

The internal migration data reveals some specific characteristics. Most evident is the age profile of migration. Figure 5 shows migration by age groups. Net outward movement is most evident amongst young adults and those at and around school leaving age. Much lower rates of net inward migration is evident among those aged 35-65 years.

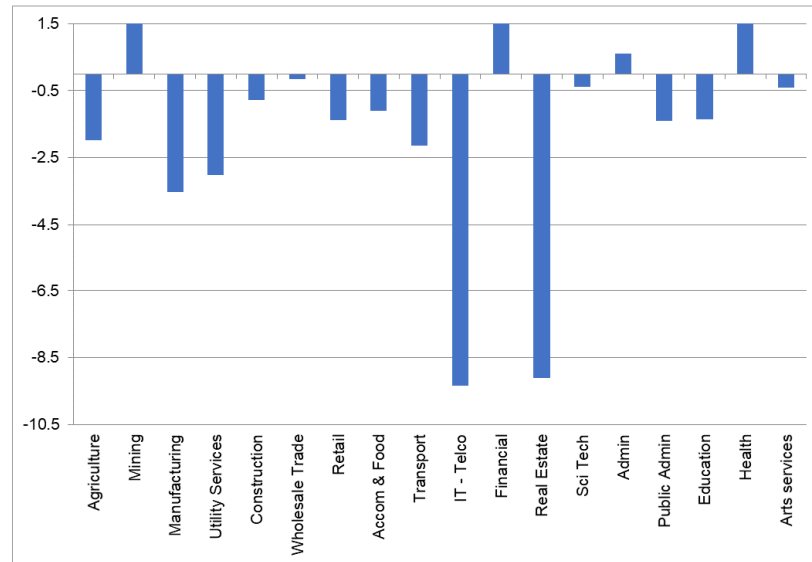
Figure 5: Net Migration 2006-2011 (to/from Loddon) – by Age Groups



The trends in population ageing are also reflected in workforce data for residents in the Shire. Labour force participation rates of those over 15 years have declined since 2006. At the 2016 census 56% of the population over 15 years was in the full-time labour force, down from 60% in 2006. In this period the unemployment rate had declined, and part-time employment had increased as a share of total employment.

Nearly all employment sectors are declining as an employment feature, with growth notable in mining (from a very small base), finance and health services. This pattern is described in Figure 6. And should be considered alongside discussions below on where Loddon Residents are working, and where those employed in Loddon are living – recognise commuting and labour mobility.

Figure 6: Average Annual Change (Industry of Employment) Loddon Residents 2006-2016 (%)



While most of the local workforce lives locally, almost 30% live elsewhere, mostly in Greater Bendigo – see Table 1 and Figure 7. It is unclear if, for example, those usually resident in metropolitan Melbourne commute daily or live part time in Loddon or surrounds.

Table 1: Top Residential Locations for Employees Working in Loddon

LGA of Usual Residence	Number	%
Loddon (S)	1918	72.9
Greater Bendigo (C)	437	16.6
Gannawarra (S)	59	2.2
Metro. Melbourne	56	2.1
Central Goldfields (S)	39	1.5
Buloke (S)	26	1.0
Campaspe (S)	22	0.8
Mount Alexander (S)	20	0.8
Other	23	0.9
Total	2632	100.0

Figure 7: Industry of Employment for Non-Resident Employees Working in Loddon

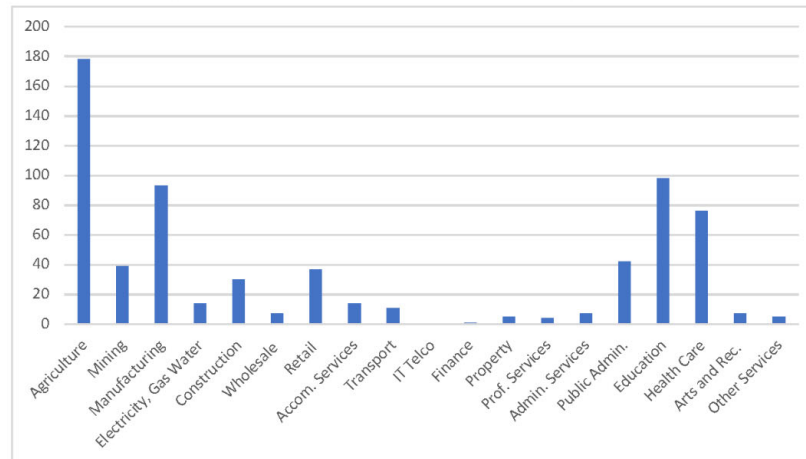
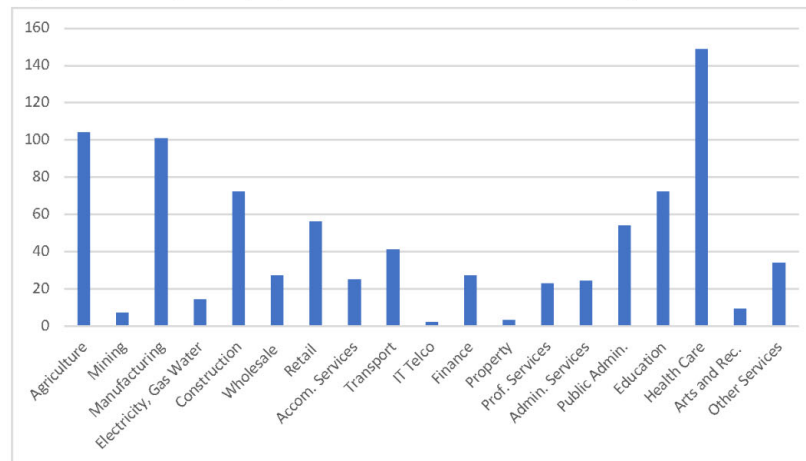


Figure 7 indicates that industries including agriculture, manufacturing, education and health care have some of the highest levels of employees commuting into Loddon from elsewhere, most prominently Bendigo. These data should be considered directly in the context of local housing markets.

Figure 8 shows that many of these industries are also prominent for Loddon residents working outside of the Shire – especially healthcare and manufacturing.

Figure 8: Industry of Employment for Loddon Residents Working Elsewhere

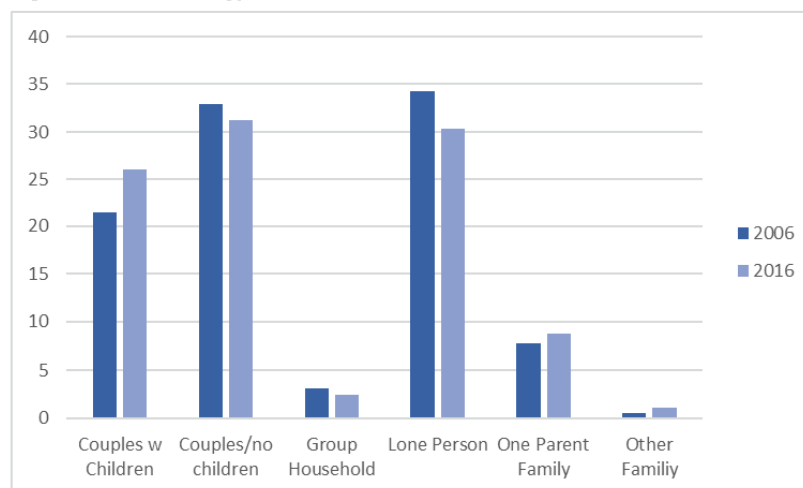


Household Patterns

While population trends offer a useful indication of change and need in the community, patterns of household formation and the features of housing are central to considering land use and settlement implications of population change. At the 2016 census, Loddon had 2957 households, fewer than the 3133 households recorded in 2006. The average household size in 2016 was 2.2 persons, a decline from 2.3 persons in 2006.

The ageing of the population is reflected in the decline in family households with children and an increasing share of lone person households. These are trends apparent generally in Australia, but they are more evident in rural areas. Figure 9 shows a considerable decline in family households with children, the share of single parent households has been stable in the decade to 2016, although they only represent about 7% of all households in Loddon. Lone person households (often comprising older single people) have decreased and are no longer the largest category of households.

Figure 9: Household Type 2006-2017 -% of total household



Despite the increasing numbers of smaller households, 94% of all dwellings in Loddon are still detached houses. The overall occupied housing stock has increased from 2006, and the share of units/flats and other dwellings has also increased slightly. This potentially suggests a preference for single houses, despite changing household sizes, and the likely consequence of availability of single dwellings.

Private ownership of housing remains dominant, with 78% of all occupied dwellings owned outright or mortgaged (although the share of mortgaged dwellings increased).

There are high levels of vacant housing in Loddon – at the 2016 census 20% of all dwellings were deemed unoccupied.

Local Population Summaries

The following summaries of population and household characteristics in the main urban centres offer reflection on the variegated nature of population change in Loddon. These are presented as a summary of key datasets

Boort Urban Area

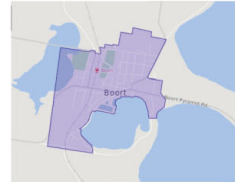


Figure 10: Population 1996-2016 Boort

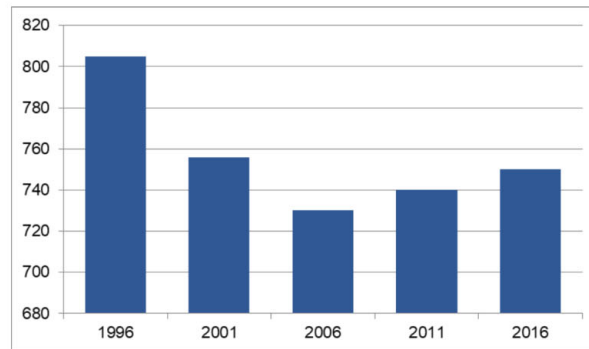


Figure 11: Average Annual Change (Age Groups) 2006-2016 -% Boort

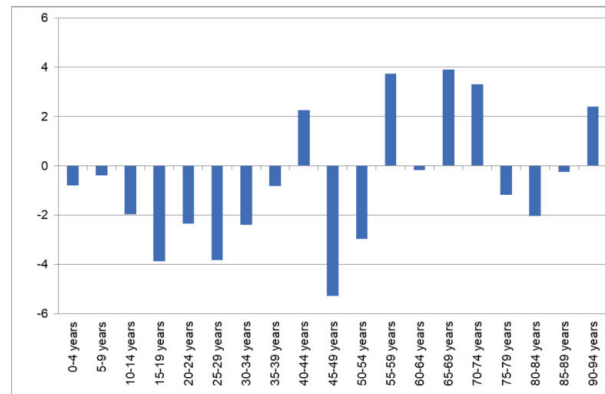


Figure 12: Household Type 2006-2017 -% of total household Boort

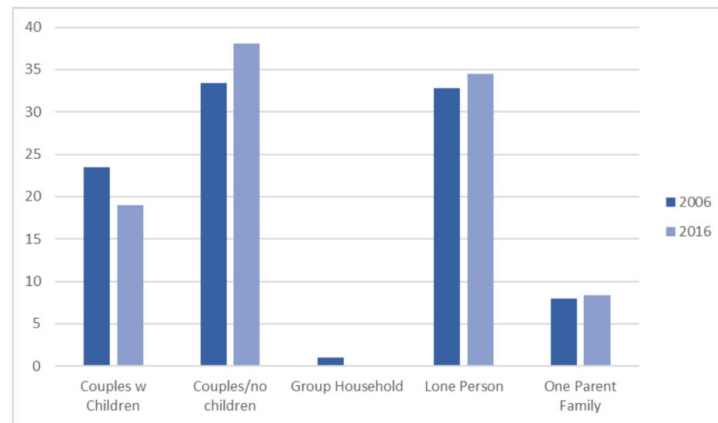
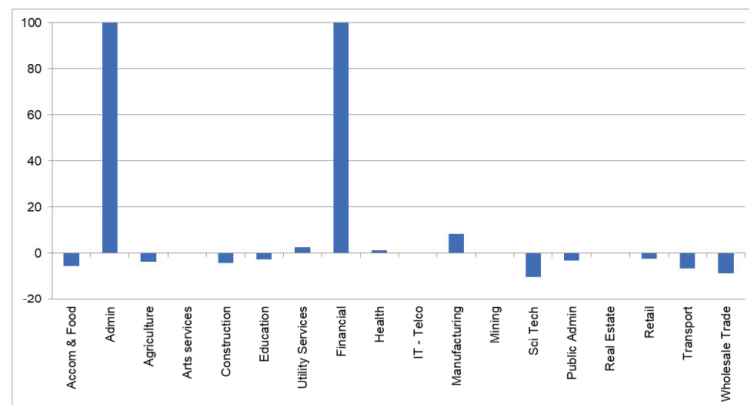


Figure 10: Average Annual Change (Industry of Employment) 2006-2016 -% Boort



Bridgewater Urban Area



Figure 11: Population 1996-2016 Bridgewater

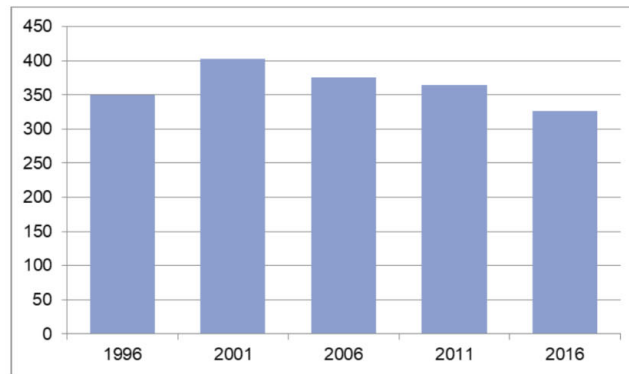


Figure 12: Average Annual Change (Age Groups) 2006-2016 -% 2016 Bridgewater

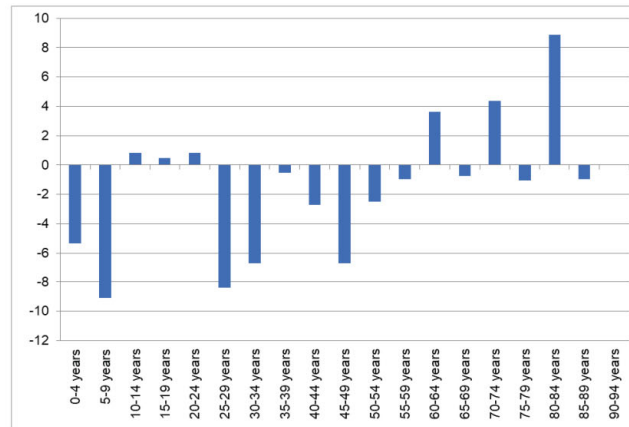


Figure 13: Household Type 2006-2017 -% of total household 2016 Bridgewater

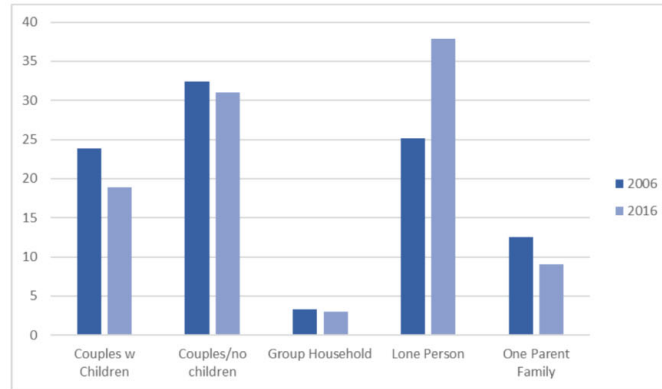
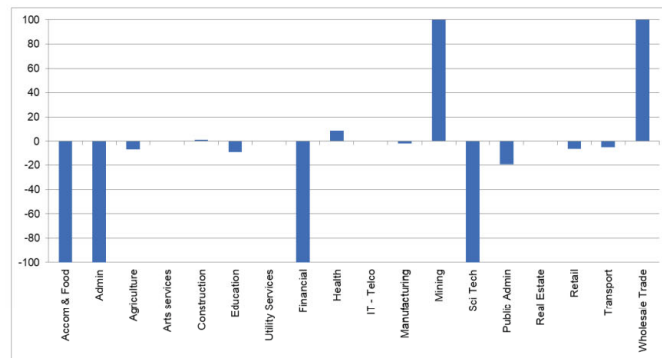


Figure 14: Average Annual Change (Industry of Employment) 2006-2016 (%) Bridgewater



Inglewood Urban Area



Figure 15: Population 1996-2016 Inglewood

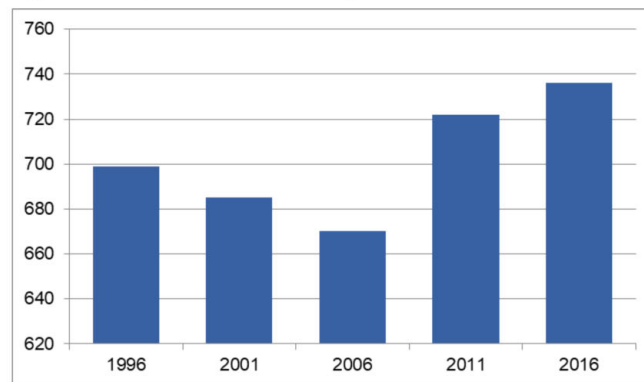


Figure 16: Average Annual Change (Age Groups) 2006-2016 -% 2016 Inglewood

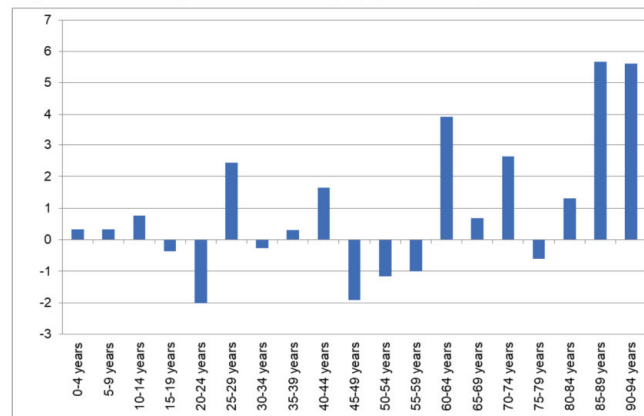


Figure 17: Household Type 2006-2017 -% of total household 2016 Inglewood

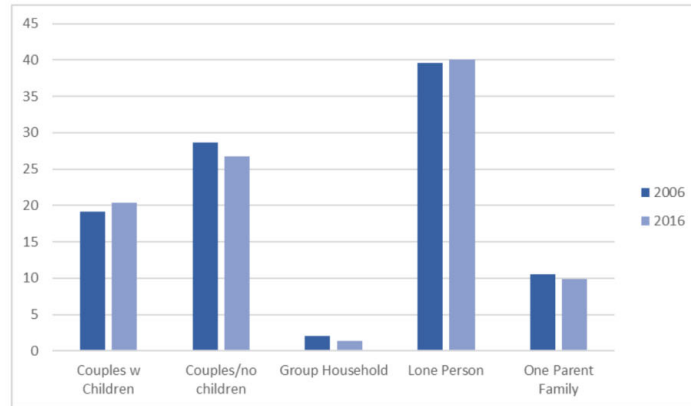
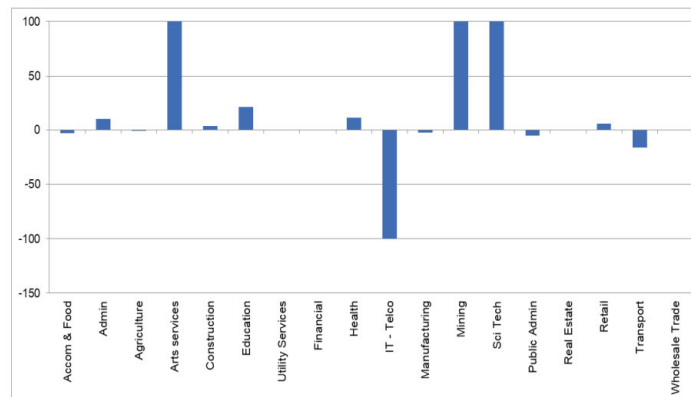


Figure 18: Average Annual Change (Industry of Employment) 2006-2016 (%) Inglewood



Pyramid Hill Urban Area

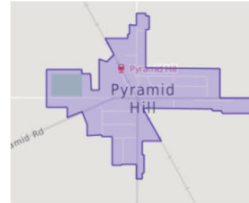


Figure 19: Population 1996-2016 Pyramid Hill

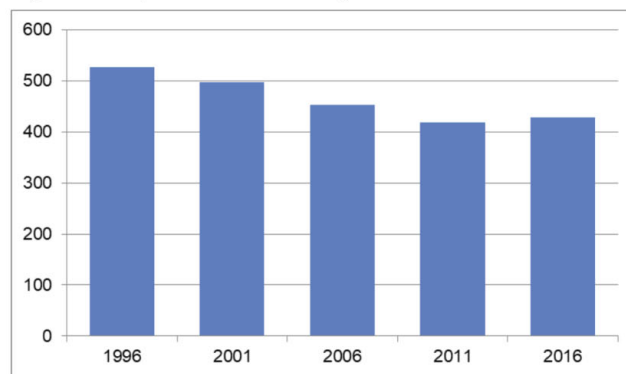


Figure 20: Average Annual Change (Age Groups) 2006-2016 -% 2016 Pyramid Hill

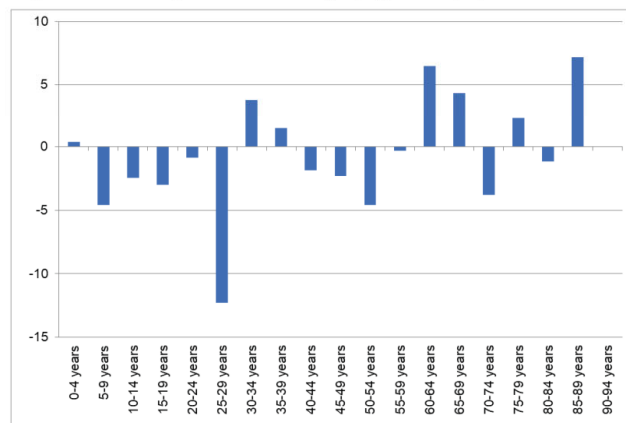


Figure 21: Household Type 2006-2017 -% of total household 2016 Pyramid Hill

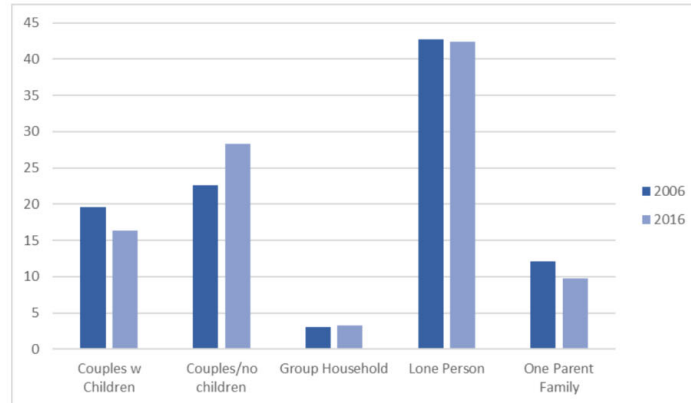
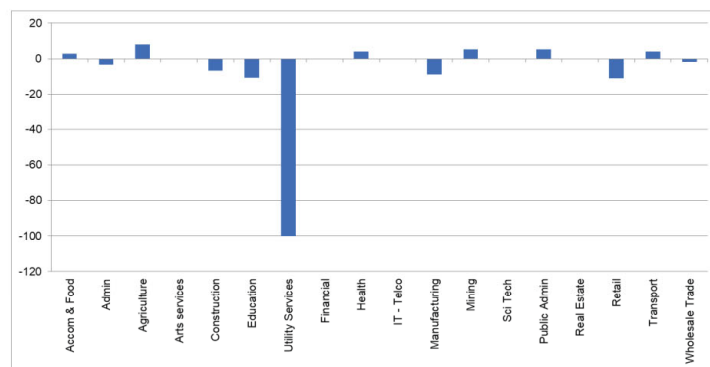


Figure 22: Average Annual Change (Industry of Employment) 2006-2016 (%) Pyramid Hill



Wedderburn Urban Area

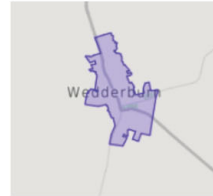


Figure 23: Population 1996-2016 Wedderburn

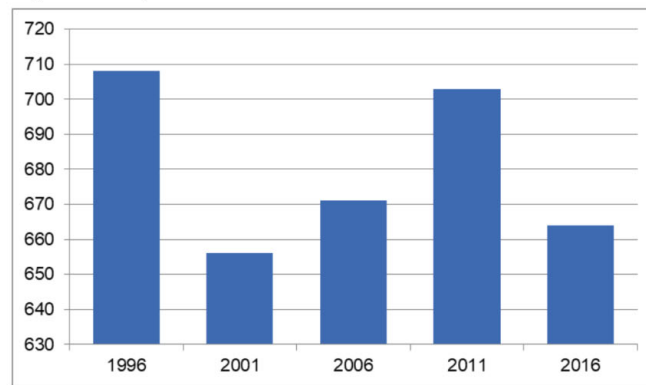


Figure 24: Average Annual Change (Age Groups) 2006-2016 -% 2016 Wedderburn

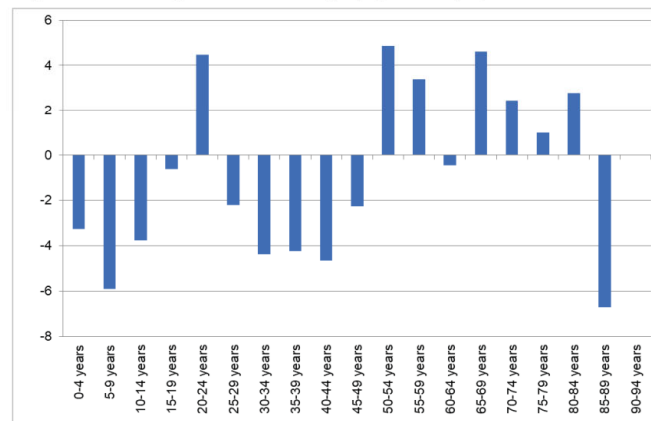


Figure 25: Household Type 2006-2017 -% of total household 2016 Wedderburn

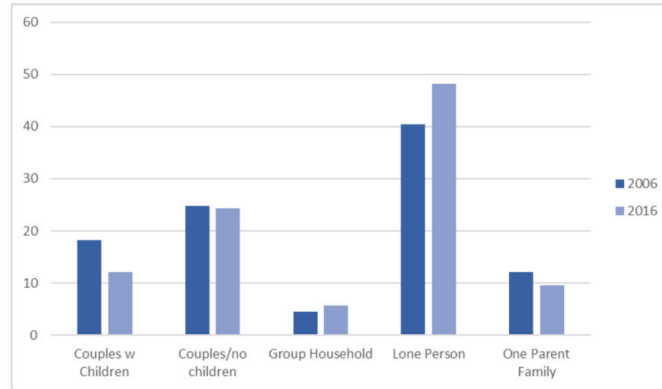
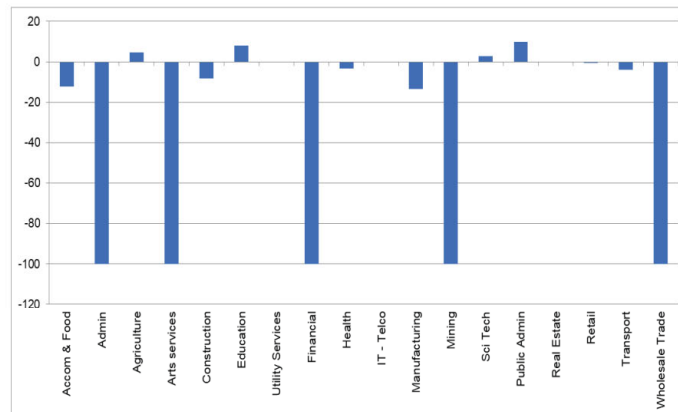


Figure 22: Average Annual Change (Industry of Employment) 2006-2016 (%) Wedderburn



**APPENDIX 2: Streamlining for Growth
Loddon Shire Towns Housing and Public Realm Audit**

Streamlining for Growth

Loddon Shire Towns Housing and Public Realm Audit



Prepared by Loddon Shire and La Trobe University

Funded by the Victorian Planning Authority



Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth Project

This report provides details of the results of a housing audit undertaken in Loddon Shire's 5 largest towns in 2017. It details the report objectives, the research approach and findings, including data tables and mapping.

Project Summary

The Loddon Streamlining for growth project was funded by the Victorian Planning Authority and involved an audit of housing and public realm in the five large urban centres in Loddon Shire. The project has been co-ordinated by Loddon Shire and undertaken by planning program staff and students at La Trobe University, Bendigo.

The project objectives were to provide an understanding of the housing mix, indicators of housing quality and scope for housing development and renewal in these towns, as well as mapping elements of the broader public realm to complement existing databases held by Loddon Shire on footpaths and similar public realm infrastructure. These objectives have arisen in response to a range of demographic and socio-economic trends apparent in Loddon's towns and the surrounding region, including:

- Long-term trends in population decline in most rural areas and urban centres in the Shire, although recent trends indicate a reversal in some areas
- Trends in household formation (typically the number of people in each residence) that result in continued, but often limited, demand for new housing
- Long-term trends in population ageing, driven both by a loss of younger populations, and inward migration of pre/post retiree cohorts
- Evidence of a limited breadth in the housing market in terms of tenure and type, with limited access to rental housing in some market segments and limited access to smaller housing forms in many areas
- A recognition of the tensions between new housing options within the existing urban centres and that in rural and semi-rural areas.

Consequently, in addition to existing data on population (including the recent release of detailed Census 2016 data) and information contained within planning and building registers, this research provides a basis for understanding both qualitative and quantitative features of the urban housing market in Loddon Shire.

Research Approach

Preliminary discussion with Loddon Shire and VPA staff allowed a deeper understanding of the knowledge gaps and housing issues in Loddon's towns. The research then involved three stages:

1. The development of a quantitative and qualitative data collection system to be used in field collection utilising licenced GISCloud software on portable devices (<http://www.giscloud.com>)
2. Field work conducted on 18-21 April 2017 with the recording of housing and public realm information in each of Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn. The field work was conducted by small teams of La Trobe Planning students.
3. Desktop data consolidation, interrogation, mapping and analysis

Data was collected on-site for housing types and structure. Additional assessments of housing quality/maintenance materials and details of elements of the public realm, including footpaths were also undertaken. After mobile collection, these data were then collated and analysed using desktop GIS to provide summary data and a basis for analysis. Collectors were provided with a framework and existing categories for assessing vacant land (based on property and parcel mapping), housing type (specifically categorising free-standing single dwellings from others, the dominant external materials, and number of storeys) and issues of housing quality/maintenance. The field workers undertook a pilot collection in sample areas in Bendigo and Loddon prior to the final exercise to allow comparative assessment amongst the data collectors, and these were discussed with Council staff.

The final categorisation mentioned (quality) is clearly the most difficult to reconcile between collectors and the most value-based indicator collected. Overall, assessments related to issues of evident maintenance and investment (for example in renovations) as these offer some indication of housing

November 2017

Page 1 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

markets and preferences. It was not intended, nor particularly useful, that these data are to be used as an exploration of clusters of quality, or indeed to imply anything about the probity of householders, but rather to gauge, at a town level, levels of investment and reinvestment in housing, the age of housing stock age and the nature of housing markets. The data has not been presented in a detailed mapped form for these reasons.

Key Findings

- As anticipated, the vast majority of housing in Loddon Shire comprises single dwellings. Housing quality varies, and despite this being a relatively subjective measure, it is evident that there are large amounts of housing that have seen minimal investment over many years and, in some instances, have potential for renewal or removal.
- Vacant lots are evident in each town, but as in many smaller communities more distant from larger cities, development pressure is relatively low. Despite this each town showed some evidence of new housing investment in recent years. Existing vacant lots are estimated to offer opportunities for urban infill in the range of 200 to 300 new single dwellings and considerably more multi-unit developments.
- There is considerable supply of existing urban development opportunities on existing vacant lots, both smaller and larger, many located very centrally in Loddon's main towns
- A key interest of this research was to consider (and pre-empt) the demographic information emerging from the 2016 census (which was released progressively from June 2017), and specifically whether this housing mix is well matched to the age and household structure of the communities in Loddon Shire. Scope for increased diversity of housing forms, and issues of housing quality are both factors that are important in ageing communities, as are issues of the quality of the public realm.
- As anticipated, and reported in the accompanying population profile, the population is ageing, although population stability, and pockets of growth, rather than a generalised story of population decline, is evident. Providing a mix of urban housing opportunities is consistent with these population data.

Housing Type

Overall the predominance of single storey, stand-alone dwellings is evident. While this pattern of dwelling structure is typical in small towns across Victoria, it is clear that the household structures and age cohorts increasing dominant in Loddon (and other communities) less typically comprise 'family' households. Consequently, scope for housing choice, particularly for older people appears limited.

Dwelling Structure (%) and Total Assessed Dwellings

	Boort	Bridgewater	Inglewood	Pyramid Hill	Wedderburn	Total
Single Storey Dwelling	88.4	88.5	89.3	88.8	89.2	88.9
Double Storey Dwelling	2.3	1.6	0.9	6.7	0.8	2.0
Multi Units	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.5
Units	0.8	0.5	1.2	3.4	0.5	1.1
Vacant Block	5.1	7.8	5.8	1.1	2.6	4.5
Vacant Block with OutBuilding	2.3	1.6	2.7	0.0	6.2	3.1
Total (Number)	389	192	328	178	388	1475

Source: Direct Field Data Collection April-May 2017

The limited number of multi-unit dwellings were generally higher quality and newer than the general housing stock.

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Vacant Urban Land

Vacant land was assessed in the field collection and reconciled with parcel and property data in VicMap (April 2017 release). **There are considerable areas of vacant land within each town.** Fully vacant land, and those with outbuildings only, comprise just under 10% in total. The distribution of vacant blocks is most evident (in scale and spatially) in Bridgewater and Wedderburn, although the scope for future urban development differs between these towns.

Vacant Parcels by Area (square metres)*

	Boort	Bridgewater	Inglewood	Pyramid Hill	Wedderburn	All Towns
<500 sq m	-	-	7	1	2	10
500-1000	10	3	5	4	13	35
1000-1500	7	7	3	10	4	31
1500-2000	2	2	3	6	2	15
2000+	3	5	12	9	19	48
Total (Number)	22	17	30	30	40	139

*note: these do not fully match field-collected Vacant (Block and Outbuilding) figures as some sit on multiple parcels (lots) without clear evidence on-ground. This is particularly the case on very small urban blocks which are fenced and managed as a single property.

Potential urban infill development has been given a general desktop assessment based on field observations and matching cadastral data. While no attempt was undertaken to design future development sites, yields have been estimated based on 500 sq. metre increments (as displayed in the table). In all at least 45 sites have potential for single dwelling developments, or more as multi-unit sites, another 94 sites have potential for subdivision (at existing standards) with a yield of up to 300 urban development sites within the urban areas of these towns. The greatest potential yields are in Wedderburn, Pyramid Hill and Inglewood, with over 100 potential building lots in Wedderburn, and close to 75 in each of Pyramid Hill and Inglewood.

Housing Quality and Maintenance

As discussed, the evaluation of housing quality was undertaken with a specific view to recent investment and re-investment in housing stock. For example, new or recent builds, along with older housing newly and substantially renovated were highly classified. Overall assessed housing quality¹ differed between towns, with an overall assessment of 20% of the total housing described as 'Fair' or 'Poor'. Both of these classifications suggest an under-investment in housing, in many cases over several years. In many cases they also indicated potential vacancy of an existing house, although the data collection method did not allow for verification of this.

Assessed Housing Quality (%) and Total Dwellings Assessed (Field Collection)

	Boort	Bridgewater	Inglewood	Pyramid Hill	Wedderburn	Total
Poor	4.1	8.3	9.8	1.1	10.1	7.1
Fair	11.6	16.1	12.8	14.6	12.4	13.0
Average	36.0	31.8	33.8	28.1	26.5	31.5
Good	33.4	26.6	28.0	39.3	31.7	31.6
Excellent	7.7	8.3	7.0	10.1	10.6	8.7
Vacant Block	7.2	8.9	8.5	6.7	8.8	8.1
Total (Number)	389	192	328	178	388	1475

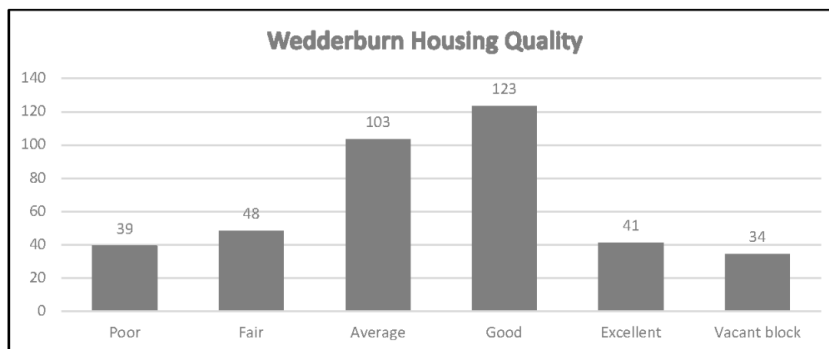
¹ This is an evidently subjective assessment. The core aim was to consider the levels of required activity and maintenance to address issues of housing quality and management – specific regard was given to structural issues (albeit those observed from the street frontage) not simply those of a cosmetic nature. Over several decades, the nature of local property markets has actively mitigated against many of the re-investment drivers evident in larger, more buoyant, property markets and this assessment sought to collate this local feature.

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

There was variation in this indicator between the towns. Boort for example showed higher levels of 'average' to 'good' quality.



This differs somewhat to Wedderburn, shown below, where a similar mix of housing types (a predominance of single dwellings) revealed a larger proportion of housing assessed as lower quality including a larger number that appeared to be uninhabited (and uninhabitable?) dwellings.



Construction Material

While not a determining factor, the external construction materials were collated. The majority of housing was clad with timber weatherboards, followed by brick and a range of external materials on few dwellings.

Construction Materials (Observed External)

	Boort	Bridgewater	Inglewood	Pyramid Hill	Wedderburn	Total
Brick (Solid & Veneer)	147	45	95	56	131	474
Rendered	9	3	10	0	17	39
Weatherboard/Timber Clad	173	106	178	100	174	731
WeatherTex/Fibre-Board	14	4	10	0	9	37
Metal Clad	19	10	4	0	7	40
Other	4	7	7	2	16	36

There was a limited relationship between weatherboard dwellings and poorer assessed dwelling quality, which may reflect issues of age and maintenance requirements of these houses.

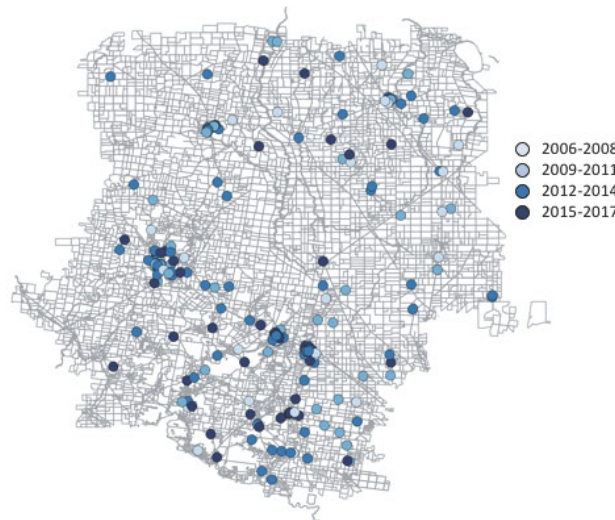
Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Recent Building Activity

Supporting this research, a spatial analysis of building permits was undertaken. This was based on the building register as at November 2017. Only dwellings were included, and all efforts made to ensure that additions and renovations were not included inadvertently, although some earlier descriptions of works were ambiguous.

Overall, the data suggests strong clustering in the urban area, and that this clustering has become more apparent in the later years – since about 2011. This is borne out by the data collected in the field study, where data collectors noted a number of new dwellings in each town, including relatively new multi-unit developments. Clustering of more recent developments in the south of the shire is also evident.

Building Approvals (2006-2017)*



Building Approvals (Dwellings) 2006-2017*

	2006-2008	2009-2011	2012-2014	2015-2017	Total
Boort TZ	2	9	5	3	19
Bridgewater TZ	1	6	3	4	14
Bridgewater LDRZ				1	1
Inglewood TZ	4	2	10	11	27
Inglewood LDRZ		2	2	1	3
Inglewood RLZ				1	3
Pyramid Hill TZ	2	3		3	8
Wedderburn TZ	3	7	10	5	25
W'burn LDRZ					0
W'burn RLZ	2	5	7	7	21
Other TZ	4	2	5	5	16
Other RLZ	1		2		3
Rural Balance	20	37	60	44	57
Total	39	73	104	85	197

Note: these data are based on the Loddon Building Register. The reliability of the data should be understood with reference to issues of categorisation (for example occasional mis-categorisation of substantial renovations as 'new' builds, the use of property identification numbers that have changed due to re-subdivision). It is likely that the data presented represents a small over-count compared with actual new dwellings. Permits issued do not always result in completed dwellings.

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Identified Access Issues in the Public Realm

A final component of the in-field spatial data collection exercise was the identification of evident accessibility issues in the public realm. While the data collection recognised the limited provision of infrastructure, such as paved footpaths, in Loddon's towns the collectors sought to identify specific pressure points and gaps. These were considered as addressing significant issues that may include low investment solutions. These include:

- Completion of kerb-crossings on existing paved footpath intersections
- Management of wide turning areas to allow safe crossing points on unpaved or ill-defined urban streets
- Tight and conflicting crossing 'choke-points' near culverts and open swale drains.

Examples of these are indicated in the maps included in Appendix 3 attached. In conjunction with existing LSC GIS these data can identify gaps in accessibility, particularly for local residents with lower mobility.

Conclusions: Implications for Housing and Planning Policy

The outcomes of this research indicate three key issues:

- There is a **lack of housing diversity** in Loddon's towns. The housing mix is almost entirely focussed on single unit dwellings. This mix does not reflect the mix of household composition in these towns, and does not provide potential for housing diversity and transition, particularly for an ageing population
- Housing quality is varied. In some towns there are considerable numbers, and clusters, of poorer quality housing. This reflects age (a strong relationship, although age was not specifically estimated), investment and maintenance in these towns. Anecdotal evidence suggests a **lack of housing options** to meet the range of potential residents, with a focus on affordability, rather than a clear spectrum of options, particularly in the rental market. The observed mix suggests confirmation of this. The assessed 'poor' standard dwellings should be considered (with due heritage and design consideration) as sites with potential for reinvestment in housing, including higher density development in central locations. This in turn creates amenity issues in the towns more broadly.
- There is a **significant supply of vacant land within the urban areas** of Loddon's towns. This also has implications for local urban amenity, and opportunities to direct urban development to focus on vacant urban sites within existing urban residential zones. This fieldwork exercise confirms previous assessments that used rates/property databases to determine vacancy and development trends. In all of the towns, scope exists for infill housing and, in many instances, this infill is in proximity to urban services. Additionally, scope for increased urban density is offered by both existing vacant sites and further development of sites with dwellings.

Appendices: Data Maps

The following set of maps show examples of each the collection datasets. These have been replicated for each town and are being compiled for presentation. The following maps include Vacant Land and highlighted Public Realm Issues.

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Appendix I: Property Type (Including Vacant Sites)

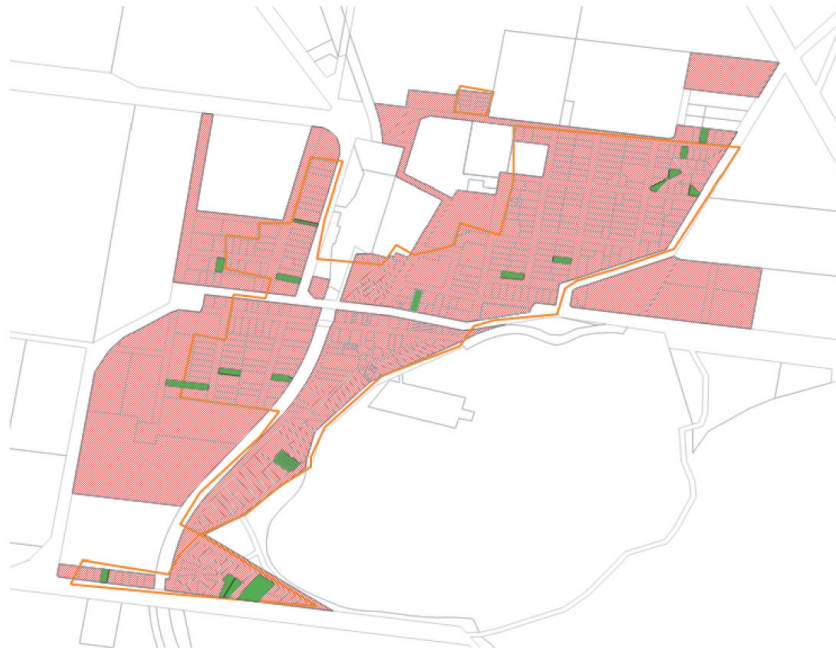
November 2017

Page 7 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Appendix II: Vacant Parcels and Township Zone

Map A2.1: Boort (Township Zone - Red; Vacant Parcels - Green)



Note: Audit Project Boundary (Orange) focussed on existing urbanised areas, these do not fully match zoning, and in some instances large areas of vacant Township Zoned land fall outside the boundary, offering considerable potential for additional ready supply of future residential development

November 2017

Page 8 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

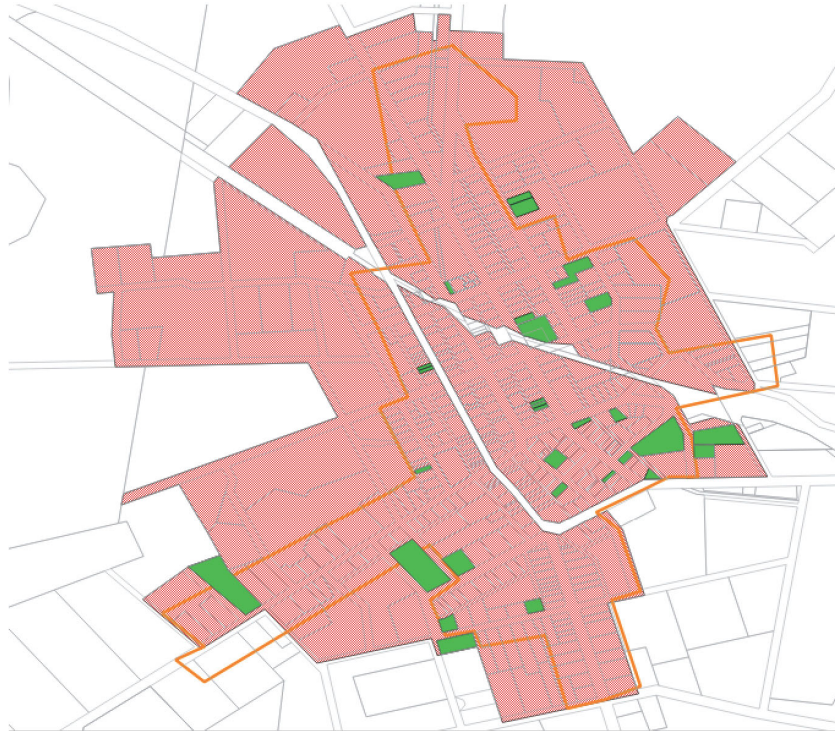
Map A2.2: Bridgewater (Township Zone - Red; Vacant Parcels - Green)



Note: Audit Project Boundary (Orange) focussed on existing urbanised areas, these do not fully match zoning, and in some instances large areas of vacant Township Zoned land fall outside the boundary, offering considerable potential for additional ready supply of future residential development

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Map A2.3: Inglewood (Township Zone - Red; Vacant Parcels - Green)



Note: Audit Project Boundary (Orange) focussed on existing urbanised areas, these do not fully match zoning, and in some instances large areas of vacant Township Zoned land fall outside the boundary, offering considerable potential for additional ready supply of future residential development

Map A2.4: Pyramid Hill (Township Zone - Red; Vacant Parcels - Green)

November 2017

Page 10 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017



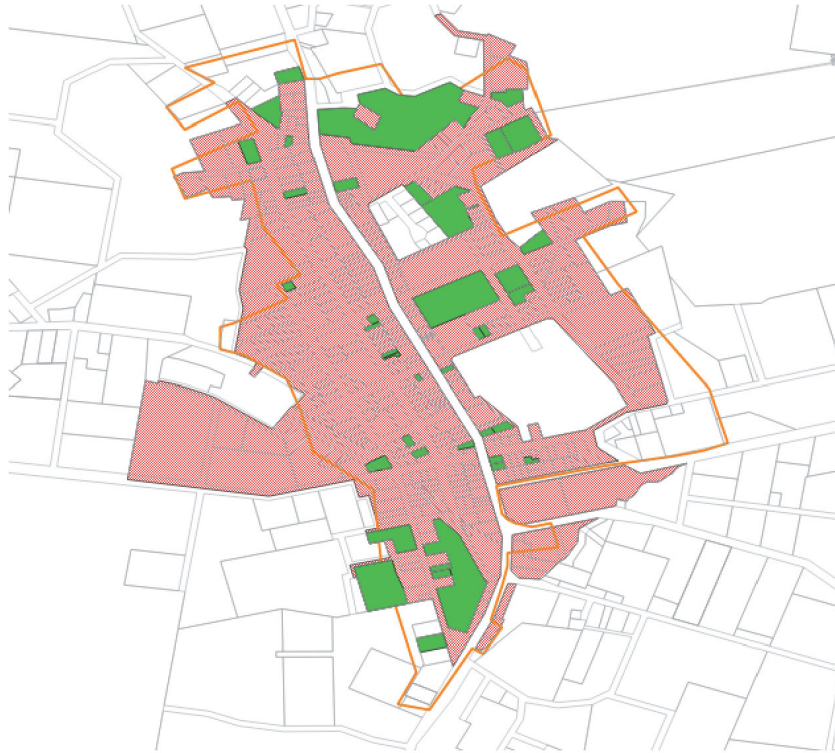
Note: Audit Project Boundary (Orange) focussed on existing urbanised areas, these do not fully match zoning, and in some instances large areas of vacant Township Zoned land fall outside the boundary, offering considerable potential for additional ready supply of future residential development

Map A2.5: Wedderburn (Township Zone - Red; Vacant Parcels - Green)

November 2017

Page 11 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017



Note: Audit Project Boundary (Orange) focussed on existing urbanised areas, these do not fully match zoning, and in some instances large areas of vacant Township Zoned land fall outside the boundary, offering considerable potential for additional ready supply of future residential development

Appendix III: Identified Public Realm Accessibility Issues

November 2017

Page 12 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Map A3.1: Boort (Red Star – Point Issues, Yellow Star – General Precinct Issue)



Map A3.2: Bridgewater (Red Star – Point Issues, Yellow Star – General Precinct Issue)

November 2017

Page 13 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017



November 2017

Page 14 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Map A3.3: Inglewood (Red Star – Point Issues, Yellow Star – General Precinct Issue)



November 2017

Page 15 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017

Map A3.4: Pyramid Hill (Red Star – Point Issues, Yellow Star – General Precinct Issue)

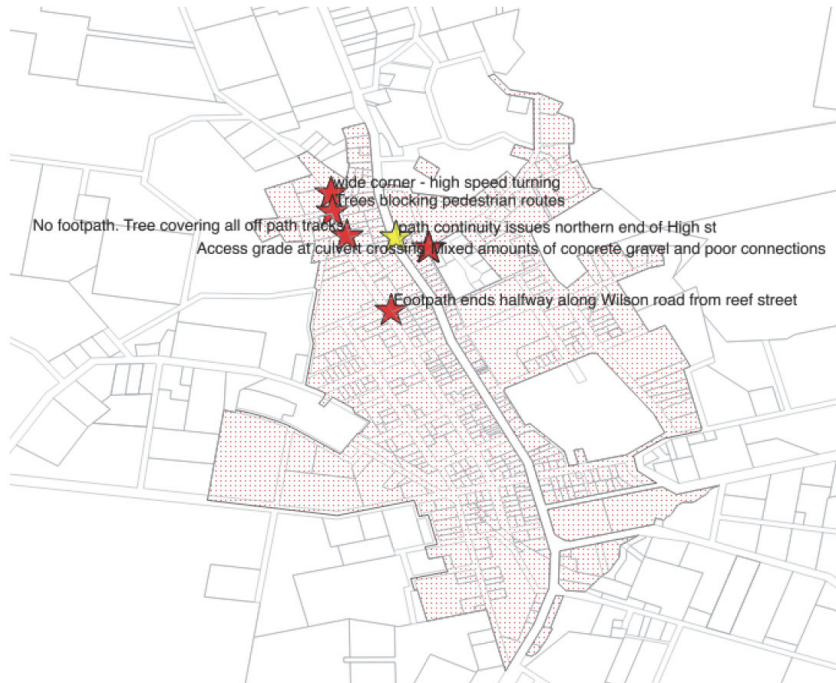


Map A3.5: Wedderburn (Red Star – Point Issues, Yellow Star – General Precinct Issue)

November 2017

Page 16 of 17

Loddon Shire – Streamlining for Growth 2017



November 2017

Page 17 of 17

APPENDIX 3: Community Consultation Summary

Settlement Strategy Community ConsultationWedderburn (6)

Yes want sustainable growth

Amenity and presentation of town

Need employment to attract growth – significant industry eg. Prison

Restrictive covenants on Council land in Ridge St is discouraging growth

Need diversity of housing – in particular suited to the elderly and rural living

Need quality housing

Lack of rental

Nine Mile Rd – rezone to LDRZ

Lack of services limiting growth

Need more vibrancy (open shops) on High Street

Dingee – opportunity for growth (tiny houses)

Inglewood (3)

Yes support growth but retain heritage character

Use vacant Crown land in the urban area

Support infill

Smaller lots in the centre of town

Retain heritage feel/character of Kingower

Newbridge (6)

Newbridge – support growth but growth is limited by lack of infrastructure (water, sewer, telecommunications) and flooding.

Need to provide for town expansion to the west.

Need to open unused road reserves

Eddington – some residents support growth, some don't support growth, need to open up river access, majority of TZ land is held in one ownership – could the way its rated encourage this land to be made available.

Pyramid Hill (8)

Council should do more to support economic development, including employ Economic Development Officer with agricultural expertise, to encourage population growth.

Provide a tool kit for new residents

Growth experienced at the caravan park, need to upgrade bathroom facilities

Review flood mapping north of town

Clean out drains to minimise flood risk

Subdivision proposed south of town – never progressed

Growth opportunity to the west of town

Provide for industrial development

Assess ability of sewer and water supply to expand (Coliban Water)

Preserve amenity and views from the hill

Mop Tops opposite school are dying and still water in drains around school are mosquito risk

Boort (4)

Need to support economic development for growth. Protect and promote agricultural opportunities

Former primary school site is ideal for medium density / units

Need to expand caravan park

Growth opportunities north of town (move tip), and south of lake

Number of infill opportunities in town (including Crown land) and land opposite caravan park

New housing lots at Boort Park

Don't compromise expansion of McMillans Rd industrial estate with residential development

Serpentine (4)

Presentation of Industrial Estate on town entrance

Review flood controls

Support for growth to east of highway

Dingee – growth opportunity between town and recreation reserve

Bridgewater (3)-

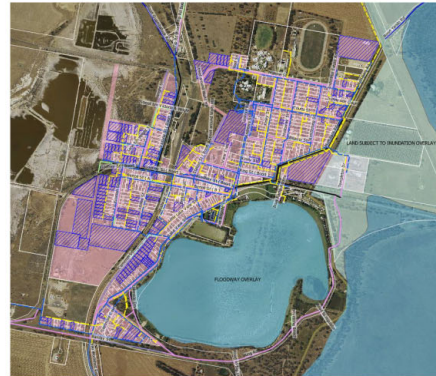
Support growth

Maintain character – not high density like Marong

APPENDIX 4: Township maps

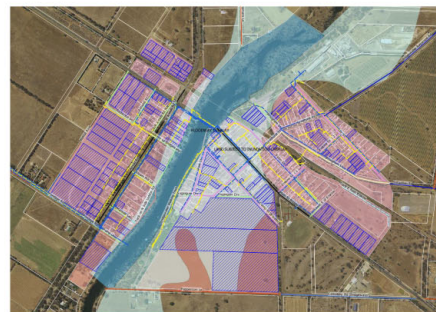
Boort

Town	Boort
2016 Population (ABS Census)	749
Families	202
Dwellings	381
Average household size	2.1
Median age	56
Infrastructure	Water, sewer, power, supermarket, hall, hotel, sporting ground, pool, P12 School, kindergarten, hospital and aged care facility
Development activity	Building approval dwellings (2006-17) - 19
Vacant land supply	Township Zone 32.4ha 143lots
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ zone)	200 + lots
Issues and constraints	Outward expansion limited by industrial uses on fringe of town, vacant land west of town unsuited to residential growth
Development opportunities	Former school site and "backpacker" site are growth opportunities, focus on Lake



Bridgewater on Loddon

Town	Bridgewater
2016 Population (ABS Census)	326
Families	91
Dwellings	192
Average household size	2
Median age	53
Infrastructure	Water, sewer, power, hall, hotel, sporting ground, primary school
Development activity	Building approval dwellings (2006-17) - 14
Vacant land supply	Township Zone 31.4ha 123lots Low Density Residential Zone 25ha 4 lots
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ zone)	200 + lots
Issues and constraints	Flooding, industrial activity



Dingee

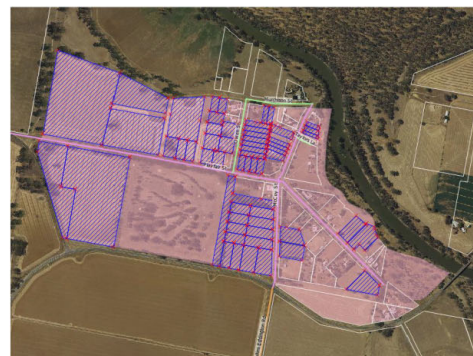
Town	Dingee
2016 Population (ABS Census)	206 (includes surrounding district)
Families	57
Dwellings	105
Average household size	2.4
Median age	45
Infrastructure	Hall, power, water, railway station, library, hotel, sporting grounds
Development activity	Nil
Vacant land supply	3.5ha
Potential new dwelling yield (existing TZ)	5
Issues and constraints	No sewer, land ownership
Development opportunities	Growth opportunities east of existing urban area (between town and sporting facilities)



Vacant lot

Eddington

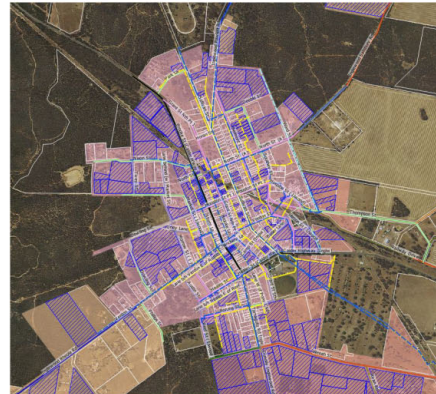
Town	Eddington
2016 Population (ABS Census)	96 (includes surrounding district)
Families	25
Dwellings	57
Average household size	2.4
Median age	48
Infrastructure	Hall, power
Development activity	Building approval dwelling (2011-17) - 1
Vacant land supply	40ha +
Potential new dwelling yield (existing TZ)	Existing lots - 20 + Further subdivision - 50 +
Issues and constraints	Lack of sewer, Laanecoorie catchment



Vacant lot

Inglewood

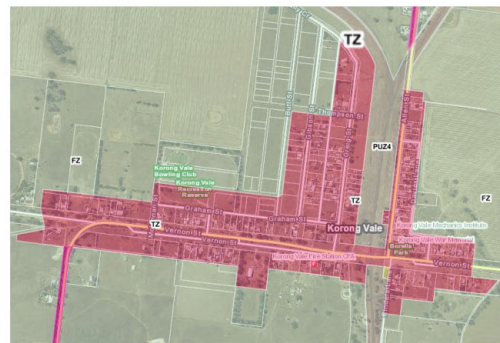
Town	Inglewood
2016 Population (ABS Census)	730 (immediate township area) 855 (town and surrounding area)
Families	170 (immediate township area) 201 (town and surrounding area)
Dwellings	371 (immediate township area) 440 (town and surrounding area)
Average household size	2
Median age	53
Infrastructure	Water, sewer, power, supermarket, hall, hotel, sporting ground, pool, 2 primary schools, kindergarten, Neighbourhood House, Medical Centre, hospital and aged care facility
Development activity	Building approval dwellings (2006-17) - 27
Vacant land supply	Township Zone 54.3ha 158 lots Low Density Residential Zone 95.7ha 41lots Rural Living Zone 844.5ha 82lots
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ zone)	200 + lots
Issues and constraints	Some lots too small to be developed, lack of all weather road in rural living area south of town, vacant crown land in towns,
Development opportunities	



Vacant lot

Korong Vale

Town	Korong Vale
2016 Population (ABS Census)	168 (includes surrounding district)
Families	32
Dwellings	102
Average household size	1.9
Median age	58
Infrastructure	Hall, power, water
Development activity	Building approval dwelling (2011-17) - 1
Vacant land supply	5ha
Potential new dwelling yield (existing TZ)	Using existing lots - 10 Further subdivision - 15
Issues and constraints	No sewer



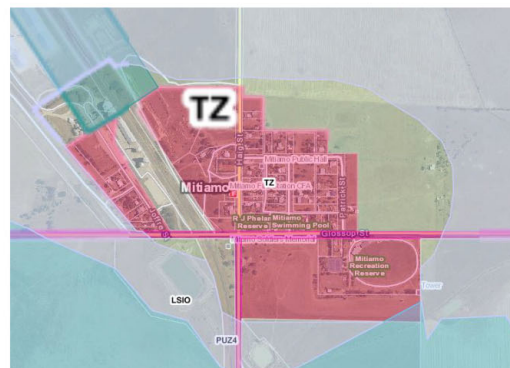
Laanecoorie

Town	Laanecoorie
2016 Population (ABS Census)	177 (includes surrounding district)
Families	41
Dwellings	102
Average household size	1.9
Median age	53
Infrastructure	Hall, power, water
Development activity	Building approval dwelling (2011-17) - 1
Vacant land supply	6ha
Potential new dwelling yield (existing TZ)	13
Issues and constraints	Flooding, no sewer
Development opportunities	Further subdivision of existing lots



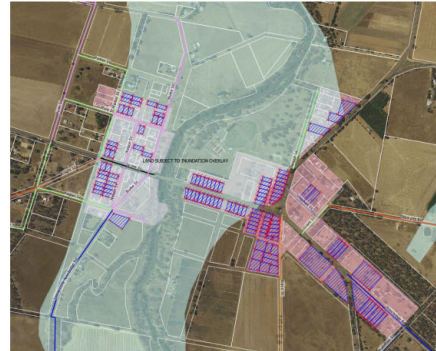
Mitiamo

Town	Mitiamo
2018 Population (ABS Census)	117 (includes surrounding district)
Families	32
Dwellings	51
Average household size	2.1
Median age	48
Infrastructure	Hall, power, water, pool, sporting facilities
Development activity	Building approval dwelling (2011-17) - 1
Vacant land supply	7ha
Issues and constraints	No sewer
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ)	Existing lots - 2
Development opportunities	Further subdivision - 15 Large parcel available for subdivision adjacent to recreation reserve



Newbridge

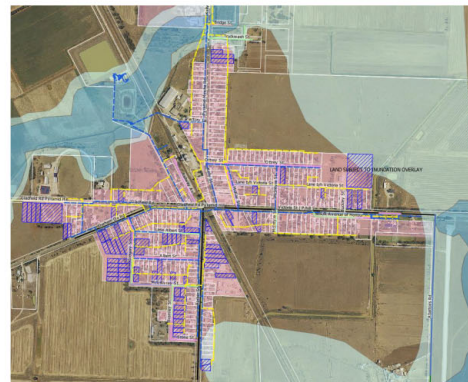
Town	Newbridge
2016 Population (ABS Census)	192 (includes surrounding district)
Families	48
Dwellings	106
Average household size	2.2
Median age	55
Infrastructure	Hall, power, hotel, sporting ground
Development activity	Building approval dwelling (2011-17) - 6
Vacant land supply	12ha (approx. 40 lots)
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ zone)	20 (without sewer) 80 + (with sewer depending on further subdivision and proposed lot size)
Issues and constraints	No sewer or water, flooding
Development opportunities	Proximity to Bendigo, Loddon River Expansion of township to the west would provide for growth outside the flood zone if sewer/water could be provided



Vacant lot

Pyramid Hill

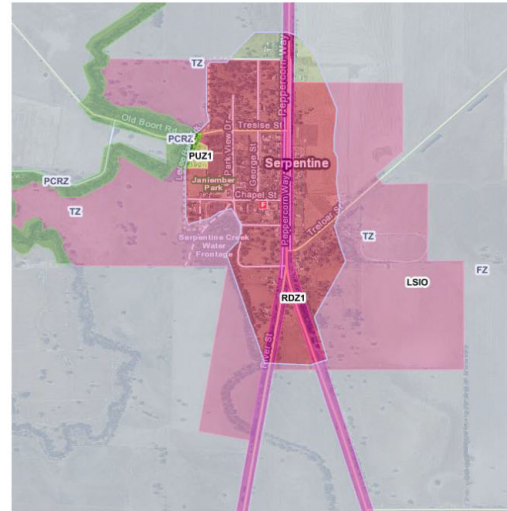
Town	Pyramid Hill
2016 Population (ABS Census)	450
Families	104
Dwellings	240
Average household size	2.1
Median age	48
Infrastructure	Water, sewer, power, hall, hotel, sporting ground, pool, P-10 school and Catholic primary school, kindergarten
Development activity	Building approval dwellings (2006-17) - 8
Vacant land supply	Township Zone 9.1ha 71 lots
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ zone)	80 (depending on lot size)
Issues and constraints	Maintain buffers to wastewater treatment plant, flooding



Vacant lot

Serpentine

Town	Serpentine
2016 Population (ABS Census)	192 (includes surrounding district)
Families	47
Dwellings	95
Average household size	2.1
Median age	42
Infrastructure	Hall, power, water, Shire office, hotel, sporting grounds
Development activity	Building approval dwelling (2011-17) - 1
Vacant land supply	150ha
Issues and constraints	No sewer, flooding
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ)	Existing lots - 7 Further subdivision - 30 (outside LSI0)
Development opportunities	Large parcels available for further subdivision



Tarnagulla

Town	Tarnagulla
2016 Population (ABS Census)	133 (includes surrounding district)
Families	37
Dwellings	112
Average household size	1.7
Median age	61
Infrastructure	Hall, power, water
Development activity	2 new dwellings approved 2011-17
Vacant land supply	4.5ha
Potential new dwelling yield (existing TZ)	6
Issues and constraints	No sewer, small lots, vegetation, Crown land, bushfire, heritage
Development opportunities	Limited to existing township lots where a number can be consolidated to achieve approximately 4 ha
Growth capacity	Growth is severely limited by surrounding State Forest and lack of sewer, Town character is defined by village feel



Wedderburn

Town	Wedderburn
2018 Population (ABS Census)	663 (immediate township area) 941 (town and surrounding area)
Families	139 (immediate township area) 215 (town and surrounding area)
Dwellings	434 (immediate township area) 634 (town and surrounding area)
Average household size	1.8
Median age	56
Infrastructure	Water, sewer, power, supermarket, hall, hotel, sporting ground, pool, P12 School, Kindergarten, Neighbourhood House, Medical Centre
Development activity	Building approval dwellings (2006-17) - 26
Vacant land supply	27.5ha (110 lots) – Township Zone 20.5ha (25 lots) - Low Density Residential Zone 1110ha (266 lots) – Rural Living Zone
Potential dwelling yield (existing TZ zone)	200 + lots



10.4 BRIDGEWATER FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB - FEE WAIVER AND REDUCTION APPLICATION

File Number: -
Author: Steven Phillips, Director Operations
Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council grant a fee waiver to the Bridgewater Football Netball Club for a Planning Permit Application cost of \$1,453.40 for the erection of advertising signage at the Bridgewater Recreation Reserve.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this paper, or involved in the subject matter of the paper.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

There has been no previous discussion with Council on this matter.

BACKGROUND

Council's Fees and Charges – Waiver or Reduction Policy applies to any not for profit organisation, incorporated association or unincorporated community group where the activity will result in a community benefit.

Applications over \$1,000 are reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer and submitted to Council for approval via a formal resolution.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The Bridgewater Football Netball Club have applied for a Planning Permit fee waiver. They require the permit to comply with the Loddon Planning Scheme for the erection of advertising signage at the Bridgewater Recreation Reserve. The recreation reserve is on land owned by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). There are currently signs that have been erected that contravene the Loddon Planning Scheme. Council's compliance team and planning team have been discussing suitable solutions with the Bridgewater Football Netball Club to bring the advertising signs into alignment with the Scheme.

Council has not made any financial contributions to this project to date. The Committee has requested that Council waive the Planning Permit Application fee of \$1,453.40. The benefit to the community as provided in the fee waiver application is "*monetary contribution from sponsor that allows us as a club to provide sporting activities etc. for the community to enjoy and participate in*".

The Planning Permit Application is to allow the use of club sponsorship signage. The signage will raise income for the club and it will also benefit the business and organisations that choose to take up the opportunity to advertise at the recreation reserve. Should the Planning Permit be granted and complied with it will avoid the need for enforcement action.

The granting or refusal of a fee waiver in no way affects or influences Council's statutory obligations to assess the Planning Permit Application on its merit.

COST/BENEFITS

Should Council decide to grant the fee waiver the cost to Council would be \$1,453.40 in lost revenue. The Planning Permit Application indicates the Club's intention is to align with the requirements for signage in a Public Park and Recreation Zone.

The Bridgwater Football Netball Club is seeking the fee waiver to support them in continuing to provide sporting activities for the community.

RISK ANALYSIS

The risks associated with this fee waiver is considered low.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Council officers have had discussions with the Bridgwater Football Netball Club on this matter.

10.5 SALE OF PROPERTIES FOR RATE RECOVERY UNDER SECTION 181 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1989

File Number: FOL/21/6593

Author: Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services

Authoriser: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

Attachments: 1. **Section 181 - Property Details - Confidential**

This attachment is designated as confidential in accordance with Section 3(1)(f) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It contains personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

Reason being that the information relates to matters of personal affairs. **(under separate cover)**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves the sale of properties listed in this report under section 181 of the *Local Government Act 1989* and authorises the use of the Council seal, if required, on any related documentation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this paper, or involved in the subject matter of the paper.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Council is provided with a quarterly update of properties that have been approved for sale under section 181 of the *Local Government Act 1989*. This outlines the progress to date of each property.

Of the 62 properties in total, 40 have been finalised and 6 are on acceptable payment arrangements at the time of this report. The remaining properties are at various stages of the rate recovery process.

BACKGROUND

There is no provision in the *Local Government Act 2020* for rate recovery sales; the process continues to fall under the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act).

Under section 181 of the Act, Council may sell any rateable land to recover unpaid rates and charges (including enforcement costs and interest) that are more than three years overdue, where no current payment arrangement exists, and where all other means of debt collection have been exhausted.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Eight properties have been identified as being eligible for sale under section 181 of the Act, where all steps in the legal process have been taken in order to collect the outstanding rates and charges, with no success. The process of rate recovery sale is the last available option.

Every opportunity has been given to the owners of these properties (where they can be contacted) to enter into an agreed payment arrangement for the payment of any current and outstanding rates and charges on their properties.

Some of the owners are not able to be contacted and both Council and Council's debt collection agency have exhausted all possibilities in trying to locate them.

The associated table of information confidentially supplied with this report outlines the properties presented for Council's consideration.

COST/BENEFITS

All legal costs incurred by Council will be recouped if the properties are sold and the sale price exceeds the total outstanding rates and charges, and those costs incurred for the auction process.

RISK ANALYSIS

Once a property is sold under section 181 of the Act and all debts to Council have been finalised, the excess funds from the sale are returned to the titled owner and in the circumstances where the owner is unable to be located, the funds are held in trust whilst further efforts are undertaken to locate the owner. Where the debts are not covered by the sale proceeds, Council is left with a bad debt.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Council works in consultation with Midstate Credit Collect Pty Ltd and Executive Collections to collect outstanding debts. On the occasions that Council or the agents have been able to contact property owners, they have tried to put in place a payment arrangement.

Where Council is unable to locate the owners, the agents have used further external sources in an attempt to locate the owner on Council's behalf.

10.6 REQUEST TO WRITE OFF BAD DEBTS

File Number: FOL/20/2500

Author: Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services

Authoriser: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

Attachments: 1. **Bad Debt Request - Detail by Client - Confidential**

This attachment is designated as confidential in accordance with Section 3(1)(f) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It contains personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

Reason being that it includes information related to personal affairs. **(under separate cover)**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolve to write off the bad debts outlined in this report for the amount of \$6,844.27.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this paper, or involved in the subject matter of the paper.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Nil.

BACKGROUND

Council has a 'Provision for Doubtful Debts and Writing Off Bad Debts Policy' (the Policy). This sets the principles for variations of the provision for doubtful debts and the write-off of bad debts.

The Chief Executive Officer, on receipt of advice from the Director Corporate is able to:

- vary the provision for doubtful debts, or
- write off bad debts against the provision for doubtful debts up to the value of \$1,000 in an individual case, and \$5,000 in aggregate per financial year.

The request being considered by Council is over the above threshold therefore it is required to be submitted to Council for consideration.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Council ceased delivering home and community care services in June 2023. Since this time there has been continued effort placed into collection of any related debts.

A reconciliation of the amounts outstanding has been completed, and formal requests have been received from the Community Wellbeing Department to clear these items.

The request made is that the amount of \$6,844.27 be written off during the 2024/25 financial year.

Detail of the relevant debtor types are included in the confidential attachment to this report.

At the time of writing this report, \$36.02 has been written off in bad debts this financial year. The above totals will bring the amount to be written off in 2024/25 to \$6,880.29.

COST/BENEFITS

The cost to Council is that of the debt written off. Council staff have also spent a significant amount of time undertaking debt collection before arriving at this recommendation.

RISK ANALYSIS

Every service or charge that Council raises is at risk of payment not being met. The likelihood has historically been very low, and this is outweighed the benefit provided by delivering services and support to the community.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Discussions have been held with the relevant departments to determine what the next course of action is with these debtors.

10.7 LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY**File Number:****Author:** Orrin Hogan, Manager Community Partnerships**Authoriser:** Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing

- Attachments:**
1. Draft Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Summary Report
 2. Draft Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Background Report
 3. ROSA Public Display Feedback Summary - Redacted

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatics Strategy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

A timeline summary is provided below with key milestones for the development of this strategy:

In August 2023 Loddon Shire Council commenced the development of a Recreation, Open Space, and Aquatic Strategy, aiming to review existing facilities and plan for sustainable future development. Consultant firm, Otium, was appointed to assist with the development of the Strategy.

At the February 2024 Forum, Otium presented Council with the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy background report and conducted a thorough presentation on consultation and survey results by interpreting data and trends and articulating a collective Loddon community response.

At the May 2024 Forum, Otium presented Council with the Engagement Findings Report.

The draft ROSA was presented to Councillors at the July 2024 Council Forum.

At the August 2024 Council meeting, Council approved the draft Recreation Open Space & Aquatic Strategy be placed on public display to receive community feedback.

In September 2024 Council officers hosted a community feedback and discussion meeting following the public display period to address question and concerns. Feedback did result in an addition to the draft strategy document.

October 2024 – Council Election

In March 2025, Council Officers attended Council Forum to present the public display period feedback and progress the adoption process.

BACKGROUND

Loddon's Recreation, Open Space & Aquatic Strategy (ROSA) consists of a Summary Report and a comprehensive Background and Data Report that has guided and informed the development of this 10-year strategic plan and establishes a clear direction and framework for providing, developing, and managing traditional sports, recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities within our unique shire council area.

The Strategy provides a robust evidence base that has informed a planning framework, strategic directions, an implementation plan and a decision-making framework for identifying investment priorities.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The Recreation, Open Space and Aquatics Strategy (ROSA) is coming before Council for adoption today.

The Strategy intentionally aligns with Loddon's recently adopted Social Infrastructure Strategy.

Both Strategies employ the use of a benchmarking and service level driven framework to inform evidence based decision making and provide Council with guidance and consistent standards when deliberating over contentious outcomes involving the rationalisation or growth of Loddon's asset base.

The relationship between the Strategies is important to highlight because their development, themes and timing in adoption, in partnership, will provide an informed, consistent and defensible basis for strategic decision making for the next 10 years.

The draft Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy (updated November 2024), provided as Attachment 2 – contains information relating to industry research, integration with Council plans and strategies, community profile data, consultation outcomes and the proposed strategic direction for Council consideration.

The proposed strategic direction, along with a summary of the other components of the ROSA document is provided in the summary document, provided as Attachment 1.

The Recreation Open Space & Aquatic Strategy was placed on public display to receive community feedback. Attachment 3 provides the feedback received, along with a summary which includes Council officer's comments/recommendations.

On reviewing the feedback Council officers have recommended one adjustment to each of the documents to reflect community feedback requesting:

- That the strategy contain a clear and documented biennial review process that relates to each town/localities categorisation against the service level benchmarking table in Appendix 1: Planning Framework.

This adjustment to the benchmarking table was also communicated at a face to face ROSA feedback session held at Newbridge on September 16, 2024 (Public Display feedback summary attached). The smaller township communities in the Tarnagulla Ward that felt that "...smaller town populations can and will change quite quickly and a 10 year strategy that categorizes 'a place' for a 10 year period of time without review is unacceptable".

As a result the following amendment has been made to each document with the inclusion of the following:

Final Report - Page 1 and Summary Report - Page 2

The Strategy includes an implementation plan that will be reviewed every two years. This review process will consider the outcomes of planning and funding processes and ensure that any emerging community and industry trends/demands, as well as external funding opportunities and Council funding capacity, are assessed and priority projects remain relevant throughout its 10-year timeline.

Final Report - Page 148 and Summary Report - Page 24

The implementation plan will be reviewed every two years. This review process will consider the outcomes of planning and funding processes and ensure that any emerging community and industry trends/demands, as well as external funding opportunities and Council funding capacity, are assessed and priority projects remain relevant throughout its 10-year timeline.

COST/BENEFITS

Due to the prevailing fiscal environment, the expansive range of quality recreation and open space assets within the Loddon Shire Council, the strategy identifies an emphasis to be placed on activation and maintenance of existing assets and infrastructure.

The strategy provides functional service level information to inform future decision making around recreational, aquatic and open space infrastructure based on location, use and township categorization. Service level rationale is provided in the prescriptive table within the document and is designed to provide consistency and guidance in decision making across the municipality.

A 10 year asset plan for recreation and open space assets is yet to be developed, however this strategy has produced a 10 year pool maintenance plan with a cost of \$1.3m required over that period.

The Loddon ROSA strategy recreation services section will be implemented using existing resources and has a focus on activation and diversification of existing asset use over the next 10 year period. The strategy encourages Council to engage with the community and explore new and progressive partnership models in the interests of sustainable asset management.

Where future projects requiring funding are identified, a funding strategy will be adopted, exploring and identifying external funding options and strategic consideration given to internal co-contribution funding.

Over time, Loddon's ROSA strategy will positively contribute to the activation of recreational and open space assets within the Shire having a positive impact on community health and wellbeing.

RISK ANALYSIS

Comprehensive engagement and consultation processes are always challenging to run effectively, posing a risk that the information received may not represent the broader community. It is evident that one of Loddon Shire Council's challenges is how we effectively engage the community to receive meaningful feedback across a large geographical area and dispersed community. On this occasion, the community engagement and consultation processes used throughout the development of this strategy employed a variety of methods to ensure a broad capture of information and resulted in constructive feedback. This is captured in more detail in the attached Public Display feedback summary and also described in the consultation and engagement section of both reports.

With any strategy development there is always a risk that community expectations will exceed Council's capacity to deliver; with this in mind the scope for the development of the ROSA clearly identified a preference for 'activation of existing assets' over 'development of new assets'.

Condition audits for Council's five outdoor public swimming pools and a review into the operational performance of Loddon Shire's aquatic service found the asset condition and ongoing operation of the outdoor pools is a real concern. The pools do not meet current industry standards and are now over 60 years old which is beyond their theoretical asset lives meaning they will become less reliable and prone to failure. In costing Council \$40-50 per visit. The ROSA identifies the need to explore how a sustainable aquatic service can be provided in Loddon Shire.

Council will need to consider the long-term financial capacity to renew assets. An examination of the need for an asset at the time of renewal is required to ensure the current and future needs of community are met within a funding profile available to Council.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The final round of community consultation, placing the document on public display, occurred in August 2024 inviting community feedback. The community were advised with public notices via print and social media, placement of the document in key community locations and on Council's online engagement platform connect@Loddon. Council officers also hosted a Q&A session and attended a key stakeholder face to face meeting at Newbridge Recreation Reserve on September 16, 2025 to address key feedback as requested.

The Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatics Strategy is now ready to be considered for adoption.

LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY



SUMMARY REPORT

NOVEMBER 2024



Prepared by Otium Planning Group Pty Ltd
www.otiumplanning.com.au



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	1
The Project	2
What Have We Learnt?	5
What Did We Hear?	14
The Strategy	21
Warranties and Disclaimers	29
Appendix 1: Loddon Recreation Planning Framework	30
Appendix 2: Recreation Trails	35



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Otium Planning Group would like to acknowledge the staff and community from Loddon Shire Council who have provided their expertise and input to the Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy.

Their valuable insights and feedback have been instrumental in shaping the strategic framework and recommendations of this Plan.

Womindjika

We respectfully acknowledge Dja Dja Wurrung and Barapa Barapa people as the traditional owners of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respect to their Elders both past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants of the land and their long and continuing connection to Country.

We are committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.

Loddon Shire has a rich Aboriginal history and is home to over 1,000 significant Aboriginal landmarks.



THE PROJECT

Participation in sport and active recreation improves community health and wellbeing and contributes to the region's liveability and economic prosperity.

Sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services are integral to achieving the visions of Loddon Shire Council and are recognised as key ingredients to achieving community health and wellbeing in Loddon and an important part of the social fabric and character of our agricultural/farming communities. They provide opportunities to be active and are highly valued by the Loddon communities, delivering social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits.

The **Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy** is a 10-year strategic plan that establishes a clear direction for providing, developing, and managing its sport and recreation, open space and aquatic facilities.

This Strategy informs how the Council can create active and healthy communities through:

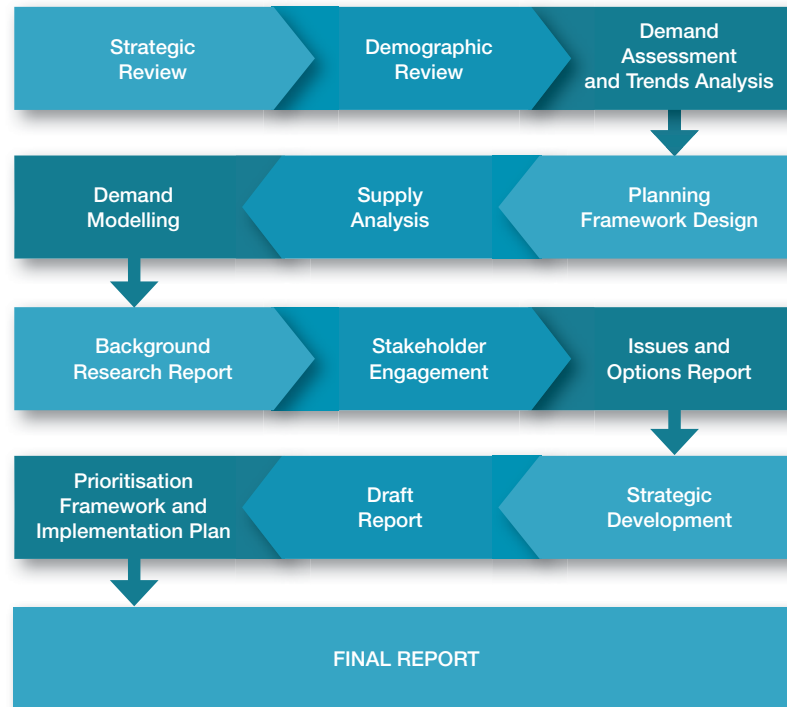
- Ensuring the Shire has a diverse range of universally accessible, sustainable facilities and outdoor spaces.
- Exploring opportunities that promote participation through structured programs and unstructured, social and incidental activities.
- Effective management and support services include information, leadership, and inclusive governance/management structures.

The Strategy provides a robust evidence base that has informed the development of a planning framework and strategic directions that aim to deliver recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services that are diverse, accessible and sustainable and will activate and connect Loddon communities.

The Strategy includes an implementation plan that will be reviewed every two years. This review process will consider the outcomes of planning and funding processes and ensure that any emerging community and industry trends/demands, as well as external funding opportunities and Council funding capacity, are assessed and priority projects remain relevant throughout its 10-year timeline.

Planning Process

The Strategy has involved the following planning process.



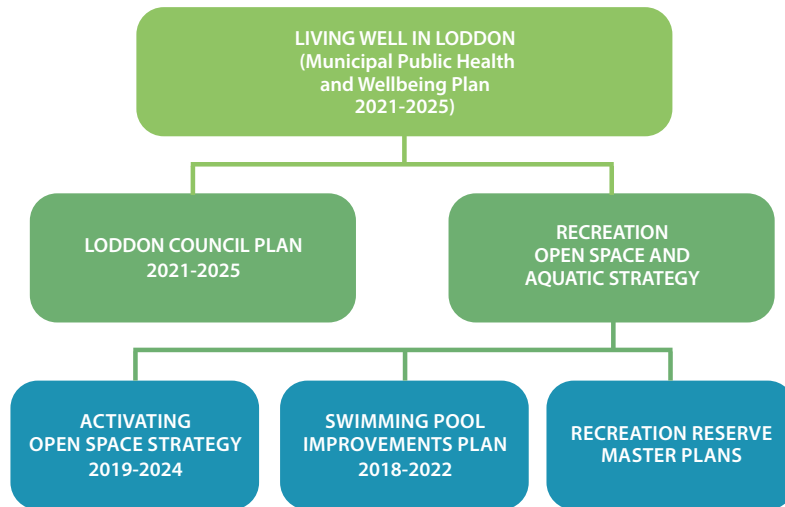
Strategic Relationship

The **Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy** responds to the Loddon Council Plan 2021-2025 directions to 'Plan for Future Facilities and Infrastructure That Meet Community Needs' and 'Maintain Sports and Recreation and Open Public Spaces to enable and Promote Access and Participation'.

The Strategy supersedes the Recreation Strategy 2014 and is an overarching strategy that consolidates strategic priorities identified in the:

- Activating Open Space Strategy 2019-2024
- Swimming Pool Improvements Plan 2018-2022
- Recreation Reserve Master Plans.

The Strategy aligns with Sport and Recreation Victoria's Active Victoria (Strategic Framework) and the Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan.



Benefits of recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services

What are the benefits of public open spaces?

Our recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services are critical for community health and wellbeing, helping to benefit our community:

- Physically and mentally** by promoting physical activity and active lifestyles, reducing illness and disease, improving mental health and creating a sense of wellbeing.
- Socially** by generating stronger and more connected communities with improved social interaction and inclusion through provision of active and vibrant community hubs, access to facilities and resources, opportunities for volunteering and involvement.
- Environmentally** by developing well-planned and attractive settings encouraging active transport and use of public parks and leisure services. The provision of parks and green environments also include temperature reduction and mitigation of the urban heat island effect; air quality improvement; management of storm water reducing the incidence of flooding and water-borne disease; ecosystem support and biodiversity enhancement.
- Economically** by assisting to reduce health care cost through reduction in disease and illness associated with lack of physical activity and social interaction. A park and public space network can also provide local employment and investment opportunities and contribute to maintaining a healthy workforce.

CASE STUDY

Australian Masters Water Skiing Championships 2024

The Australian Masters Ski Comp was held from 26 to 28 January 2024 and it is a prestigious event to host.

Established in November 1960, the Bridgewater Water Ski Club is situated on the Loddon River in the heart of the charming town of Bridgewater.

The Australian Masters Skiing Championships was run over three days in January on the Loddon River at the Bridgewater Water Ski Club. The event featured the country's best water skiing, slalom, trick and jump competitors. There were events for age groups from under 10 to over 65, as well as our top national open men and women skiers.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

Loddon Shire has a diverse network of sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services. They are wonderful places to be active and present an opportunity to improve community health and wellbeing.

Loddon Shire has a diverse range of open spaces, including sport and active recreation reserves, parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, tracks and trails, and natural places, including bushland reserves and waterways (rivers and lakes). These places are important in supporting rural farming communities.

There are nine major and 11 minor recreation reserves, five community swimming pools, one swimming hole (Bridgewater) and over 113 parcels of public open spaces within the municipality. The facilities are in good condition and attractive to use. They are managed by Council, contractors and Reserve Committees.

There is a good distribution and supply of quality sport and recreation reserves, open spaces and aquatic facilities across the townships:

- The major towns of Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn

have a central sport and recreation reserve, a playground, a swimming pool, a golf course, a public hall and walking/cycling tracks.

- The medium-sized townships of Mitiamo, Calivil, Dingee, Newbridge, Serpentine and Tarnagulla don't have as many public open spaces. Still, most have a central sport and recreation reserve, public hall and playground.
- Small towns generally have a public hall and park or village green.
- Within each major and medium-sized township there are centralised district sports reserves and parks and gardens that support social recreation, active recreation and play and a local walking trail.
- The central sport and recreation reserves facilitate participation in a wide range of sports including Australian Rules football, netball, cricket, hockey and tennis. These are supported by other sports facilities including lawn bowls greens and golf courses.
- The sport and recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities are supported by a network of local walking tracks and regional trails that connect key destinations. A popular local trail is Nolens Park in Boort which hosts the local Park Run.
- Loddon Shire features spectacular bushland reserves and river corridors that connect people to nature and culture, whilst also holding high biodiversity values. They offer opportu-

nities for nature-based recreation including bushwalking, rock climbing and bouldering, fishing, canoeing, camping and picnicking. The bushland reserves in the Loddon Valley are managed by Parks Victoria, with some managed in partnership with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation following the formalising of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement. There is an opportunity for Council to work with land managers and Traditional Owner groups to develop products and promote nature-based recreation opportunities. Key nature conservation reserves include Kooyoora State Park, Leaghur State Park, Pyramid Hill Summit Walk, Mount Hope Nature Conservation Reserve, Boort Lakes and Wetlands and Loddon River.

- The Loddon Shire community also access regional sport and aquatic facilities within Bendigo and Kerang including the Red Energy Centre, Latrobe University Bendigo Athletics Centre, Bendigo Regional Tennis Centre, Bendigo Badminton Centre, Bendigo Regional Hockey Centre, Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre and Kerang Outdoor Pool. This means Loddon Shire does not need to provide competition fields for these sports, unless it services a local need i.e., local club training and competition venue or social competition. These venues host the regional associations and deliver athlete talent development pathways.

The sports reserves are generally in good condition and attractive to use and there is an opportunity to diversity play experiences:

- The sports reserves are in very good condition following significant investment by Council, the community and State and Federal Government in improving sports fields, lighting, courts and pavilions.
- The local playspaces are very similar and a planned approach to upgrading and diversifying play experiences is needed at renewal. There has been recent investment in diversifying play spaces and providing active recreation facilities like fitness stations in townships. The Inglewood Reserve park has a shaded playspace and fitness station area with picnic facilities and access to a public toilet that also servicing the aquatic centre in summer and sports teams during the winter.
- Five major townships have access to an outdoor swimming pool. These facilities are in average condition. The recent technical assessment of all pools has found all pools to be in an average but serviceable condition. They all require upgrades in the next 10 years to continue the existing benefit to community.



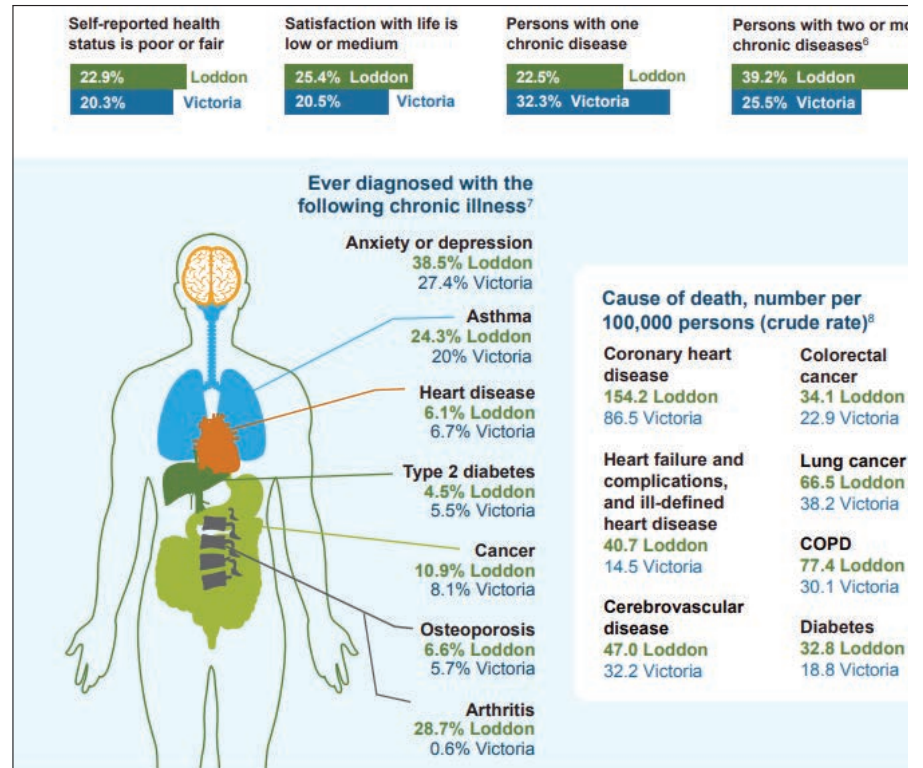
Loddon Shire is facing a health crisis, and we need creative ways to reverse this trend

There are high rates of dental health problems, smoking, and pre-obesity/obesity in the Loddon Shire’s rural communities. The impact of two flooding events and the COVID-19 pandemic has also seen a decline in participation and an impact on social connectedness as residents endured isolation from family, friends and community.

The Strategy’s priority is to deliver strategies to “activate people” with the aim to reversing the alarming health statistic that sees three-quarters of adults in the Loddon Shire being overweight or obese.

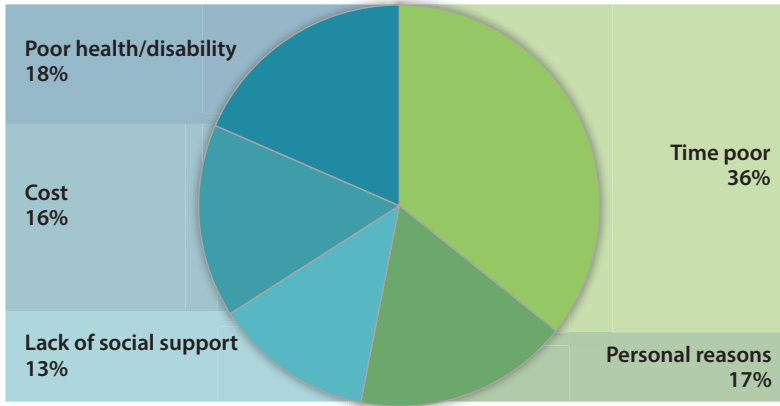


7



Credit – Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

The figure below shows the reported barriers to being more active in Loddon Shire:



Credit – Active Living Census



Let's together explore ways to encourage how we can activate our community because it is important to improving community health and wellbeing in our rural communities.

CASE STUDY

Active Farmers

Active Farmers host weekly fitness classes at the Bridgewater Recreation Reserve and host an annual Run for Resilience event. The Run for Resilience is a half marathon course run along the Inglewood to Bridgewater Trail. The event attracts 400 participants aged between 5 and 93 years.

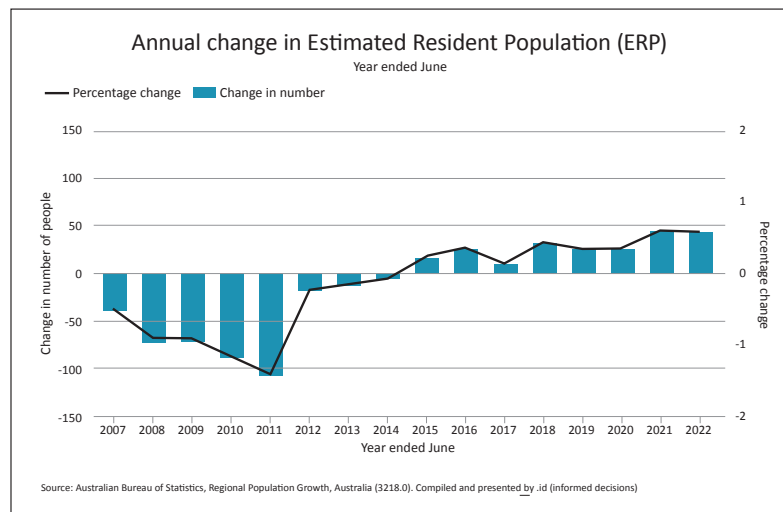


We need to adapt and design sports and active recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services to meet the needs of our changing community.

The current Loddon Shire population of 7,759 (ABS Census 2021) has grown over the last 10 years, and by 243 people since 2016 (7,516). The population is projected to grow by an average 0.5% annually to 8,144 by 2032. The townships identified for population growth in the Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan are Bridgewater and Inglewood.

The population is distributed across many rural townships that support a strong agricultural/farming industry. Providing services like sport and recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services and in local townships that support farming communities is an important social and economic driver.

Sport and active recreation in the Loddon Shire are considered the “heartbeat” of these rural communities and important for participation, community gathering, capacity building and economic development. Maintaining this benefit is important for rural living and the success of our townships. There is a history of migration of people to small townships to support local sports clubs.



Credit – ABS



Loddon Shire is an older population than the rest of regional Victoria, with a median age of 52 years. There are also higher rates of disability. The facilities and programs must be accessible and consider social engagement, fitness, and therapeutic activities.

There are relatively younger populations in Serpentine, Eddington, and Pyramid Hill. These communities will continue to seek sports competitions and active recreation activities.

Loddon Shire has people with diverse and rich cultural backgrounds. Townships like Boort and Pyramid Hill have a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people born overseas. Inclusive and culturally sensitive participation opportunities will be important to encourage participation from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Many people are on low median incomes, and some of the Loddon Shire communities are considered disadvantaged. Affordable participation opportunities will be important to encourage all of Loddon Shire to lead active lifestyles.

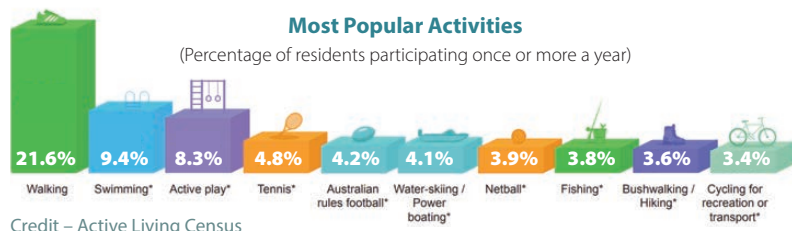
Other key findings include:

Sports clubs have been struggling to attract participants in Loddon Shire. A further two clubs (bowls clubs) have disbanded in the last 12 months. Junior teams are struggling with participation and volunteerism is in decline.

In general, competition structures still operate a traditional format of play. New modified formats could be encouraged more in Loddon Shire, but local sports clubs and associations need support from peak sporting bodies to facilitate this.

The recent Active Living Census survey shows the importance of active recreation in Loddon Shire with over 80% of residents utilising open spaces weekly with walking, play, and swimming being amongst the most popular types of active recreation in Loddon. Unstructured sports that can be played at flexible times and support a person's lifestyle, health and wellbeing are now being preferred.

The modelling shows no demand for additional sports facilities in Loddon Shire and that a key focus of this Strategy is on activating sport and active recreation facilities rather than needing to improve the capacity of existing facilities or build new facilities.



CASE STUDY

Boort Parkrun and Little Lake Boort Foreshore Upgrade

Parkrun is hosted in Boort at Nolen's Park. The free, fun, and friendly weekly 5km community running event attracts over 50 runners. The Parkrun is run along the upgraded Little Lake Boort Foreshore Trail.





Loddon Shire Council has invested in improving sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities. However, the asset renewal funding gap is widening. A strategic and sustainable approach is now needed

Loddon Shire Council has improved the sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces, aquatic facilities over the last 10 years. This includes upgraded sports fields, courts, lighting and pavilions. The Council has also invested in developing walking and cycling trails and streetscape improvements within township areas.

These improvements were identified through a series of master plans and have helped deliver on the Loddon Council Plan 2021-2025 directions to 'Plan for Future Facilities and Infrastructure That Meet Community Needs' and 'Maintain Sports and Recreation and Open Public Spaces to enable and Promote Access and Participation'.

The increasing costs of infrastructure and services is escalating, and the asset renewal funding gap is widening. The Asset Plan 2022 projects a significant funding shortfall to meet the current asset replacement and maintenance requirements in the next 10 years. However, asset values are unknown for sport, recreational and aquatic facilities, community facilities, parks, open spaces and streetscapes.

Loddon Shire Council has the lowest rate base in Victoria and the community is one of the most disadvantaged in Victoria. The Council is reliant on external grants to not only improve infrastructure but also to operate recreation, open space and aquatic facilities. External funders require a strategic approach to be undertaken by the Council if they are to invest in the future.

The Council will need to consider the long-term financial capacity to renew assets. This Strategy considers what a sustainable sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic service can be provided.

CASE STUDY

Donaldson Park Pavilion

Wedderburn's Donaldson Park includes a new multi-sport and community-focused pavilion, construction of a carpark, solar installation with batteries, pavement works and landscaping. Stage 2 works are being designed to be delivered at a later stage and will include a new play-space for all abilities, landscaping and internal paths. The project is being delivered by Loddon Shire in partnership with the Reserve Committee and user groups, the Inglewood and Districts Community Enterprise Limited and State and Federal Government.

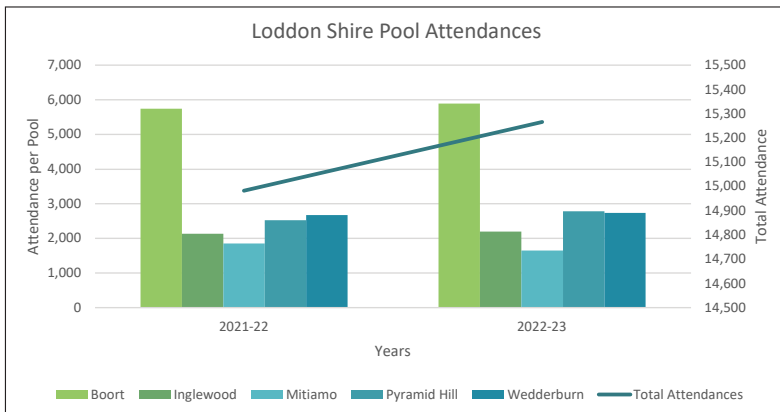
Donaldson Park is a key sport, recreation and community space for Wedderburn, and is home to the town's football, netball, hockey and harness racing clubs.



Loddon Shire pools operate low patronage and now cost the Council \$47 per visit

The aquatic service review identifies that Council is subsidising the use of the aquatic facilities by \$47 per visit with an annual cost of \$700,000 and attracting 15,000 visits. This is very high and well above the industry benchmark.

The graph below shows the attendances at the Loddon Shire aquatic facilities across 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons.

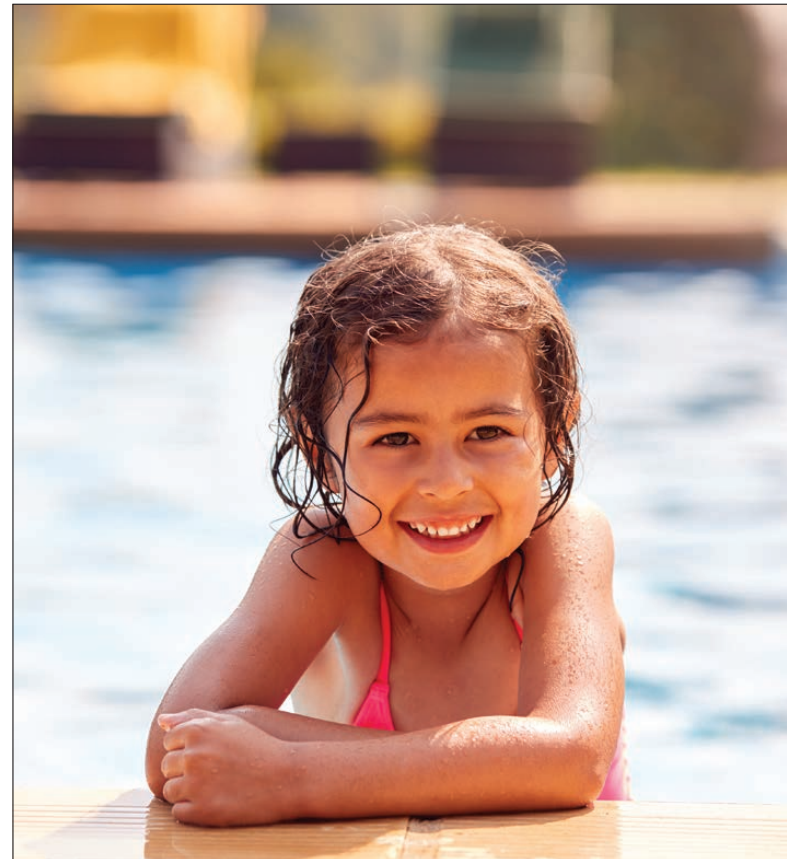


When compared to other outdoor pools in the region, Boort has the highest visitations across the Shire's pools. Pyramid Hill, Wedderburn, Inglewood and Mitiamo are operating at a low patronage. This is consistent with small township pools in the area.

Aquatic facility management and operations are subject to increasing costs across the industry. The increasing cost of qualified staffing, chemical supply and delivery are major contributing factors for rural facilities. Loddon Shire Council has also recently considered a proposed increased management fee by the current operator, whilst undesirable, represents market rates for pool management and operations. Staff (lifeguards) and chemicals (water treatment) are the major factors in managing operational risks.

Loddon Shire seasonal (October to March) pool attendances remained relatively static and when considered against the increasing costs, the Council will need to assess the benefit compared to the cost of providing an aquatic service in the future.

The Council recognises that the Loddon Shire community value having access to swimming pool facilities and despite declining attendances there is strong support for them. Unfortunately, the high cost of swimming pools is placing considerable pressure on Council's capacity to fund them amongst other competing community and infrastructure needs. A strategic approach to addressing this issue is critical.



Mitiamo and Pyramid Hill pools have significant overlapping catchments and Echuca and Bendigo indoor pools service Loddon Shire

Boort is the main tourism centre and Wedderburn the main service centre of Loddon with the largest population catchments. Inglewood pool and facilities are in the best condition and is central to communities in the south including Bridgewater, Newbridge and Serpentine. This area is identified for future growth.

Most pools are located 20 minutes from each other, except for Pyramid Hill and Mitiamo to the northwest and Wedderburn and Inglewood in the southeast of Loddon Shire, which have overlapping catchments. Pyramid Hill and Mitiamo Pools overlapping catchment is significant, with both facilities servicing both town centres.

Shire pools are not the only pools servicing Loddon residents. Bendigo, Dunolly and Echuca pools also service Loddon communities. As the facilities in Loddon Shire are all outdoor seasonal pools, it can be assumed that if residents wish to participate in aquatic programs i.e. learn to swim lessons or swim year-round, they will drive to Bendigo or Echuca indoor aquatic facilities.

The map shows the primary (0–15-minute travel time) and secondary (15–30-minute travel time) catchment areas of the aquatic facilities located within Loddon Shire.

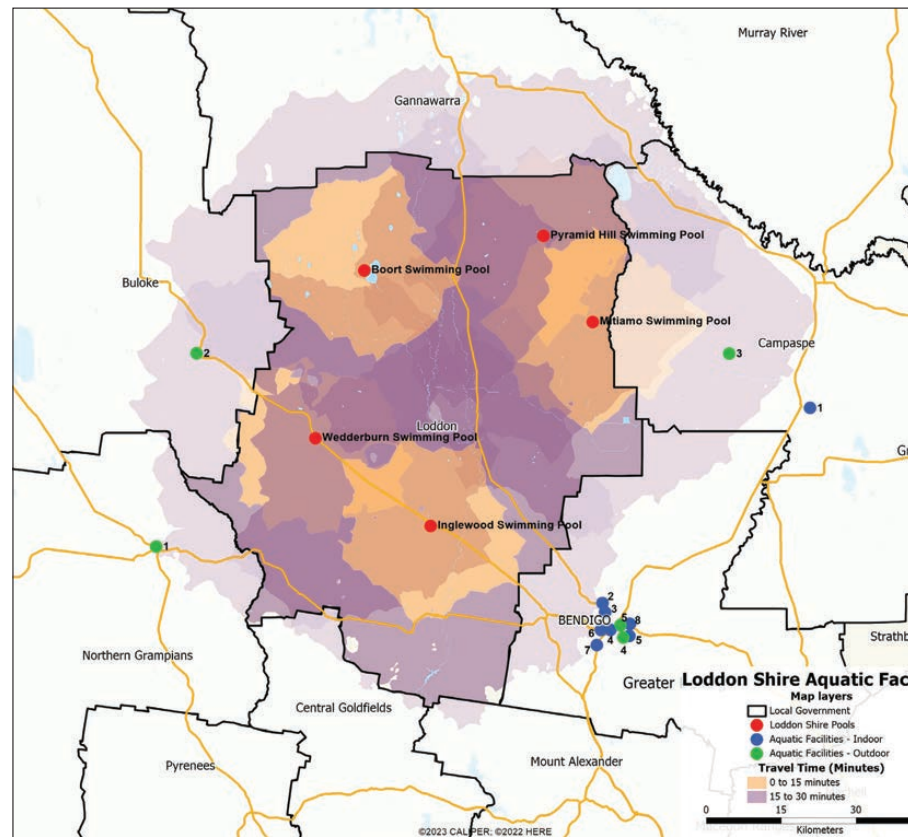
\$1.3 million is needed over the next 10 years to maintain the current aquatic service

The Structural Engineer (JWS Engineers) has provided a detailed Technical Assessment of the aquatic facilities and identified the asset management (renewal) requirements of the facilities in the next 10 years. The total cost of these works is approximately \$1.3 million over 10 years to maintain the current benefit.

This funding only maintains the assets and does not provide any additional benefit to the community; or address dignified accessibility and depth concerns with pools. The Pools do not meet current industry standards and are now over 50 years old.

The asset management costs do not include regular Council maintenance program items (e.g., pool painting and expansion joint reinstatement). These items are still required to be completed, and therefore, consideration must be made as to how these will be funded and included in future budget planning.

The current "management model" for aquatics in Loddon is effective, yet unavoidably expensive. The current financial input of public money is unsustainable. The need to explore and evaluate other potential partnership management models is critical and must occur over the next three years in order to preserve any chance of retaining the current number of aquatic facilities beyond 2028.



WHAT DID WE HEAR?

The planning process was built on previous engagement activities hosted for the Activating Open Space Strategy and Swimming Pool Improvements Plan and involved a comprehensive community engagement process.

The engagement process involved:

- Community survey – 59 residents completed a survey. Respondents lived across most Loddon Shire communities.
- Sports club/association survey – 20 sports clubs and associations completed a survey.
- Community drop-in sessions – 170 people attended the drop-in sessions. Respondents were made up of 25% seniors, 25% adults and 50% children and young people.
- Public submissions – Two public submissions were received.
- Stakeholder interviews and workshops.

Outdoor sporting facilities are highly valued, and the Reserve Committees and sporting clubs need support to maintain facilities and benefit the community

Outdoor sporting facilities are highly valued:

Residents highly value existing sports facilities and clubs as essential community assets. Active support is important for maintaining and improving these facilities to encourage increased usage.

Sports club challenges: Clubs across Loddon Shire face challenges with declining memberships, facility maintenance and in some regards deteriorating infrastructure. Supporting sport and recreation clubs in local communities was a key finding of the consultation process. It is also recognised by Council services that the partnership between Council, Reserve Committees and sporting clubs is critical to maintaining these recreation places for community.

Financial constraints, operational challenges, difficulties in securing volunteers, and concerns over facility accessibility, management expertise, and regulatory burdens are significant issues affecting the sustainability and growth of sports and recreation clubs in the area. Additionally, there is a noted impact of changing work patterns and seasonal overlaps on participation.

CASE STUDY

Loddon Valley Football Netball League Finals

The Loddon Valley Football Netball League (LVFNL) finals are significant regional events that provide social and economic benefits to Loddon townships, businesses and communities. The LVFNL finals series include six finals hosting three football games and seven netball games. Each final is shared across Loddon townships.

In 2023, the finals series attendance was estimated to be within 8,500 to 10,000 players, officials and spectators and were hosted at Bridgewater, Newbridge, Serpentine, Pyramid Hill, Calivil and Inglewood.



The community enjoys the diverse recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities in Loddon and wish to use them more

Diverse facilities

There is a strong demand for more diverse recreational spaces to cater for a broad range of interests.

The high value placed on parks and gardens and riding tracks and walking trails...

...emphasises the importance of investing in green spaces and active recreation infrastructure to promote community health and wellbeing. Respondents particularly identified a high value for the township park and playspace provided in each township.

Health and fitness stations and local programs encourage adults to be active:

Adults appreciate gyms, fitness stations, and fitness sessions for maintaining health and fitness.

Prioritising access to central open spaces in townships:

Outdoor sport facilities and park with play-space and active recreation opportunities is important with the community emphasising the proximity to home to access family-oriented sport and recreation activities encourages physical activity.

Community seeks an expanded aquatic program and service:

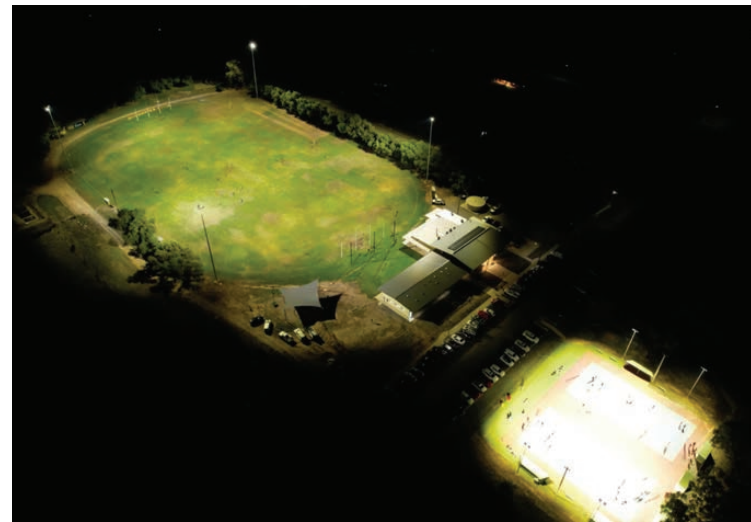
Local pools are valued as safe places for learning to swim and cooling down. The community suggested effective communication about pool timings and seek extended operating hours and diversifying aquatic programs, events and activities to meet the needs of residents and boost usage. Ideas include:

- Diversifying water play experiences: Installing water play splash parks and play equipment, diving boards and hosting more inflatable days as ways that would encourage greater participation. Innovative adventure and play opportunities should be explored with community when considering future aquatic facilities improvements.
- More programming and events: Hosting community events and introducing water aerobics, strength training, morning lap swims, etc. A range of programs and events that engage a cross-section of the community, including young and old and families should be explored with considering the future aquatic services.

CASE STUDY

Recreation Reserve Lighting Upgrades at Serpentine, Mitiamo and Calivil
















The Recreation Reserve floodlighting upgrade project includes lighting towers and LED lighting and associated works for playing areas. These projects have significantly improved the safety of football and netball training at each reserve.



Adults and Seniors Story Board

LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY
What facilities and services do you want to see?
















Choose Your Top 3

 <p>45</p>	 <p>14</p>	 <p>25</p>	 <p>9</p>	 <p>11</p>
Sports Facilities	Program/ Lap Swimming Pool	Trails i.e. Walking and Riding	Active Recreation	Playspaces
 <p>7</p>	 <p>11</p>	 <p>10</p>	 <p>16</p>	 <p>8</p>
Nature Play	Water Play	Adventure Activities	Nature-based Recreation Activities	Fitness Stations
 <p>19</p>	 <p>26</p>	 <p>16</p>	 <p>5</p>	 <p>14</p>
Fitness Sessions	Sports Club Support	Community Events	Social Seating and Water Stations	Landscaping i.e. Sensory, Shade

Children and Young People

LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY
 What facilities and services do you want to see?

Choose Your Top 3

25 	23 	12 	7 	8 
Sports Facilities	Program/ Lap Swimming Pool	Trails i.e. Walking and Riding	Active Recreation	Playspaces
10 	42 	9 	12 	3 
Nature Play	Water Play	Adventure Activities	Nature-based Recreation Activities	Fitness Stations
1 	6 	12 	1 	3 
Fitness Sessions	Sports Club Support	Community Events	Social Seating and Water Stations	Landscaping i.e. Sensory, Shade

Maintain recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities to encourage regular use

Facility upgrades and maintenance: Ongoing maintenance, improvements, and diversification of recreational facilities is important. Specific concerns include footpath improvements, trail maintenance, and facility upgrades to meet current needs and safety standards. There is a need to enhance facility quality and maintenance.

Residents also emphasise the need for facility upgrades, including renovated changing rooms, shaded areas, and recreational amenities like mountain bike trails and skate parks, to improve the appeal and functionality of Loddon Shire's public spaces. These spaces need to be maintained to encourage regular use.

High value placed on the maintenance and improvement of playspaces: This finding highlights the community's recognition of the importance of maintaining existing playspaces to ensure their continued usability for the residents.

Consistent theme of adequately maintaining and activating the current assets over building new ones: This finding indicates a preference for maximising the utility of existing facilities before investing in new infrastructure through maintenance and improvement of current assets in Loddon Shire.

CASE STUDY

Inglewood Change Room and Park Upgrade

The major upgrade of the building at the outdoor pool at Inglewood Recreation Reserve now provides shared change rooms where they are used as pool change rooms in the summer and netball change rooms in the winter. The upgrade also included improvements to the park with landscaping and a new playspace and fitness station.



Accessible recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities will encourage participation

Accessibility to facilities and services: Enhancing accessibility for seniors, diversifying play options for children and youth, promoting safe and inclusive swimming experiences, and providing a variety of recreational opportunities for adults and families are essential considerations. Improving access, footpaths, and trails is crucial, especially for seniors. Amenities like water stations, shade, and seating enhance outdoor experiences and encourage physical activity.

Additionally, the community seek more community events and support multipurpose recreational spaces. These suggestions were seen as vital for promoting physical activity and community participation.

Activate the recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities we have: A range of ideas for increasing use of public open spaces have been suggested, including places that are tailored for young people, increasing public engagement through better promotion of existing activities, improved accessibility across the Shire, walking and cycling paths, seating and shade, fitness and play equipment and physical activity programs. There is active support for hosting more community events in open spaces to encourage physical activity and participation. There is growing interest in active recreation facilities like bike skills tracks, nature-based and water play experiences.

Residents suggested multi-purpose recreational spaces, amenities, and community-focused

events are key principles for the future recreation service.

Promote nature-based recreation activities: The drop-in sessions found children and young people benefit from diverse play experiences, including water play and nature activities. There is high interest by adults in activities like mountain biking, bouldering, bushwalking, and fishing to promote enjoyment of natural bushland and waterways.

Key barriers: Key barriers to engaging in sport and active recreation in Loddon Shire include limited accessibility, lack of specialised clubs or organisations, poor facility quality, and outdated amenities, underscoring the importance of addressing these issues to encourage participation.

CASE STUDY

Bridgewater Swimming Hole and Foreshore Project

Bridgewater Swimming Hole on the Loddon River is a popular destination for families to swim in the summer months, especially during the Christmas/New Year and Easter holiday periods when there is a high influx of visitors camping in Loddon caravan parks and bushland areas.

The swimming hole is now connected to the township and caravan park by the new Bridgewater Foreshore Trail.



The community wants Council to prioritise high quality recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services

Community accepts fewer facilities if facilities are of high quality: While a significant portion of respondents are willing to pay higher rates to maintain current sport and recreation facilities, a slightly larger group would accept fewer but higher-quality facilities, indicating a preference for prioritising maintenance and enhancement of existing infrastructure over new developments.

The "how would you spend \$100 engagement activity" resulted in the following priorities for funding:

- Improving and maintaining play spaces
- Improving and maintaining active recreation facilities
- Improving and maintaining aquatic facilities
- Improving and maintaining community sport facilities

The burdening "cost vs benefit" of five aquatic locations: There needs to be a careful evaluation of investment in aquatic facilities to ensure they align with community needs and provide significant value relative to their cost.

The community desire to see council spending increase in sport and active recreation suggests a need for prioritising budget allocations towards provision of sport and active recreation in Loddon Shire to promote physical activity, social engagement, and community cohesion.



CASE STUDY

Newbridge Recreation Reserve Re-Establishment Project

Delivery of the Newbridge Sporting Pavilion, new netball and tennis courts and other ancillary recreation and camping reserve restoration works was one of the largest flood recovery projects delivered by Loddon Shire in partnership with the Reserve Committee and user groups, local businesses and State Government.

The facilities accommodate multiple sporting and recreation activities and clubs, community events and visitors camping on the Loddon River at the reserve. In the future if Council were to develop a combined netball and tennis facility the opportunity to consider multi-purpose courts using an approved playing surface by Netball Victoria and Tennis Victoria could be investigated.



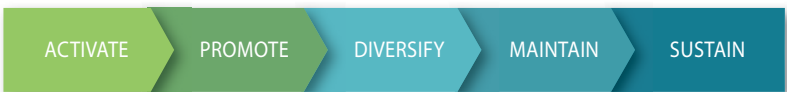
THE STRATEGY

Vision



The following strategic objectives and actions are designed to achieve this vision.

Objectives



Strategic Directions

ACTIVATE RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC FACILITIES

- How?**
- Partner with Reserve Committees and facilitate greater programming of sports reserves for community activities i.e. fitness classes, walking groups, etc.
 - Deliver innovative approaches and encourage a diversity of activities, programming and events at aquatic facilities to increase visitation.
 - Partner with community in hosting nature-based recreation events.
 - Explore opportunities for nature-based recreation and tourism activities with Land Managers.
 - Design community spaces in the main streets of townships that are welcoming and interesting to move through, that connect communities, encourage active lifestyles, are walkable, reflect local art and celebrate culture and heritage.

PROMOTE RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC FACILITIES

- How?**
- Promote recreation as key ingredient of country lifestyle.
 - Partner with Bendigo Tourism and develop the Loddon Valley webpage with content promoting family and lifestyle sport and active recreation and a connection to nature.

DIVERSIFY RECREATION, OPEN SPACES AND AQUATIC FACILITIES SO THEY ENCOURAGE GREATER PARTICIPATION

- How?**
- Take a strategic approach to the improvement of recreation assets and apply the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework.
 - When assets are due for renewal, identify opportunities to diversify recreation opportunities.
 - Prioritise improvements that address fair play, universal access and multipurpose objectives.
 - Develop a recreation project rolling program to undertake initial designs to enhance the ability to attract external funding to support diversification of existing recreation assets.

MAINTAIN QUALITY RECREATION, OPEN SPACES AND AQUATIC FACILITIES

- How?**
- Apply a consistent standard to design and maintenance of recreation, open space and aquatic facilities that responds to the planning framework (levels of service).
 - Develop an Asset Management Plan for recreation assets and provide annual funding allocation to implement Plan. This will include the recent aquatic facility asset management plan.
 - Regularly monitor and review the Asset Management Plan.
 - As part of Council's annual budget process provide funding for maintenance of parks, playspaces, active recreation and tracks and trails.
 - Seek external funding opportunities to support any planned upgrade or renewal of recreation, open spaces and aquatic assets.
 - As part of Council's annual budget process provide funding for asset management (renewal) of aquatic facilities as detailed in the JWS Engineers Technical Assessment to maintain the assets.
 - Conduct close analysis and feasibility studies of individual pool locations. Upon catastrophic plant and/or pool failure, Council investigates, with the community, future aquatic options.

DELIVER A SUSTAINABLE SERVICE

- How?**
- Support partnership with Reserve Committees in managing and maintaining sports reserves.
 - Support the development of sustainable clubs and organisations by partnering with peak bodies responsible for skilling and supporting volunteers; and promoting the Sports Community website that provides the resources, training and knowledge to volunteers and clubs on how to make their role easier.
 - Investigate options to consolidate if recreation facilities are duplicated. Partner with peak sporting bodies to conduct strategic reviews.
 - Recognise and protect high-value natural environments and landscapes in the planning scheme and when planning open spaces.
 - Integrate environmentally sustainable design and water-sensitive urban design features in capital works projects and encourage tenants to develop sustainable facility management practices.
 - Investigate management models and partnering opportunities for aquatic facilities e.g., Community partnership models and regional management models with partnering councils. This includes what the possible transition of management models could look like.

Planning Framework

To support best practice recreation and open space planning, a planning framework has been developed that considers the roles different facilities, assets and spaces, play in activating communities and the different places we live in. These different roles of recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities deliver a wide range of 'liveability' benefits. These include improved physical and mental health and wellbeing, providing a pathway from grass root to elite level

sport, socialising and play, learn to swim, cooling off in hot weather, protecting and connecting with nature, attracting community and visitor activity that returns economic benefits and cultural connection.

Effective recreation facilities, open space and aquatic facilities planning requires a partnership with community and land managers (Committees of Management) across Local, State and Federal Governments. The planning should be integrated, holistic, and sustainable.

The Planning Framework classifies recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities by their primary functions and provides a classification system to apply service levels to guide the provision of recreation assets across the municipality.

State and Federal Government legislation, the planning scheme and reserve management plans will outline the design and management requirements of nature conservation reserves. These open space types are mostly managed by other land managers, including Parks Victoria.

There is an opportunity for Council to advocate for nature based recreation and adventure activities that will provide a unique experience and community with an important connection to nature.

The Planning Framework will guide the project scope during development of concept plans or detailed designs along with consideration of industry design standards and principles, universal design standards and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) guidelines.



Site Specific Recommendations

Site specific recommendations have been prioritised in an implementation plan. The Loddon Recreation Planning Framework (Appendix 1) will guide the delivery of recommendations in this section. Projects will be subject to available funding to support implementation, will be prioritised with other projects in Council’s capital works program and may rely on the availability of external funding.

The recommended projects are prioritised for delivery:

- Short – 0-3 years
- Medium – 4-7 years
- Aspirational
- Ongoing

The implementation plan will be reviewed every two years. This review process will consider the outcomes of planning and funding processes and ensure that any emerging community and industry trends/demands, as well as external funding opportunities and Council funding capacity, are assessed and priority projects remain relevant throughout its 10-year timeline.

The Council will continue to work with sports clubs on developing proposals that can be considered at this review point.

Table 1: Implementation Plan

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/Support
Sport and Recreation Precinct (Reserve)				
Arnold Cricket Ground	Arnold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Bears Lagoon Tennis Centre	Bears Lagoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Boort Bowls Club	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Boort Croquet Club	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement actions identified for this site in the Boort Foreshore Recreation Plan 	Short	Committee of Management/ Council
Boort Golf Club	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Boort Tennis Club	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement actions identified for this site in the Boort Foreshore Recreation Plan 	Short	Committee of Management/ Council
Boort Park	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review design of current pavilion and consider netball and umpire change room provision 	Short	Committee of Management/ Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation of timekeeper’s box 	Short	Committee of Management/ Council
Bridgewater Bowls Club	Bridgewater on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review playing surface and lighting options and consider future use of second green 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/ Council
Bridgewater Recreation Reserve	Bridgewater on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider improved toilet facilities for patron use 	Medium	Committee of Management/ Council
Calivil Recreation Reserve	Calivil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Clubs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate alternative use for old golf course - Consider a walking track 	Short	Committee of Management

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/Support
Sport and Recreation Precinct (Reserve)				
Dingee Recreation Reserve	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review location of local level playspace location (see Parks and Playgrounds section) 	Ongoing Short	Committee of Management Council
Inglewood Bowls Club	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review playing surface and lighting options and consider shared site opportunities 	Ongoing Aspirational	Committee of Management Committee of Management/ Council
Inglewood Community Sports Centre	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Complete and implement Master Plan 	Ongoing Medium	Committee of Management Committee of Management/ Council
Inglewood Golf Course	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Kingower Cricket Ground	Kingower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Korong Vale Recreation Reserve	Korong Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider future of reserve 	Short	Committee of Management/ Council
Mitiamo Recreation Reserve	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review reserve change rooms against current standards and develop a site management plan (including feasibility study) 	Ongoing Short	Committee of Management Committee of Management/ Council
Mitiamo Golf Course	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Newbridge Recreation Reserve	Newbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Mitchell Park	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review design of current pavilion and consider netball and umpire change rooms provision 	Ongoing Medium	Committee of Management Committee of Management/ Council
Pyramid Hill Bowls Club	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review playing surface and lighting options 	Ongoing Aspirational	Committee of Management Committee of Management/ Club/Council
Pyramid Hill Golf Club	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Pyramid Hill Quarter Horse Club	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Pyramid Hill Tennis Centre	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Serpentine Recreation Reserve	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Clubs
Serpentine Bowls and Tennis Centre	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider opportunities to enhance shared facility use Review bowls playing surface and lighting options 	Ongoing Short Aspirational	Committee of Management/Clubs Committee of Management/Clubs Committee of Management/Council
Market Square Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider shared site opportunities 	Ongoing Aspirational	Committee of Management/Club Committee of Management/Club

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/Support
Sport and Recreation Precinct (Reserve)				
Donaldson Park Recreation Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider oval playing surface options to increase shared space opportunities - eg cricket wicket Review Bowls playing surface and lighting options 	Ongoing Aspirational Aspirational	Committee of Management/Clubs Committee of Management/Council Committee of Management/ Club/Council
Skinnners Flat Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolve Dam Wall / Spillway Issues Implement Master plan (after dam resolution complete) 	Short Medium	Council Council
Wedderburn Golf Club	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Woodstock Recreation Reserve	Woodstock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Parks and Playgrounds				
Jubilee Park	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review playground using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Ongoing Medium	Council
Little Lake Boort Precinct/ Nolens Park/ Rotary and Historical Parks	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Implement actions identified for this site in the Boort Foreshore Recreation Plan (separate to Tennis and Croquet actions) 	Medium	Council
Sunnyside Court Playground	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove equipment and sell block 	Short	Council
Sloans Park	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider future of site using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Short	Council
Bridgewater Foreshore	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Progress Park	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review provision of local level playground using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Ongoing Medium	Council Council
J Sloan Park	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review skate park design to incorporate current pump/skate/bike track trends to enhance activation 	Ongoing Aspirational	Council Council
Village Green	Kingower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Borella Park	Korong Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider improvements to seating and shade 	Ongoing Medium	Council Council
RJ Phelan Park	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review provision of local level playground using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Ongoing Medium	Council Council

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/Support
Parks and Playgrounds				
Progress Park	Newbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Kelly Park / Lions Park East Park	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review provision of township playgrounds using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework and develop a playground management plan 	Ongoing Medium	Council Council
Pyramid Hill Reserve – The Hill	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
T J Rudkins Reserve	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Tarnagulla Soldiers Memorial Park	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Tarnagulla Park	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider removal of cricket nets and bike track 	Ongoing Medium	Council Council
Cooper Park	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Wedderburn Soldiers Memorial Park	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Nardoo Linear Park/equipment	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Teds Garden	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Aquatic Facility				
Outdoor Pools	Boort/Inglewood/Mitiamo/Pyramid Hill/Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and monitor Activate space to enhance patronage Conduct feasibility study, including exploring alternative operating models 	Ongoing Ongoing Short	Council/Leisure Services Contractor Leisure Services Contractor/Council Council
Bridgewater Swimming Hole	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Trails				
Loddon Trail Network	Various - refer Inventory Appendix 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Audit condition and compliance with standards Review provision of trails using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework and develop a trails management plan 	Ongoing Short Medium	Council Council Council
Canoe Trails				
Serpentine Canoe Trail	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Laanecoorie Canoe Trail	Laanecoorie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Durham Ox Canoe Trail	Durham Ox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council

Recreation Service

The Strategy has identified a shift for Loddon Shire’s Recreation Services from one that has partnered with community and State and Federal Government to deliver infrastructure improvements to one that focuses on activating the recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities we have.

Proposed Recreation Service role:

- Partner with the Reserves Committee of Management to facilitate local programs and events for active sports reserves.
- Partner with State and Local Sporting Associations to facilitate modified playing formats that encourage more people to participate in sport and host club development programs.
- Establish a club support role that seeks feedback on club needs and links resources to respond to governance and management issues and initiatives. This includes supporting clubs in delivering fair access to facilities and programming.
- Represent the user groups in the planning and design of infrastructure projects. Prepare funding applications in partnership with the community.
- Participate in the development of asset management plans for recreation, open space and aquatic facilities. This will require organising asset audits and management of asset maintenance schedules.
- Planning for the renewal of recreation, open space, and aquatic facilities, apply the planning framework, consider duplicated services, and engage the community in planning processes.

- Promote the recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire, through developing content and developing the Loddon Valley tourism webpage.
- Facilitate nature-based recreation programs and events in Loddon Shire nature parks and waterways. Partner with land managers, outdoor recreation groups and event promoters.
- Identify, and share with Council, clubs and committees, an understanding of recreation trends and opportunities to enhance or expand the recreation options to increase activation and participation.
- Identify, and work proactively with Clubs, opportunities for future shared usage of facilities.



WARRANTIES AND DISCLAIMERS

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence', and these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are

inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

Otium Planning Group's advice does not extend to, or imply professional expertise in the disciplines of economics, quantity surveying, engineering or architecture. External advice in one or more of these disciplines may have been sought, where necessary to address the requirements of the project objectives. There will be differences between projected and actual results because events and circumstances frequently

do not occur as expected, and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite, or guarantee the projections' achievability as it is impossible to substantiate assumptions based on future events.

This report does not constitute advice, investment advice, or opinion and must not be relied on for funding or investment decisions. Independent advice should be obtained in relation to investment decisions.

Accordingly, neither Otium Planning Group, nor any member or employee of Otium Planning Group, undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than the client in respect of this report, for any errors or omissions herein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.



APPENDIX 1: LODDON RECREATION PLANNING FRAMEWORK

To pursue an appropriate and sustainable distribution of recreation facilities and open spaces throughout the municipality, the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework has been developed. This is based on the current situation, aligns with the township classification in the Social Infrastructure Strategy, and can be reviewed should circumstances change in future.

This table also provides a guide for future provision, in terms of what could or should realistically be provide in towns of various sizes to encourage active participation. The information in this table has been specifically developed for Loddon Shire, taking into consideration :

- Provision and benchmarking of facilities in similar-sized towns in rural Victoria
- the types of activities that currently occur (or may feasibly occur in the future given feedback from local residents and examining nation-wide participation trends)
- population distribution
- existing facility provision within the catchment (including neighbouring towns and municipalities)

The assessment of recreation and open space infrastructure provision levels will be subject to the following principles:

- Some townships may already exceed the infrastructure level identified for a town of its size. In this situation, Council will continue to provide the existing level of service, until such time as the asset is due for renewal where Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
- Where infrastructure exceeds the level identified for a township, and the infrastructure will not be replaced in future, Council will cease insuring the asset.
- Some townships may not currently have the level of infrastructure as detailed in the table. The levels noted apply to townships where existing infrastructure exists. A feasibility study, demonstrating demand, need and sustainability will be required to initiate new infrastructure development. These projects will be subject to available funding and will be prioritised against other projects.
- Association or competition sport conducted in a township may create an override of the minimum provision levels. For example, two netball courts may be required in a community participating in a football/netball league competition. Council commits to retaining the existing level of service to recreation facilities whilst they continue to participate in competition sports.

- Community groups or other organisations, such as schools, may choose to construct and maintain additional facilities at their own cost. Where communities wish to develop infrastructure outside the level suggested in this guide, and where there is an expectation that Council will take on responsibility for the infrastructure, it is a requirement that the initiatives are subjected to a fully informed feasibility study (which demonstrates demand, need and sustainability) and whole of life costs are clearly understood. Council approval must be provided for construction or renewal of assets on a council owned or managed site.
- In cases where clubs are considering amalgamation, going into recess, or dissolution, Council will assist user groups in planning for the future use of their facilities. If amalgamation occurs, Council will support the parties in consolidating their facilities within a 4-year timeframe. The management and maintenance of dual locations is generally discouraged and will not be supported beyond the initial four years.



The following table classifies recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities by their primary functions and provides a classification system to apply service levels to guide the provision of recreation assets across the municipality.

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
Sports field and change/social facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	Irrigated sports field provided. A fit for purpose change/social facility will be provided with the expectation of multi-use functionality, and guided by relevant requirements including building regulations, DDA compliance and other guidelines such as AFL Cricket Victoria, preferred facility guidelines. Where secondary ovals are used for individual sports, consideration should be given to planning for future consolidation to one precinct to reduce facility duplication.	Sports field provided – irrigated where competition sport is active and has playing surface standards. Where competitive sport is played, a fit for purpose change/social facility will be provided with the expectation of multi-use functionality, and guided by relevant requirements including building regulations, DDA compliance and other guidelines such as AFL, Cricket Victoria, preferred facility guidelines.	Retain existing sports fields. Change/social facilities retained until such time as the infrastructure is due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
Hard courts and change facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	Two courts provided. Preference to be line marked for multipurpose use, with minimum of netball and tennis. Fit for purpose change facilities provided.	One court may be provided, with preference to be marked for multipurpose use, with minimum of netball and tennis. Where competition netball is played, two courts will be provided, with access to fit for purpose change facilities.	Retain existing hard courts and any associated infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
Lawn Tennis Courts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	Retain existing lawn court numbers and associated infrastructure where competition and membership numbers support use. A "Tennis Victoria HIT Assessment" will be undertaken to inform any proposed growth or reduction in court or light numbers at Loddon tennis venues prior to any change. Explore alternative court surface options where required. A combination of grass and hard courts may be provided.	Where competition tennis is played, up to six courts may be available for local competition, social use and practice. No additional grass courts will be provided. Existing hard courts may be marked for multi-purpose use at the discretion of Council. Lighting will not be supplied.	Retain existing tennis court and any associated infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
Bowling Green <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	One bowling green. Retain sites with two greens and associated infrastructure whilst competition requirement May have a synthetic surface, subject to business case and funding.	Generally not provided. Where competition bowls is played, one bowling green and associated infrastructure. May have a synthetic surface, subject to business case and funding.	Not provided.
Croquet Green <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	Retain existing Croquet green and associated infrastructure whilst competition sport is active. New Croquet greens are subject to feasibility study, identification of shared surface opportunities, and funding.	Not provided.	Not provided.

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
<p>Golf Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<p>One golf course and associated infrastructure whilst competition sport is active.</p>	<p>Generally not provided. Retain existing while competition sport active.</p>	<p>Not provided.</p>
<p>Equine sport facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<p>An equine sport facility and associated infrastructure may be provided. Retain existing facilities whilst events are active. New facilities are subject to a feasibility study and available funding.</p>	<p>Generally not provided.</p>	<p>Generally not provided.</p>
<p>Park</p>	<p>One main park with one or two BBQs, shade, picnic facilities and accessible public toilets within reasonable distance. Likely to be minimum of 0.5 hectare – where space permits Secondary park, smaller in size. May have one BBQ, shade and picnic facilities. A public toilet may not be available. For townships with 750+ population a tertiary park may be provided. Smaller in size. To be an open space or parkland. Public toilet may not be available. Waste Services may be provided to these spaces at the discretion of Council. Any of these sites may be associated with a recreation precinct or a linear area (such as a foreshore development)</p>	<p>One local level park provided to a basic level. Seating and shade provided. May have access to public toilets. May have a BBQ. If public toilets and/or a BBQ are provided at a recreation precinct in the township, they will not be duplicated in the park (and vice versa) Waste Services may be provided to these spaces at the discretion of Council.</p>	<p>Possibly one small park area provided to a basic level. May have some seating and shade. Toilets and BBQs and waste services are generally not provided. Retain any existing infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.</p>
<p>Playground</p>	<p>One main playground, located at the main park area (as above) including play equipment relative to the space, the community size and profile. Current playground standards and design trends will be considered. May include a nature or themed play space. Playground will offer equipment suitable for a variety of children’s ages and abilities. Secondary (local level) playground provided. May be at a secondary park or recreation precinct, or another location specific to the needs of the community. A limited offering of equipment will be provided. At least one all abilities item to be included. For townships with 750+ population a tertiary (local level) playground may be provided. May be at a secondary/tertiary park or recreation precinct, or another location specific to the needs of the community. A limited offering of equipment will be provided. At least one all abilities item to be included.</p>	<p>A local level playground will be provided within an existing park or recreation precinct. A limited offering of equipment will be provided. At least one all abilities item to be included. Current playground standards and design trends will be considered.</p>	<p>Retain existing playgrounds and any associated infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure</p>

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
Footpaths	<p>Council aspires to having constructed footpaths on at least one side of each sealed street in large townships. Subject to funding and prioritisation. Where practicable, seating to be provided on main pedestrian routes or key locations at regular intervals (500m apart). Priority to be given to footpaths linking shopping precincts and community facilities. Consideration given to paths that link existing footpaths. Select footpath routes to be enhanced with activation resources (such as decals), subject to funding. Footpath surface to be determined on a case by case basis.</p>	<p>Footpaths, on one side of the road only, may be considered for key identified pedestrian routes, or to improve pedestrian safety. Subject to funding and prioritisation. Seating may be provided on main pedestrian routes (500m apart). Priority to be given to footpaths linking recreation, shopping & community precincts. Footpath surface to be determined on a case by case basis.</p>	<p>Not provided.</p>
Walking/cycling trails	<p>One or two off road recreational trail that provides opportunities for walking and/or cycling, preferably near a creek, river, bushland or recreation precinct. Likely to be 5km in length, but in some circumstances may be longer to complete a select route or link to another trail or facility. Trail to feature appropriate signage. Seating or other facilities could be made available at the trail head or in select locations en-route (to be determined based on trail specific needs). Trails that can reasonably meet current standards to be retained.</p>	<p>One off road recreational trail or space that provides opportunities for walking and/or cycling. May be near a creek, river or bushland and could be within a local recreation precinct. Likely to be up to 2km in length, but in some circumstances may be longer to complete a select route or link to another space or facility. Seating and other facilities may be provided at trail heads, but unlikely to be en-route. Trails that can reasonably meet current standards to be retained.</p>	<p>Possibly one off road recreational trail that provides opportunities for walking and/or cycling where the location has been identified as a priority site to attract visitors to the area. Likely to be near a significant natural attraction. Length determined on a case by case basis. Seating and other facilities may be provided at trail heads or in select locations en-route (to be determined based on trail specific needs). Trails that can reasonably meet current standards to be retained.</p>
Swimming pools/sites	<p>One 25m – 50m outdoor pool with a toddler pool provided. Where there is no existing outdoor pool an alternative swimming/water play site will be available. Consideration should be given to improving all abilities access to existing pools. Existing pool sites will be subject to a review to determine most appropriate operating model. Upon catastrophic plant and/or pool failure, Council investigates, with the community, future aquatic options.</p>	<p>Township will have access to a 25m – 50m outdoor pool and toddler pool within approximately 30 minute drive. (noting this may be in neighbouring municipality) Existing pool sites will be subject to a review to determine most appropriate operating model. Upon catastrophic plant and/or pool failure, Council investigates, with the community, future aquatic options.</p>	<p>Township will have access to a 25m – 50m outdoor pool and toddler pool within approximately 30 minute drive. (noting this may be in neighbouring municipality).</p>
Pump tracks/bike skills area Space that is suitable for bikes, scooters, skateboards & rollerblades	<p>Pump track/bike skills area provided in a suitable location, preferably in an existing recreation precinct. New pump track/bike skills are subject to feasibility study and available funding. Size and surface type of pump track/bike skills will be relative to the type of track use, size of community and community profile.</p>	<p>Generally not provided.</p>	<p>Not provided.</p>

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
Lakes/creeks/ivers Council owned or managed infrastructure	Existing fishing or recreation platforms to be retained. Existing boat ramps and canoe launchers to be retained. Development of additional fishing or recreation platforms, boat ramps or canoe launchers subject to feasibility study and funding.	Existing fishing or recreation platforms to be retained. Existing boat ramps and canoe launchers to be retained. Development of additional fishing or recreation platforms, boat ramps or canoe launchers subject to feasibility study and funding.	Existing fishing or recreation platforms to be retained. Existing boat ramps and canoe launchers to be retained. Development of additional fishing or recreation platforms, boat ramps or canoe launchers will only be considered where the location has been identified as a priority site to attract visitors to the area. Subject to feasibility study and funding.
Outdoor fitness equipment	One outdoor fitness station with the type and number of items relative to the size of the community and the community profile. New or extended stations will be subject to feasibility study and available funding. Outdoor fitness station to be located in an existing recreation precinct or playground.	May be provided with a small outdoor fitness station containing a maximum of four equipment items. Subject to a feasibility study and available funding. Outdoor fitness station to be located in an existing recreation precinct or playground.	Not provided.
Active recreation facilities Physical activities that are non organised/formal activities.	A number of activations for informal recreation may be developed subject to community profile, prioritisation and funding. Active recreation opportunities should be co-located with an existing recreation, open space or community precinct.	A number of activations for informal recreation may be developed, subject to community profile, prioritisation and funding. Active recreation opportunities should be co-located with an existing recreation, open space or community precinct.	Not provided.

Social Infrastructure Strategy township classification:

Large Towns	Boort Pyramid Hill	Bridgewater Wedderburn	Inglewood
Small Towns	Calivil Korong Vale Newbridge	Dingee Laanecoorie Serpentine	Eddington Mitiamo Tarnagulla
Localities	All townships/communities under 100 people		

APPENDIX 2: RECREATION TRAILS

Trail	Location	Description
Bridgewater River Track (Local)	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6km along banks of Loddon. Formed footpaths, gravel path and dirt road. Trail head - Loddon River, Bridgewater (adjacent to hotel)
BullaBul Trail (District)	Inglewood/ Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13km trail links Inglewood and Bridgewater. Via bushland, dirt roads, and river track. Involves road crossing - local and VicRoad roads. Trail head: Verdon St (old gaol), Inglewood West Side, Loddon River Bridgewater
Inglewood Reservoir Track (Local)	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2km loop through bush land and around reservoir. Trail head: Inglewood Botanical Gardens
Laanecoorie River Trail (Local)	Laanecoorie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5km loop from camp ground, along Loddon River to the weir. Return track is on sealed road. Trail head: Laanecoorie Loddon River Recreation Reserve
Tarnagulla Cemetery Track (Local)	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3km return from extension from township walk to cemetery. Trail head: Wimmera HWY, Tarnagulla
Tarnagulla Reservoir Track (Local)	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3km loop with shorter option available at recreation reserve. Gravel path, majority is dirt road. Some sealed road crossings. Trail head: Poverty St, Tarnagulla
Tarnagulla Town Heritage (Local)	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 5km taking in heritage sites of Tarnagulla. Paved paths, bush tracks, road reserves and dirt tracks. Trail head: Tarnagulla
Queens Gully Trail (Local)	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.8km Loop. Starting at Wedderburn Reservoir Walk. Small section of single track, then follows dirt roads. Trail head: Hospital St, Wedderburn
Wedderburn Reservoir Track (Local)	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1km Loop around Wedderburn Reservoir on trail. Trail head: Hospital St, Wedderburn
Blue Mallee Trail (Local)	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8km loop. Trail signed with post and yellow arrows. Dirt and sealed road crossings. Trail head: Hard Hill Reserve
Nardoo Track Wedderburn (Local)	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2km loop along Nardoo Creek and Chapel St. Trail head: Wedderburn

Trail	Location	Description
Pon Bon Track (Local)	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2km of trail through swamp. Trail begins at Travelers Rest. • Trail head: TJ Rudkins Reserve
Dingee Walking Track (Local)	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 formed path from Dingee to the Recreation Reserve • Trail around oval and through bushland at the reserve. • Trail head: Winzar Reserve • Trail head: Dingee Pavillon
Dunolly-Tarnagulla Cycle Tracks (District)	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44k Forest ride includes nature conversation reserve - loop from Dunolly to Tarnagulla. • Trail head: Dunolly Town Hall
Dunolly-Laanecoorie Cycle Track (District)	Laanecoorie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44k Forest loop from Dunolly to Laanecoorie. • Trail head: Dunolly Town Hall
Pyramid Hill Trail (Local)	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2km Loop around Pyramid Hill base. • Trail head: Hill Reserve
Pyramid Hill Connecting Trail (Local)	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1k path connecting township to hill. Ends at swimming pool. • Trail head: Hill Reserve
Little Lake Boort Trail (District)	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4km path around Little Lake Boort. • 2.5km path circuit around Little Lake Boort. The trail hosts the local Parkrun. • Trail head: Nolens Park



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LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY FINAL REPORT



NOVEMBER 2024



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Otium Planning Group acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and to Elders, past, present and emerging. Otium is committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples’ unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.



Acknowledgement

Otium Planning Group would like to acknowledge the staff and community from Loddon Shire Council who have provided their expertise and input to the **Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy**.

Their valuable insights and feedback have been instrumental in shaping the strategic framework and recommendations of this Plan.

Womindjika

We respectfully acknowledge Dja Dja Wurrung and Barapa Barapa people as the traditional owners of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respect to their Elders both past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants of the land and their long and continuing connection to Country.

We are committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.

Loddon Shire has a rich Aboriginal history and is home to over 1,000 significant Aboriginal landmarks.



Figure 1: Lake Boort Scarred Trees (Source: Lake Boort Scarred Trees Masterplan)

Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Planning Process.....	2
1.2	Location.....	3
2.	Strategic Review	5
2.1	Local Government Strategic Plans.....	5
2.2	Activating Open Space Strategy Implementation Plan	11
2.3	Swimming Pool Improvements Plan	14
2.4	Master Plans.....	16
2.5	State Government Strategies.....	24
2.6	National and International Strategies	25
2.7	Research Findings.....	30
2.8	Key Findings of the Strategic Review	32
3.	Demand Assessment	35
3.1	Demographic Influences.....	35
3.2	Local Participation Trends.....	39
3.3	Local Sports Participation Trends.....	42
3.4	National and State Participation Trends	43
3.5	Demand Analysis Model.....	47
3.6	Key Findings of Demand Assessment.....	51
4.	Trends Analysis.....	54
4.1	General Participation Trends.....	54
4.2	Sport Participation Trends.....	56
4.3	Open Space Trends.....	60
4.4	Aquatic Facility Trends	61
4.5	Facility Trends	67
4.6	Key Findings of Trends Analysis.....	72
5.	Supply Analysis	77
5.1	Current Supply.....	77
5.2	Planning Framework	86
5.3	Key Findings of Supply Analysis.....	86
6.	Aquatic Service Review.....	89
6.1	Current Facility Provision	89
6.2	Catchment Review	89
6.3	Competitor Review.....	91
6.4	Attendance Review	92
6.4.1	Council Costs.....	94

6.5	Asset Management Review	95
6.5.1	Current Asset Conditions	95
6.5.2	Overall Asset Renewal Costs	96
6.6	Key Findings of Aquatic Service Review	99
7.	Stakeholder Engagement	101
7.1	Previous Engagement Findings	101
7.2	Community Survey Findings	102
7.2.1	Respondent Profile	102
7.2.2	Aquatic Facilities in Loddon Shire	103
7.2.3	Sports and Active Recreation in Loddon Shire	109
7.2.4	Future Spending Priorities	114
7.2.5	Written Submissions	115
7.2.6	Community Drop in Sessions	116
7.3	Clubs and Associations Survey	123
7.4	Key Findings for Stakeholder Engagement	126
8.	Other Impacts on Open Space and Sport and Recreation Facilities	129
8.1	Climate Change Impacts	129
8.2	Environmental Impacts	130
8.3	A Child's Right to Play	130
8.4	Fair Access to Play	131
8.5	Funding Major Sports Infrastructure Challenge	133
8.6	Key Findings of Other Issues	133
9.	Strategic Directions	135
9.1	Key Issues and Opportunities	135
9.2	Vision	141
9.3	Strategic Directions	141
9.4	Site Specific Recommendations	143
9.5	Recreation Service	147
10.	Warranties and Disclaimers	149
	Appendix 1: Loddon Recreation Planning Framework	150
	Appendix 2: Case Studies	158

1. Introduction

Loddon Shire Council (Council) recognises that participation in sport and active recreation improves community health and wellbeing and contributes to the region's liveability and economic prosperity.

The **Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy** is a 10-year strategic plan that establishes a clear direction for providing, developing, and managing its sport and recreation, open space and aquatic facilities.

The Strategy informs how Council can create active and healthy communities through:

- Ensuring the Shire has a diverse range of universally accessible, sustainable facilities and outdoor spaces.
- Exploring opportunities that promote participation through structured programs and unstructured, social and incidental activities.
- Effective management and support services include information, leadership, and inclusive governance/management structures.

The Strategy provides a robust evidence base that has informed a planning framework, strategic directions, an implementation plan and a decision-making framework for identifying investment priorities.

The Strategy includes an implementation plan that will be reviewed every two years. This review process will consider the outcomes of planning and funding processes and ensure that any emerging community and industry trends/demands, as well as external funding opportunities and Council funding capacity, are assessed and priority projects remain relevant throughout its 10-year timeline.

1.1 Planning Process

The planning process included a comprehensive community engagement process including interviewing land managers and surveying community, sport and recreation groups and schools.

The following planning process was undertaken. This **Final Report** summarises key research and engagement findings and includes strategic directions.

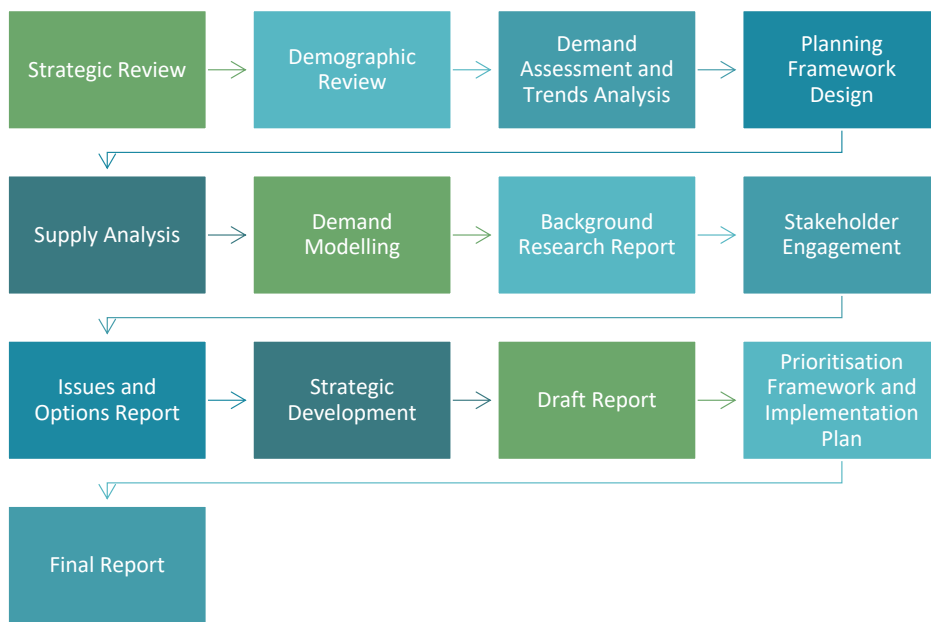


Figure 2: Planning Process

1.2 Location

The Loddon Shire Council is a rural municipality in central Victoria within proximity to the regional town centres of Bendigo, Kerang and Echuca. It shares borders with the following councils: Gannawarra Shire in the north, Campaspe Shire and the City of Greater Bendigo in the east, Mount Alexander Shire and Central Goldfields Shire in the south, and Northern Grampians Shire and Buloke Shire in the west.

It is made up of small towns dispersed throughout the Shire including the towns of Bridgewater, Inglewood, Wedderburn, Korong Vale, Dingee, Mitiamo, Serpentine, Newbridge, Tarnagulla, Laanecoorie, Eddington, Boort and Pyramid Hill.

The Shire covers a total land area of around 6,700 square kilometers. The primary industry is agricultural and horticultural, including grain production, sheep farming, wool, beef cattle, dairy, pigs, poultry, and in recent years, viticulture, olives, and fodder crop cultivation. Major employers within the Loddon Shire include Laucke Flour Mills, Hazeldene’s Chicken Farms, Boundary Bend Olives, Water Wheel Vineyards, Southern Riverlands Poultry, ASQ Allstone Quarries, health services in Boort and Inglewood, P-12 colleges in Boort, East Loddon, and Wedderburn, and a P-10 college in Pyramid Hill.

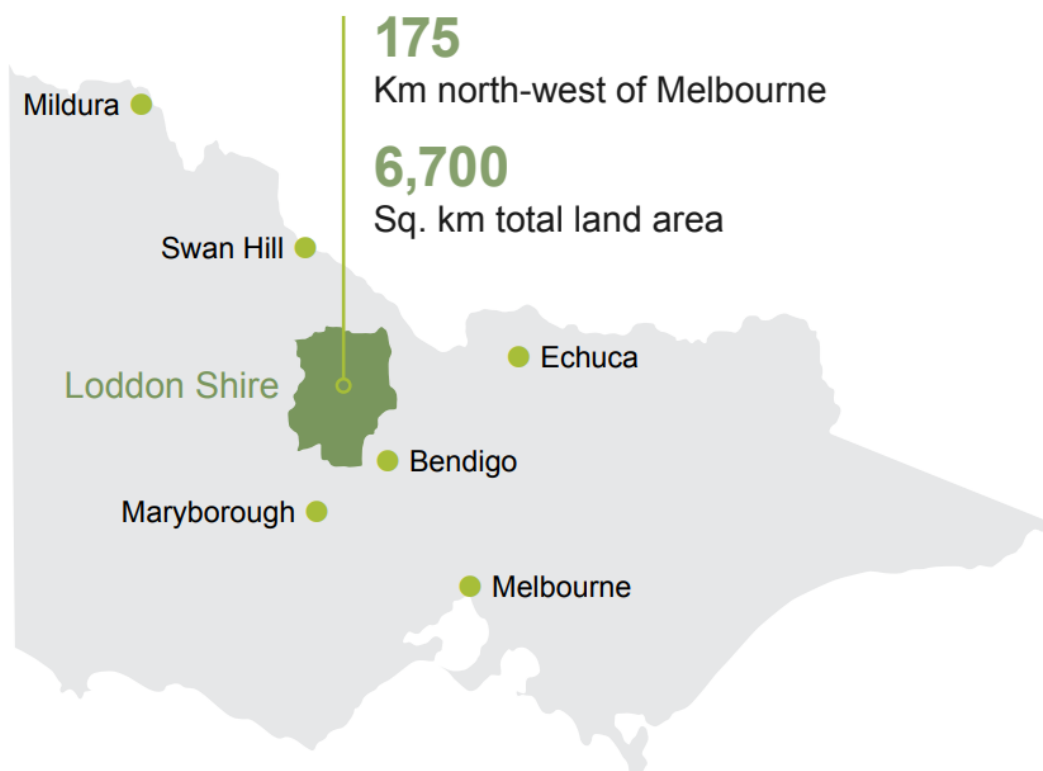


Figure 3: Loddon Shire location in Victoria (Source: Loddon Shire Council)

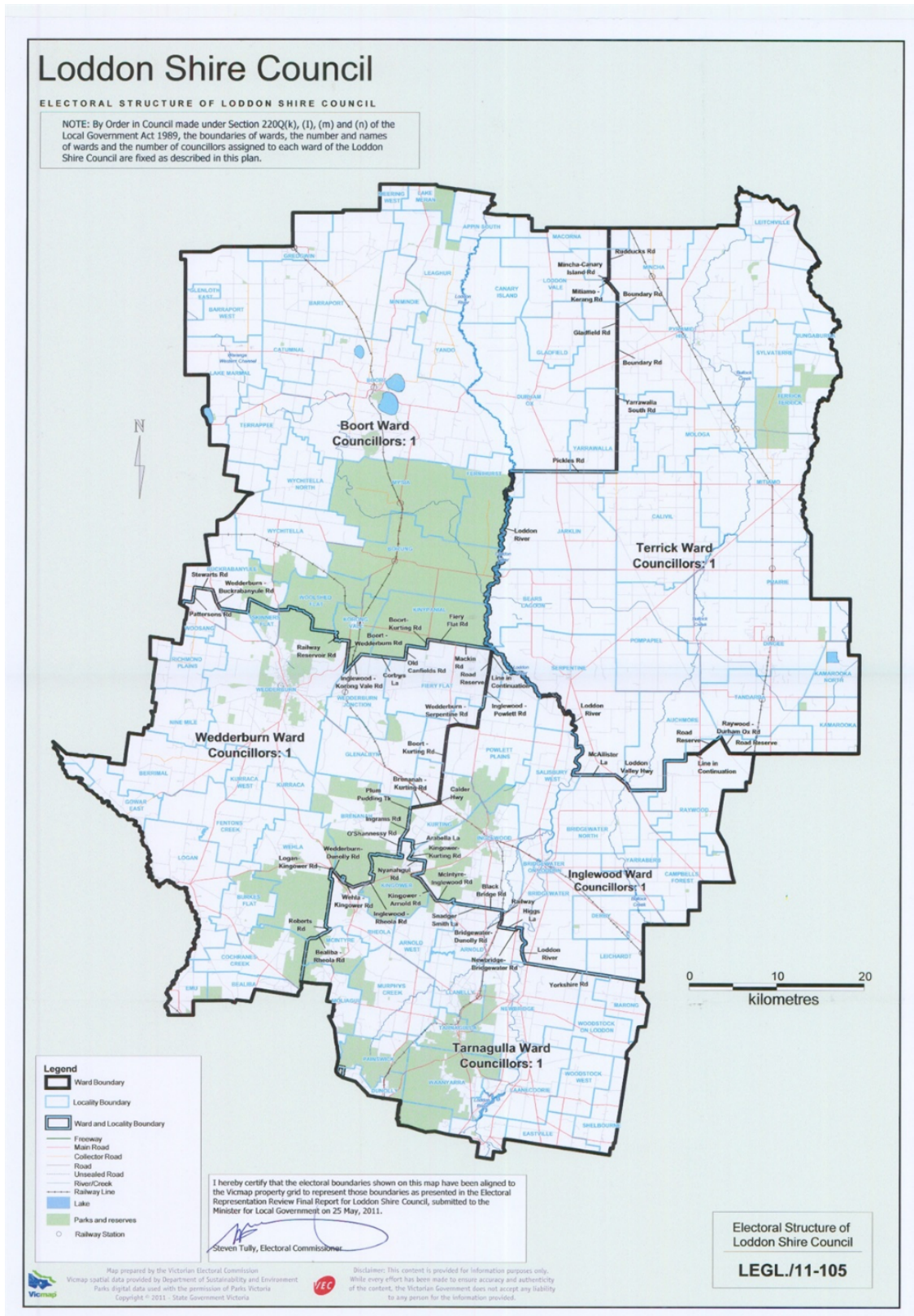


Figure 4: Loddon Shire Council Area Map (Source: Loddon Shire Council)

2. Strategic Review

What strategic commitments have Loddon Shire Council made that will influence the provision, development and management of sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services?

This section reviews local, regional, State and National policies and strategic plans.

2.1 Local Government Strategic Plans

The table below summarises Loddon Shire Council strategies relevant to sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

Table 1: Loddon Shire Council Strategy Review

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
<p>Loddon Shire Council Plan</p>	<p>The Loddon Project was designed to develop the Council Vision and Council Plan that form the strategic planning framework for Loddon Shire Council. The process involved a Community Reference Group plus a further 187 participants in phase one engagement and 160 participants in phase two engagement.</p> <p>Four priority areas of interest were identified by community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community – Support of community events and community groups, local facilities and roads. Community engagement was identified as an important priority. • Economy – Supporting local business, tourism, marketing and promotions and planning and events. • Natural environment – Walking and cycling tracks, parks and gardens, tree planting and signage and environmental protection and preservation including weed management. • Services and infrastructure – Roads, improving internet and phone services and water and sewerage. Participants identified childcare and health services as key services that are needed. <p>Community Vision 2031: “Creating a community where everyone is welcome and has the opportunity to live, work and thrive.”</p> <p>To achieve this vision, there are four strategic objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A sustainable built and natural environment 2. A growing and vibrant community 3. A diverse and expanding economy 4. A supported and accessible community. <p>Council Plan 2021-2025 strategies relevant to the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 We will implement financially and environmentally sustainable infrastructure that supports our social and economic needs. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Planning for future facilities and infrastructure that meet community needs (finalising asset management plans and completing funded major infrastructure projects). – Our built and natural environments are accessible (Council assets are accessible). – Maintaining sports and recreation and open public spaces to enable and promote access and participation (Community facility use is maximised). • 1.2 We will work with our partners to preserve and protect our local environment. We will support our community to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plan for and build community capacity to mitigate, respond and adapt to climate change (Participate with regional groups to implement environmental priorities). – Work with our partners to support biodiversity and habitat in our area (Participation with regional groups to maximise opportunities to support biodiversity and habitat). • 2.2 We will support a connected and inclusive community that provides opportunities for current and new community members at all ages, abilities, and stages of their life. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support community groups and volunteers (like Community Asset Committees who manage facilities on behalf of Council; and community groups providing in kind and financial support). – Promote welcoming and safe communities. • 3.1 We will support established businesses and seek to attract new businesses to grow our local economy. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leverage partnership opportunities to promote and support the local economy (Collaborating with regional partners on broader economic opportunities i.e. nature tourism). • 4.1 We will deliver our core services and advocate for access to other services for our community. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhance the community’s opportunity to maintain good health and wellbeing, including mental health (Implement initiative and advocate for services to support overall health and wellbeing to the community and partner with agencies in the Short to promote good health and wellbeing). <p>The Council Plan includes ‘adults who get adequate physical exercise’ as a key strategic indicator of success.</p>
<p>Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021 – 2025</p> <p><i>Living Well in Loddon</i></p>	<p>Loddon Shire Council’s Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 is a strategic plan that guides Council and other agencies on how to improve the health and wellbeing of the Loddon Shire community.</p> <p>The Plan addresses four strategic priority focus areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good physical health • Good mental health • Protect and promote health • Feel safe and secure. <p>The key initiatives of the Health and Wellbeing Plan relevant to the Strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing partnerships to reduce preventable disease are maintained and strengthened. • The Healthy Heart of Victoria initiative is maintained. • Participation in active recreation is increased. • Partnerships to prevent family violence and improve gender equity are supported and strengthened. • Cooler space options are identified, and access promoted on days of extreme heat.
<p>Loddon Settlement Strategy 2019-2034</p>	<p>Loddon Shire Settlement Strategy is a Council initiative supporting population growth in Loddon Shire through affordable housing development in suitable localities.</p> <p>The Strategy identifies where and how Council will support population and housing growth in its capacity as the planning authority.</p> <p>The key strategic directions are for Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote growth in Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn, taking advantage of all available development opportunities to fully develop the existing urban footprint.

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodate new development in smaller settlements where effluent can be managed. • Support a range of residential forms including rural living and medium density. <p>The Strategy supports maximising the use of existing infrastructure to support population growth including community and sporting facilities; and protecting the environmental assets of Loddon Shire, including native vegetation and waterways for their contribution to amenity, tourism value and agriculture.</p>
<p>Loddon Shire Economic and Development Plan (in development)</p>	<p>The Loddon Economic Development Plan is in development. Key focus areas of the Plan include the following:</p> <p>Economic drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture will continue to dominate the Loddon Shire economy in terms of output and employment. Council will continue to advocate for the sector and focus on water and technology to enable viability and sustainability. • Council will continue to encourage business expansion and investment attraction for food producers and processors in Loddon Shire, taking advantage of the over-endowment in suitable land, access to good roads and services. • Council will identify export opportunities for Loddon Shire’s food and beverage producers whilst working to create local and regional connections to regional distribution and sales (UNESCO City and Region of Gastronomy). • We will identify key regions for industrial development and potential industry clustering in the South Eastern region of the Shire. • Council will focus on, influence and encourage residential housing development (and stock diversity) in Loddon Shire key towns, including for the provision of affordable and worker housing (Loddon Settlement Strategy). • We will continue to explore opportunities to enable investment in renewable energy generation and local and regional benefit sharing programs. • We will support main street retail and SME – the Inglewood Streetscape Project is in planning stage, and we submitted a State Government budget bid to fund design and feasibility. • We will promote housing affordability, amenity and liveability to attract investment and population growth. <p>Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will establish, develop and nurture the Visit Loddon Valley brand – centred on historic towns, natural landscapes, active and passive nature-based experiences and welcoming communities. • Council will invest and expand Council-owned caravan parks, including encouraging diversity in privately-owned short-stay accommodation. • Council will work with Traditional Owners to unlock compelling product and experiences in First Nations cultural tourism at Mt Kooyoora and Boort. • Loddon Shire Council is an active partner and contributor to the Victorian Goldfields UNESCO World Heritage bid – anticipated to land circa 2025. This will attract visitors to Inglewood, Wedderburn and Tarnagulla. • Council will continue to acquire new events and support existing events that showcase Loddon Shire’s unique experiences and communities, to drive visitation. Loddon Shire’s open spaces including waterways and nature parks can support these events. • Council will promote Loddon Shire as a visitor destination that will in turn promote the Loddon Shire as a great place to work and live. • Council will contribute to regional tourism destination plans, showcasing Loddon Shire’s unique natural landscapes, attractions and experiences.

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
<p>Loddon Activating Open Space Strategy 2019-2024</p>	<p>The Strategy focuses on two key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving the physical appearance, functionality and opportunities available at public open spaces. 2. Activation of public open spaces through programs, activities, events and services. <p>The following open spaces were included in the Strategy: parks, playgrounds, waterways, shared paths, and bushland.</p> <p>Sport and recreation reserves were excluded from the analysis because each reserve has its own master plan and Reserve Committees are responsible for overseeing these sites. In addition, public halls, indoor leisure centres and aquatic facilities were excluded from the analysis.</p> <p>The Strategy identifies seven key factors to activate open space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the benefits of being physically active to the community. • Create safe, inclusive and accessible spaces and places. • Promote events and programs that encourage physical activity. • Involve the community in planning spaces, places, events and programs. • Promote spaces, places, events and programs where physical activity occurs. • Ensure that our systems, policies and processes encourage physical activity. • Develop partnerships with organisations to help deliver spaces, places, events and activities. <p>The Strategy includes an implementation plan with actions. The status of these actions is provided in the next section.</p>
<p>Loddon Recreation Strategy 2015-2020</p>	<p>The Loddon Shire Recreation Strategy 2015-2020 is now out of date. It has provided Council and partners with a framework to invest in sport and recreation facilities, services and programs.</p> <p>The Strategy includes a vision and ten guiding planning principles that will be reviewed as part of this strategy.</p> <p>Vision: “Loddon Shire is an active, healthy and inclusive community supported by strong community clubs and a diversity of programs and accessible facilities”.</p> <p>Planning principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to meet demonstrated community need. • Of benefit to the community. • Accessible for people of all abilities. • Inclusive and welcoming. • Sustainable. • Multi-purpose design. • Able to offer diversity of opportunities. • Cost effective. • Designed to enhance and protect natural environment and cultural and heritage values. • Designed to reflect the unique nature of Loddon Shire. <p>The Strategy includes an implementation plan with actions. The status of these actions is provided in the next section.</p>
<p>Asset Plan 2022</p>	<p>The Asset Plan is Council’s asset management plan for the following asset classes: buildings, roads, bridges and major culverts, footpaths, stormwater drainage, recreational, leisure and community facilities, parks, open spaces and streetscapes.</p>

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<p>The plan identifies the necessary funds to provide the agreed levels of service for all assets including operations, maintenance, renewal, upgrade and new assets over the 10-year planning period.</p> <p>Note: Asset values are unknown for recreational, leisure and community facilities, and parks, open spaces and streetscapes.</p> <p>The asset management funding shortfall is a key issue for the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy.</p> <p>The Asset classes relevant to the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational, leisure and community facilities – swimming pools, sports grounds, trotting tracks and lakes (water holdings). • Parks, open spaces and streetscapes – park and street trees, playgrounds, outdoor exercise equipment, picnic shelters, street furniture, barbecues and shelters, rotundas and band stands. <p>The next steps are to review and prioritise all improvement projects in each asset class with a view of grouping projects that can be undertaken together which will lead to efficiencies.</p>
<p>Swimming Pool Improvements Plan 2018-2022</p>	<p>The Swimming Pool Improvements Plan 2018 assessed the current provision of Loddon Shire Council’s swimming pools and provides broad directions and actions to improve services and minor facility works. Significant upgrades to pool facilities in the future require further investigation.</p> <p>The following risks were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation and maintenance costs have significantly increased, placing greater pressure on Council to find ways of operating more efficiently. Water, energy, water treatment and waste-water disposal costs contributed a large portion of operational costs. • Council has little flexibility in limiting costs as legislative requirements dictate levels of compliance in the operations of public swimming pools. For example, new pressures from legislative requirements and government initiatives are impacting how Council delivers swimming pool services including when lifeguards are required to be on duty and how many are required at any given time. <p>The Strategy identifies a balance between cost and benefits is needed to assess Council’s aquatic service. In 2019, Council subsidised patrons \$20.06 per visit. Council does not expect to operate the pools at a profit; however, the expense needs to be justified by the health and social benefits gained. Royal Life Saving Australia recent social and economic benefit assessment shows for every visit to a public swimming pool an average health benefit of \$26.39 is realised.</p> <p>There are five outdoor swimming pools owned and managed under contract management by Loddon Shire Council.</p> <p>There was \$2.5m for capital works and major maintenance for swimming pools between 2008 and 2018 (10 years) that included both Council and external funding contributions. These improvements included installing wet decks, repairs to pool shells, installing water features, solar blankets, improvements to filtration/circulation systems/chlorination, buildings and landscaping (pathways, shade structures, fencing, barbecues).</p> <p>A community consultation process found six key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing opening hours without increasing operational budget. • Participation and partnerships – more structured activities and community events. • Greater communication with the community.

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading facilities. • Increasing usage by schools of lifeguard hours. • Tracking of data for greater informed future decision making. <p>The Strategy includes an improvement plan with actions for minor and major works, programming and partnerships, communications and promotions and records management. The status of these actions is provided in the next section.</p>
<p>Climate Proofing Loddon’s Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy 2011</p>	<p>The aim of this Strategy is to identify work that will assist to ‘climate proof’ as many sporting facilities in Loddon Shire as possible and at the same time help communities to retain their invaluable sport and recreation assets. The report notes that climate change has had a significant impact on the ability of sport and recreation clubs to access water to maintain sports grounds to a satisfactory standard. Rainfall levels have decreased, temperatures have increased and access to potable or irrigation water through water authorities has decreased.</p> <p>This Strategy has identified several works to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce water use. • Increase the security of supply of water. • Reduce leakage of storage systems at sport and recreation facilities in Loddon Shire. <p>These works included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of hard courts and removal of grass courts. • Resurfacing grass playing fields. • Upgrading irrigation systems. • Water harvesting projects, e.g. installation of water tanks. • Installation of water saving devices. <p>Council received \$900,000 external funding and contributed \$1.7 million to implement the Strategy and redevelop facilities.</p>
<p>Cycling and Walking Strategy 2009</p>	<p>The Cycling and Walking Strategy reviewed the existing tracks and trails located within Loddon Shire and identified tracks and trails provision, future development, management, maintenance and marketing.</p> <p>The Strategy recommendations will be reviewed as part of the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy. Key initiatives included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve links between trails. • Improve connectivity of existing trails. • Improve trail design. • Instigate a “Stop and Walk” program. • Identify potential events to encourage usage of tracks and trails. • Ensure interpretation opportunities are made available. • Improve marketing and promotion of tracks and trails. • Improve the coordination, management and planning of trails. • Provide appropriate maintenance schedules.
<p>Loddon Mallee Regionally Significant Trails Strategy 2009</p>	<p>The Loddon Mallee Regionally Significant Trails Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide land managers and trail planning and management groups in the development of regional cycling, walking, mountain biking, horse riding and canoeing/kayaking trails in the Loddon Mallee region.</p> <p>Of relevance to Loddon Shire Council is Captain Melville’s Trail, which links Bridgewater-on-Loddon, Inglewood, Kingower, and Melville Caves. This is a regionally significant trail that brings in economic and tourism benefits from trail users whilst delivering social and health benefits to residents.</p>

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<p>Strategic opportunities relevant to the Recreation and Open Space Strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking trail-related activities to annual local events (such as food and wine festivals) will improve awareness and use of the trail. • The development of packages and some innovative marketing and interpretation (i.e. indigenous and bushranger history) and the naming of the trail to reflect its bushranger past may assist in attracting potential trail users from other parts of the state, and potentially internationally. • There is an opportunity to develop canoe trails, rock climbing and horse riding which would further enhance the reputation of the trail. <p>The major challenge identified was access to public transport and the distance from metropolitan and regional city areas. Also, the trail does not link with other major trails in the regional trail network in Loddon Mallee.</p>

2.2 Activating Open Space Strategy Implementation Plan

Table 2: Activating Open Space Strategy – Action Status

Theme	Action	Status
Parks	1. Review Council’s Park Asset Management Plan 2010 to update policy around hierarchy, standards and service levels.	Not started. This Strategy has updated the hierarchy and service level standards.
	2. Undertake a gradual plan to renew and upgrade parks and reserves throughout the Shire, focusing on planting more shade trees in strategic locations, improved landscaping (using drought tolerant plantings and infrastructure such as rocks and logs), installing drinking fountains, installing more seats with arm and back rests, providing picnic tables, providing BBQs, improving accessibility for people of all abilities, installing paths and installing lighting where appropriate, etc.	Completed as part of funded projects.
	3. Appropriate planning should be undertaken prior to any renewals or upgrades to ensure that the proposed works complement what already exists and will meet community needs into the future. For major sites, a master plan is recommended.	Completed. Master plans have informed projects.
Play Spaces	1. Renew playgrounds when they reach the end of their useful life, taking into consideration diversity of play opportunities, quality of play, etc.	Ongoing
	2. Provide a greater focus on nature-based play and work towards including access for all abilities, particularly in the larger play spaces.	Ongoing
	3. Remove under-utilised play spaces that do not provide play value.	Not started
	4. Encourage each major recreation reserve to maintain and further develop suitable play opportunities for families.	Completed
	5. Explore opportunities to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with local schools to provide access to school play equipment after hours.	Not started
	6. Playgrounds will be included as part of the review of Councils Park Asset Management Plan and will include information about updating policy around hierarchy, standards and service levels.	Not started

Theme	Action	Status
Walking/cycling tracks	1. Develop future footpath infrastructure to be consistent with “Loddon Shire Footpath Asset Management Plan”.	Ongoing
	2. Continue to develop quality walking/cycling tracks throughout the Shire, with suitable supporting infrastructure, e.g. seats, shade, drinking water and signage (subject to feasibility and full costings/whole of life costings being established). Connect any new tracks to the existing walking/cycling network wherever possible.	In part
	3. Consider partnering with golf clubs to develop walking/cycling tracks on golf courses.	Not started
Waterways	1. Develop key water ways as passive recreation facilities for residents and visitors, including infrastructure such as seating, picnic tables, BBQs where relevant, shade, planting of grass, fishing platforms, swimming pontoons, kayak entrance/exit points, play opportunities, etc. There is a real opportunity to turn these spaces into quality family recreation facilities that attract not only locals but also visitors.	Completed
Swimming pools	1. Extend the swimming pool season wherever possible through use of solar heating and implementation of a volunteer lifeguard program.	Not started
	2. Provide a range of activities at each pool throughout summer, e.g. community BBQs, water aerobics, swimming lessons, pool parties and dive in movies to encourage physical activity participation. Share inflatable equipment between the pools. Install drinking fountains. These actions have been picked up in swimming pool development plans.	Not started
	3. Maintain and further develop early morning swimming sessions and other related activities i.e. aquarobics at all swimming pools.	Not started
Signage	1. Install suitable signage (trail heads, directional signage, place signage, kilojoule consumption signage, etc.) so that residents and visitors are aware of facilities available, their location and the benefits of physical activity. Provide interpretive signage where appropriate to enhance the experience.	Not started
Maintenance and management	1. Develop an adequate maintenance schedule and budget to keep infrastructure in a safe and usable state. Consideration for additional staff in Townscape Services to adequately maintain existing open spaces, parks and gardens as well as new additional items added into these areas.	Not started
Affordability	1. Ensure that facilities, events and programs remain affordable for residents to maximise participation.	Completed
Programming	2. Work in partnership with a range of organisations including the health sector, the environmental sector, schools, community organisations such as neighbourhood houses, churches and the private sector to do deliver a range of physical activity programs in parks and open spaces in Loddon Shire. Activities could include yoga, tai chi, walking groups, circus skills, bocce, community cricket games, old fashioned games, running groups, cycling groups, swimming groups, water aerobics, canoeing, stand up paddle boarding, etc. If funds permit, Loddon Shire could potentially train some local people to facilitate some of these programs (as per a key recommendation in the 2015 Recreation Strategy).	In part
Boort Initiatives	1. Implement the recommendations of the Little Lake Boort Draft Master Plan 2019.	Underway
	2. Incorporate rubberised paths to play equipment in Nolen’s Park and more informal play opportunities near Little Lake Boort as part of the Boort Foreshore Plan, e.g. half basketball court, a rock-climbing wall, outdoor table tennis tables, bocce pitch and a kayak launch pad.	Underway

Theme	Action	Status
	3. Sell the Sunnyside Court block and use the funds to expand the play space at nearby Boort Park.	Not started
	4. Renew Jubilee Park playground.	Not started
Bridgewater Initiatives	1. Continue to implement the Bridgewater Foreshore Development Plan (stages 1 and 2), which includes a nature-based play space, shade, seats, signage, art work, pier/jetty, landscaping, lighting and interpretation (black smith area).	Completed
	2. Prepare an upgrade plan in partnership with the local community for Sloan Park to install paths, landscaping, shade trees, a barrier, some form of public art and more exciting play equipment. Ensure that play opportunities available at this site are different to what is available at the Recreation Reserve and along the Foreshore	Not started
	3. Install additional seating at Bridgewater Swimming Hole and more shade trees/structures.	Not started
	4. Install signage on Bullabull track.	Not started
Calivil Initiatives	1. Support the Recreation Reserve COM to upgrade the social aspect of the Reserve to include a BBQ area, shelter, picnic tables, drinking fountain and landscaping. At the same time develop a pedestrian safe area.	Not started
	2. Support the Recreation Reserve COM to develop a walking track around Calivil Recreation Reserve utilising the old golf course.	Not started
Dingee Initiatives	1. Construct access paths at Progress Park and renew existing play equipment when it reaches the end of its lifespan.	Not started
Durham Ox Initiatives	1. Construct environmentally sustainable toilets at Durham Ox for use by canoeists.	Not started
Eddington Initiatives	1. Construct some access paths in the park next to Eddington Community Centre	Not started
Inglewood Initiatives	1. Develop a BBQ area with shelter and picnic tables at Inglewood Recreation Reserve.	Completed
	2. Consider providing active play opportunities for teenagers at J Sloan Park playground, e.g. flying fox, climbing wall, full sized basketball court and upgrade traditional skate park to a modular pump track when it reaches the end of its life.	Completed
	3. Plant more shade trees at J Sloan playground.	Completed
	4. Develop a safe pedestrian area at Inglewood Recreation Reserve in the vicinity of the J Sloan playground and the oval.	Completed
	5. Liaise with Inglewood Golf Club to develop a walking track around the golf course.	Not started
	6. Liaise with the Heart Foundation to establish a walking group in Inglewood, utilising the golf course.	Not started
	7. Upgrade Inglewood Botanic Gardens and Inglewood Reservoir, primarily through a track upgrade, more seats, renewal of infrastructure and better maintenance.	Not started
Kingower Initiatives	1. Advocate for Parks Victoria to upgrade seats, toilets, picnic/BBQ facilities at Melville Caves.	Completed
	2. Support development of Captain Melville's Trail.	Completed
Korong Vale Initiatives	1. Consider upgrading Borella Park to include shelter over the BBQ area, upgraded seats and new play equipment (when the existing equipment reaches the end of its useful life).	Not started
Mitiamo Initiatives	1. Advocate for Parks Victoria to undertake more regular grading of the tracks at Terrick Terrick National Park.	Not started
	2. Upgrade Phelan Park when equipment is at the end of its lifecycle by renewing equipment, installing some form of barrier against the Mitiamo-Echuca Road boundary and planting more shade trees and trees to act as a wind break.	Not started

Theme	Action	Status
Newbridge Initiatives	1. Install BBQs and shelters at Progress Park if feasible and if it aligns with community planning priorities.	Not started
Pyramid Hill Initiatives	1. Redevelop Lions Park in Kelly St to develop a passive recreational space.	Underway
	2. Install a drinking fountain and more comfortable seats at Kelly Park.	Underway
	3. Improve toilets at Pyramid Hill.	Underway
	4. Improve signage and maintenance of Pyramid Hill Walking.	Not started
	5. Redevelop the playground next to the swimming pool and tennis courts and install a barrier to prevent children from running on to the road.	Not started
Serpentine Initiatives	1. Upgrade track condition and wayfinding on the Pon Pon Trail in Serpentine.	Not started
Tarnagulla Initiatives	1. Renew street furniture in Heraud's Place and improve landscaping.	Not started
	2. Add additional play equipment at Soldier's Memorial Park.	Not started
Wedderburn Initiatives	1. Upgrade play equipment at Soldiers Memorial Park (consider installation of a learn to ride bicycle track) and include a screen to act as a wind break. This could become a smart park by installing technologically advanced items such as exercise bikes that charge mobile phones and a demonstration environmental park (i.e. use of solar lighting and water saving measures).	Not started
	2. Develop informal activities for young people, e.g. climbing wall, multi-use games areas, skate park or modular pump park, socialisation space, etc. at Soldier's Memorial Park.	Not started
	3. Install drinking fountains in public places in Wedderburn, e.g. Soldier's Memorial Park and Nardoo Creek Trail.	Not started
	4. Install additional seating and trees along Nardoo Creek Trail.	Not started
	5. Consider developing an off-leash dog area in Wedderburn.	Not started
	6. Prepare a development plan for Skinners Flat Reservoir, particularly focusing on items such as walking track to the site, BBQ, picnic tables, shelter and possibly a toilet.	Not started
	7. Consider installation of some water play features at or near the Wedderburn Swimming Pool.	Not started
	8. Advocate to Parks Victoria to grade tracks in state and national parks and provide additional facilities such as BBQs and seats.	Not started

2.3 Swimming Pool Improvements Plan

Table 3: Swimming Pool Improvement Plan – Action Status

Theme	Action	Status
Minor and Major Works		
Lawn areas:	Mow the lawns more often, inspect and remove evidence of prickles and bees at all pools.	Completed
Trees:	Plant trees on the perimeter of pool fence lines for Boort, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn pools.	Not started
	Trim back existing trees.	Completed
Pools:	Seek to repaint steps into Pyramid Hill pool a different colour for visibility.	Not started
	Paint inside pool edge as paint is flaking around the top of Wedderburn pool.	Not started
Change rooms:	Install hooks on back of shower doors and around the wall of all change rooms (all pools).	Not started
	Install new rubbish bins in change rooms (all pools).	Completed

Theme	Action	Status
	Install mirrors in change rooms (all pools).	Not started
	Assess Pyramid Hill Swimming Pool change room floor.	Completed
	Ensure change rooms are cleaned every day.	Completed
Bins:	Install bins in prominent places around the grounds (all pools).	Completed
Bollards:	Repaint the existing bollards at Wedderburn Swimming Pool.	Not started
Concrete and paved areas:	Investigate if concrete paving needs repainting (Inglewood Swimming Pool).	Completed
	Every day during opening hours, sweep and hose down concrete areas (all pools).	Completed
	Investigate feasibility and viability of rubber mats or alternative options on concrete areas on hot days.	Not started
	Paint four squares within one large square area for a tennis ball game (Wedderburn Swimming Pool).	Not started
	Conduct regular assessments to ensure surrounds of pool concrete are not slippery.	Completed
Portable shade:	Investigate feasibility and funding of portable shade umbrellas being provided at all pools.	Not started
Toilets:	Toilets to be cleaned every day at Mitiamo Swimming Pool.	Completed
Seating:	Seek funding to install more seating, particularly for parents to supervise and some on grass areas and under shade.	Not started
Tables:	Seek funding to install several tables at each of the pools.	Not started
Drinking fountains:	Seek funding to provide drinking fountains at each of the swimming pools.	Not started
Bike racks:	Seek funding to provide bike racks within the swimming pool facility to encourage adults and children to ride to swimming pools.	Not started
Permanent shade structures:	Consult with pool patrons and swimming pool staff to determine where shade structures are preferred.	Not started
	Seek external funding for the installation of permanent shade structures.	Not started
Change rooms upgrades:	Conduct an audit to identify recommendations on upgrading change room, toilets and shower facilities at all pools (except Inglewood Swimming Pool).	Completed
	Include any recommendations in future swimming pool capital works plan.	Underway
Pools:	Investigate feasibility to install extra rails on steps at the Pyramid Hill pool for greater access.	Completed
	Investigate installation of gates around the baby pool at Wedderburn Swimming Pool.	Completed
Kiosks:	Investigate the feasibility of upgrading the kiosks at the Boort, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn swimming pools.	Completed
Barbecues:	Investigate feasibility of installing picnic tables and chairs near barbecues at all swimming pools.	Not started
Programming and Partnerships	Investigate the development of a volunteer lifeguard program, with regard to the regulatory, legislative and insurance requirements.	Not started
	Recruit and train volunteer lifeguards to supervise adult only morning swimming lessons.	Not started
	Promote and open the pools where there is interest and qualified volunteer lifeguards for regular early morning lap swimming during opening season.	Not started
	Investigate possibility of local community health services coordinating water-based strength activities for older adults in the morning.	Not started
	Continue to support VicSwim and learn to swim programs.	Ongoing
	Host two to three inflatable days at each swimming pool over the summer period.	Ongoing

Theme	Action	Status
	Identify the impact of the roll out of the Swimming in Schools Program and review the current model where Council funds lifeguard costs.	Not started
	Where there is an interest, support the development of a swim club.	Not started
	Promote free entry for adult and child non-swimmers and a reduced price for seniors' tickets.	Not started
Communications and Promotions	Investigate the use of Message Media to text patrons of changes to opening hours or events being held.	Not started
	Implementation of Message Media if investigation concurs.	Not started
	Investigate opportunity to develop a service specific App.	Not started
	Development and implementation of App if investigation concurs.	Not started
	Regularly update the opening hours and any events being held at pools on Council's website.	Not started
	Regularly feed into and update Council's Facebook page on what is happening at the pools.	Not started
	Investigate the possibility of purchasing flags for entry areas of pools to indicate when the pools are open.	Not started
	Update entry signage at all pools.	Not started
Records Management	Investigate systems that record accurate data to capture the details needed.	Completed

2.4 Master Plans

Loddon Shire Council have developed master plans for key sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities. The implementation of the following master plans has been progressing over the last five to 10 years. The following table summarises the key strategic directions and provides a status comment on progress (completed, in progress, not started, not required)

Table 4: Loddon Shire Council Reserve Master Plans – Action Status

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
Bridgewater Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2011	The Bridgewater Recreation Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:	
	1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods, implement an ongoing water use monitoring and reporting program.	Completed
	2. Resurface and re-grade the oval and plant with warm season grasses.	Completed
	3. Irrigation specialist to assess the current system and provide recommendations to either upgrade or replace the system.	Completed
	4. Implement the recommendations provided by the irrigation specialist.	Completed
	5. Proceed with the development of a groundwater source at the Recreation Reserve.	Completed
	6. Construct concrete pathways and paving around the Sports Pavilion, construct verandah.	Completed
	7. Construct drainage near the pavilion to reduce pooling of water.	Completed
	8. Install two additional floodlights around the sports ground.	Completed
	9. Replace mower.	Completed
	10. Provide shade and protective barriers around playground equipment.	Completed
	11. Install boundary fencing, particularly along the highway.	Completed
12. Asses the need to purchase and install a rainwater/storm water harvesting system which collects run-off from the netball /tennis courts as a back-up emergency water supply.	Completed	

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
Boort Park Master Plan 2011-2020	The Boort Park Master Plan includes the following actions:	
	1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods.	Completed
	2. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process.	Completed
	3. Construct basic facility with shelter and storage space for hockey club.	Completed
	4. Install lights to enable hockey club to train on winter evenings.	Completed
	5. Install a more hard-wearing grass on the sports oval that remains green over winter.	Completed
	6. Install more lights for football club training purposes.	Completed
	7. Build new scoreboard near the playground, incorporating regulation size stairs and power.	Completed
	8. Upgrade toilets, showers and taps to water efficient fixtures.	Completed
	9. Extend social rooms to cater for club functions (18 m x 5 m extension).	Completed
	10. Construct a small shed on site to be utilised as a gymnasium.	Not Required
	11. Develop a change room for use by female umpires (if netball change facilities are inadequate).	Not Started
	12. Upgrade kitchen (2 new stoves, 2 range hoods and new fridges) to better cater for club functions.	Completed
	13. Upgrade public toilets.	Completed
	14. Install rainwater tanks to collect water from club house roof and use for toilet flushing, cleaning and other non-drinking purposes.	Completed
15. Extend netball shelter full length of court.	Completed	
Calivil Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2018	The Calivil Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:	
	Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process.	
	1. Investigate the sinking of a bore to provide an alternative source of water for the Recreation Reserve.	Completed
	2. Resurface courts and relocate light towers to meet Netball Victoria standards. Line-mark these two courts for tennis.	Completed
	3. Install a new irrigation system to reduce water use.	Completed
	4. Install lights for bowls to allow night time training and games.	Completed
	5. Construct a BBQ to encourage visitors.	Not started
	6. Resurface cricket practice nets.	Completed
	7. Consider development of a campground at the Recreation Reserve.	Not started
	8. Install shade sails to provide a safer and more attractive play space.	Completed
	9. Re-vegetate and landscape around the entire recreation reserve to improve visual amenity of the site.	Completed
	10. Consider the development of a farmer's market and alternative expos at the Recreation Reserve to increase local revenue.	Not started
	11. Modify power supply to the football shed.	Completed
	12. Install safety signage around play area and additional directional signage to and around the reserve.	Completed
	13. Retain two grass courts in the short term and develop two new hard courts if demand dictates.	Completed
	14. Install two extra light towers on the football oval.	Completed
15. Construct a covered and paved area which links the pavilion to the change rooms.	Completed	
16. Explore the possibility of developing an Opportunity Shop in the tennis pavilion at the Reserve.	Completed	
Donaldson Park Master Plan 2018	The Donaldson Park Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:	Completed

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
<p>Community Hub Redevelopment Project 2023</p>	1. Calculate the yield of the old town water supply system and put in place a water allocation process.	Not started
	2. Develop and implement an ongoing program of works for Skinners Flat Reserve and Caravan Park dam.	Not started
	3. Investigate potential for storm water harvesting from Nardoo Creek.	Completed
	4. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods.	Completed
	5. Develop a new pavilion on the current site of the spectator shed. The new pavilion is to be constructed in two stages.	Completed
	6. Upgrade second netball court to meet Netball Victoria standards.	Completed
	7. Extend kitchen and construct administrative space in bowls pavilion. Ensure kitchen upgrade includes provision for low water use fixtures and appliances.	Completed
	8. Demolish the old tennis shed and develop an adventure/ outdoor play space in this area, and a more traditional play space near the netball courts.	Completed
	9. Plant with warm season grasses to reduce water use and costs.	Completed
	10. Replace two grass tennis courts with two synthetic (hard) tennis courts with lights to reduce water use and to provide for year-round tennis.	Completed
	11. Upgrade existing hockey irrigation system.	Completed
	12. Review use of harness racing in 2011 to determine future of pavilion and the track. Increase use of the pavilion, e.g. hockey change facility, cricket pavilion, community gym shared with Wedderburn P-12 College, etc. and install a DDA compliant toilet and ramp suitable for people with disabilities.	Completed
	13. Install signage that reflects Council’s corporate style and provides information on opportunities at the park.	Completed
	14. Improve landscaping throughout the park, to create a more attractive and welcoming environment.	Completed
	15. Seal main entrance from Chapel St to improve condition of internal roadway.	Completed
	16. Install two lights at the southern end of the hockey field.	Not started
	17. Demolish existing sheds and build one new shed, able to provide some shelter, seating and storage for hockey equipment.	Completed
	18. Decommission Hospital Street toilet block once pavilion extension is complete.	Not started
	19. Render and smarten up existing public toilets near the bowls green.	Not started
	20. Develop an electronic ground booking system.	Ongoing
	21. Continue to explore opportunities for new activities/user groups.	Ongoing
	22. Continue to plant trees along Nardoo Walking Track.	
<p>The Donaldson Park Community Hub Redevelopment Project will include a new multi-purpose facility, replacing the current pavilions for football, netball and hockey club and harness racing club. The new community hub will support these sporting teams and increase sport participation whilst also providing a community facility able to host large-numbered community groups and events.</p> <p>The project includes the following actions. These are due for completion in 2023/2024:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New multi-sport and community-focused community hub 2. Car park 3. Solar installation with batteries 		

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Pavement works 5. Landscaping 6. Playspace for all abilities 7. Additional landscaping 8. Internal paths adjacent to the new building. 	
<p>Inglewood Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2018</p>	<p>The Inglewood Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods. Completed 2. Calculate the yield of the Old Inglewood Reservoir and put in place a water allocation process. Completed 3. Develop and implement an ongoing program of works for the Old Town Reservoir. Completed 4. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process. Completed 5. Secure water for the ground by upgrading catch drains to allow the Inglewood Reservoir to fill so that water can then be transferred to the sports complex for irrigation purposes. Completed 6. Upgrade toilet facilities in Sports Centre. Completed 7. Install a new irrigation system to allow more efficient use of water and plant warm season grasses to provide a better playing surface. Completed 8. Install a range hood in the kitchen area to meet regulations. Completed 9. Install some speed humps with signage around the sports oval. Not started 10. Upgrade Sports Centre to improve overall appearance and amenity. Completed 11. Develop change facilities for netballers and female umpires – as part of the tennis pavilion. Completed 12. Install heating and cooling in the pavilion. Cover louver windows. Completed 13. Install more shelter, shade and seating around the Recreation Reserve. Completed 14. Upgrade the canteen and the bar. Completed 15. Upgrade lights for sports oval and netball courts. Completed 16. Upgrade football/cricket showers and toilets in change rooms. Completed 17. Upgrade public toilets. Completed 18. Develop a rebound wall to allow people to practice their tennis alone or in pairs. Not started 	
<p>Inglewood Streetscape Improvement Project</p>	<p>The Inglewood Streetscape Project will be a major influence in uplifting Inglewood’s main street appeal and experience and has the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautification: Transform the streetscape into an inviting, visually pleasing environment that reflects the unique character and history of Inglewood. • Infrastructure Upgrades: Upgrade kerb and channel systems, enhancing drainage and accessibility while maintaining historical architectural elements. • Footpaths: Develop pedestrian-friendly footpaths that promote safe movement and accessibility for all residents and visitors. • Underground Power: Implement underground power installation to improve the aesthetic appeal and safety of the streetscape. • Greening Initiatives: Integrate landscaping and urban greening strategies, incorporating plantings to improve air quality, biodiversity, and aesthetics. • Traffic Calming: Implement traffic calming measures to reduce vehicular speed and enhance pedestrian safety, encouraging alternative modes of transportation. 	<p>In progress</p>

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian Safety: Enhance pedestrian crossings and signage to prioritize pedestrian safety and encourage walking within the town. • Overall Amenity: Create functional gathering spaces, seating areas, and resting points, contributing to the overall comfort and enjoyment of the streetscape. • Heritage Loan Scheme Policy: Seek to adopt the draft Heritage Loan Scheme Policy, to coincide with this project. • Place-Making: Develop spaces that foster a sense of identity and community, where residents and visitors can connect and engage in cultural and social activities. Enhance existing heritage walking trails and signage. • Public Art: Integrate artistic installations that tell the story of Inglewood's history, culture, and aspirations, creating points of interest and visual engagement. • First Nations Recognition: Incorporate design elements that acknowledge and celebrate the First Nations people and their connection to the land, integrating cultural significance into the streetscape. <p>The project has commenced and will be completed by September 2024 and will cover planning and actions for period 2025-2029.</p>	
<p>Mitiamo Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2019</p>	<p>The Mitiamo Recreation Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an agreement with the MRWS to access water from the proposed pipeline and install rainwater tank. 2. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods. 3. Decommission all 5 lawn tennis courts and construct 2 new shared netball/tennis courts (which meet Netball Victoria standards). 4. Relocate existing light poles and upgrade lighting of the courts. 5. Improve drainage around the court area so that water does not pool on the courts. 6. Relocate entrance to pavilion further to the east to allow a car-free area around the netball/tennis and play area. 7. Survey oval and improve drainage on southern side of ground. 8. Revegetate Recreation Reserve. 9. Construct a basic club facility to provide shelter, toilet, shower and storage space next to the courts. 10. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process. 11. Install sturdy cafe plastic sheeting around the verandah to increase capacity of the pavilion to cater for events. 12. Relocate the two water tanks and connect to the roof for toilet flushing. 13. Install water efficient fixtures. 14. Assess the need to supplement the water supply and implement a stormwater harvesting system. 15. Extend pavilion by approximately 4 metres to increase capacity for events and functions and to provide additional storage space. 16. Improve the existing irrigation system on the sports oval. 17. Upgrade light towers around the sports ground to allow football games to be held at night. 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Underway</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not required – Plastic sheeting recommended solution.</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
Newbridge Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2018	<p>The Newbridge Recreation Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods. 2. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process. 3. Install an in-ground irrigation sprinkler system to decrease water use; decrease amount of time spent watering; and improve condition of the ground. 4. Develop a new community sports pavilion to cater for social events and to provide suitable change facilities for players and umpires, and upgrade power. Incorporate water efficient fixtures and additional rainwater tanks. 5. Reconstruct netball courts to meet Netball Victoria standards (over existing tennis courts). 6. Mentor young people to take on administrative roles on the Newbridge Recreation Reserve Committee of Management to ensure its ongoing sustainability. 7. Provide shade trees and a BBQ in playground/picnic area to provide a more comfortable place for people to recreate. 8. Develop a track along reserve extending this around the top of the reserve. 9. Fence the site to prevent sheep from causing damage. 10. Liaise with Coliban Water on potential for recycled water option if the proposal to provide a reticulated sewage system to the town goes ahead. 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
Pyramid Hill Mitchell Park Master Plan 2018	<p>The Mitchell Park Master Plan includes the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods. 2. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process and set up an agreement with Loddon Shire to access a set volume of water from the Loddon Shire's Pyramid Hill-Boort Irrigation water share. 3. Reseal both courts and extend run-off to meet Netball Victoria standards and to improve safety for netballers. 4. Replace existing irrigation system. 5. Upgrade fire service to ensure safety of patrons in the pavilion should a fire break out. 6. Install light near playground to improve visibility of children playing in the area. 7. Install signage to warn motorists to slow down. 8. Provide access for people with disabilities to top floor of the pavilion. 9. Collect rainwater from clubhouse and use for toilet flushing and other non-drinking building purposes. 10. Consider replacement of turf wickets with synthetic wickets to reduce water usage. 11. Need to install heating and cooling in the pavilion, a skylight and better acoustics. 12. Construct a verandah to the south end of the pavilion for netball spectators. 13. Improve aesthetics of the ground through ongoing planting and upkeep of more trees. 14. Seal internal road around oval and provide signage and speed humps. 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Completed</p>

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
	15. Replace training lighting around the sports oval to improve visibility during training sessions.	Not started
	16. Replace gate, fence and track to provide safe access for users of Mitchell Park.	Not started
	17. Replace original toilet block.	
Pyramid Hill Tennis and Bowls Facility Master Plan 2018	<p>The Pyramid Hill Tennis and Bowls Facility Master Plan includes the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods. 2. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process. 3. Set up an agreement with Loddon Shire to access a set volume of water from the Loddon Shire's Pyramid Hill Boort Irrigation water share. 4. Develop two synthetic tennis courts with lights to reduce water usage and to provide year-round tennis opportunities for the community and install an in-ground irrigation system on the tennis courts to eliminate the need for flood irrigation and to irrigate the tennis courts more effectively. 5. Install a fence near the channel to prevent children from falling into the water; between the playground and the fire training track; and between the playground and the main road. 6. Erect signage from main road to direct people to the tennis courts. 7. Plant trees on the western side of the tennis/swimming pavilion to help keep players and the pavilion cooler and to provide additional shade in the car park. 8. Purchase a new motorised spraying machine to maintain the bowls greens more effectively. 9. Upgrade the bowls pavilion kitchen by installing a new oven and relocating the hand basin; and installing new carpet throughout the pavilion. 10. Upgrade play equipment to ensure provision for younger and middle age groups. 11. Undertake additional planting and landscaping around the tennis area, particularly at either end of the complex once the end tennis courts have been removed. 12. Install lighting at the Bowls Club to allow night time training, competitions and events. 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Not started</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Not started</p>
Pyramid Hill Streetscapes Revitalisation Project 2023	The Pyramid Hill Streetscapes Revitalisation Project is funded and will include tree planting, improved pedestrian amenity and navigation around the centre and between key community facilities, and a unified, exciting civic area along Kelly Street.	In progress
Serpentine Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2018	<p>The Serpentine Recreation Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods. 2. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process. 3. Upgrade irrigation system so that it is fully automated. 4. Purchase and install a storage tank and associated pipework to connect to the new pipeline. 5. Re-level, laser and resurface sports ground oval to create a more uniform playing surface. 6. Replant sports oval with warm season grasses to reduce water use. 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

Strategy	Strategic Directions	Status
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Increase run-off on netball to meet Netball Victoria standards. 8. Improve landscaping around the front of the Community Centre and by planting drought tolerant species. 9. Install a new playground with a protective barrier or fence. 10. Re-route Coliban water tankers from internal road at the Reserve to an alternative/new road when accessing the treatment plant due to potential safety issues and degradation of the internal roads. 11. Consider closing off road between netball courts and the Community Centre to increase safety. 12. Drop off area in front of Community Centre. 13. Upgrade inefficient water fixtures (toilets and taps). 14. Develop the area behind the netball courts into a native bush land area (known as Pon Pon Reserve), featuring a shared trail with fitness stations around it. 15. Increase size of football and netball change rooms, and improve umpire change rooms, the social rooms and canteen facilities. 	<p>Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Not started Completed</p>
Winzar Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2018 (Dingee)	<p>The Winzar Recreation Reserve Master Plan includes the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a water allocation agreement for key sports facilities during restriction periods. 2. Implement a formal water use monitoring and annual reporting process. 3. Consider purchasing a permanent water allocation. 4. Convert one lawn tennis court to hard court to allow for year-round multi-purpose use; install lights; and line mark for other sports such as netball and basketball. 5. Upgrade lighting on the bowling green. 6. Continue to develop the walking track around the reserve to form a self-contained loop from Dingee and link up with Tang Tang Reserve. 7. Upgrade cricket practice nets. 8. Improve condition of cricket wicket and oval. 9. Fill in the dam as water will be sourced from a pipeline in the future and a new water storage tank has been installed recently. 10. Level ground around pavilion; repair exterior wall to match new extension; and install carpet in function area. 11. Review the adequacy of the tennis courts sprinkler system and replace or upgrade the sprinkler system if required. 12. Share a caretaker with another community to maintain sports facilities. 13. Formalise bowls club parking area with pine bollards and install lighting. 	<p>Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed</p>

2.5 State Government Strategies

The table below summarises State Government strategies relevant to sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

Table 5: State Strategy Review

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
<p>Active Victoria</p>	<p>Active Victoria is the Victorian Government’s strategic framework for sport and recreation in Victoria. The framework aims to reset the sector following the COVID-19 global pandemic, build on the existing foundations for the State to be recognised as the nation’s sporting capital and to deliver a more active Victorian population.</p> <p>The vision of Active Victoria is to build a thriving, inclusive and connected sport and active recreation sector that benefits all Victorians.</p> <p>The framework includes twelve key directions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase and promote opportunities so Victorians can participate in ways that suit them. 2. Target efforts towards individuals and communities who participate less. 3. Improve community sport and active recreation infrastructure coordination to better meet demand, with a focus on areas and populations who need it most. 4. Deliver inclusive, multi-use and sustainable community sport and active recreation infrastructure. 5. Attract and retain a skilled sport and active recreation workforce (paid and unpaid). 6. Promote more financially sustainable organisations that reduce duplication and inefficiencies in service delivery. 7. Implement frameworks to create safe and inclusive sport and active recreation settings. 8. Build insights through better use of evidence and data. 9. Develop a world-leading suite of major stadium and state facilities. 10. Connected and co-ordinated pathways exist to pursue sport at the highest level. 11. Invest in state infrastructure that can host international and regional events and support event content that boosts the Victorian economy. 12. Partner to maximise leverage from investment in Victoria’s major events. <p>The Strategy will need to respond to the strategic directions outlined above, and directly align with the identified need to increase participation and deliver multi-use sustainable community sporting infrastructure.</p>
<p>Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014</p>	<p>Regional growth plans provide broad direction for land use and development across regional Victoria. They also provide more detailed planning frameworks for key regional centres. Each of regional Victoria's regions is covered by a regional growth plan, which, together with Plan Melbourne, provide strategic land use plans for Victoria.</p> <p>The regional growth plans have been developed in a partnership with local government and state agencies and authorities through consultation with the community and key stakeholders.</p> <p>The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan covers the municipalities of Central Goldfields, Greater Bendigo, Loddon, Macedon Ranges and Mount Alexander. The Plan is endorsed by each council and is reviewed every four years.</p> <p>The Regional Growth Plan supports Bendigo as the regional city and Inglewood and Bridgewater as hinterland towns to encourage sustainable population growth; and to protect character and amenity of smaller settlements.</p> <p>The land use framework supports:</p>

Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating ongoing agricultural productivity and new opportunities that respond to climate change through ongoing adaptation and flexibility in the Loddon Shire. Identifies areas containing high value terrestrial habitat in Loddon Shire (National and State Regional Parks). Key transport corridors of Wimmera Hwy, Calder Hwy and Loddon Valley Hwy. Rail corridors connecting Bendigo through Loddon Shire to Swan Hill/Kerang and connecting Maryborough through Loddon Shire to Boort and Mildura. Support the ongoing role of the region’s small towns and settlements. Acknowledge the non-urban population’s contribution to the region. Invest in liveability, infrastructure and urban design initiatives. Build community connectedness and reduce areas of social disadvantage. <p>The land use planning framework provides for sport and recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services to deliver liveability benefits to the region.</p>
<p>Recognition and Settlement Agreement 2013</p>	<p>The Recognition and Settlement Agreement supports Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the land.</p> <p>As part of the agreement, six parks including Hepburn Regional Park, Paddys Ranges State Park, Kooyoora State Park, Wehla Conservation Reserve, Greater Bendigo National Park and Kara Kara National Park have been transferred to the Traditional Owners on Aboriginal Title.</p> <p>The Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board have a joint management plan with the State Government (Parks Victoria) for managing the parks. The plan includes strategies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve the natural values and cultural values. Managing threatened species. Recognition and utilisation of traditional Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge and customs. Attracting and managing visitors and identifying opportunities for benefits flowing from enhanced park experiences for visitors, the Dja Dja Wurrung people and wider community. Connection with broader Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Consequent economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits for Dja Dja Wurrung people and the wider community. <p>Public access to the parks and reserves continues in accordance with applicable legislation.</p>

2.6 National and International Strategies

The table below summarises National and International strategies relevant to sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

Table 6: International, National and State Strategy Review

Other Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
International	
<p>World Health Organisation: Brief for Action on Urban Green Spaces (2017)</p>	<p>Urban green spaces are a feature of healthy settlements and that the evidence proves <i>“green spaces benefit cities and urban quality of life”</i>.</p> <p>The brief found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban living limits access to nature and can increase exposure to certain environmental hazards such as air and noise pollution. Many urban areas face increasing pressure from expanding populations, limited resources and growing impacts of climate change.

Other Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These challenges must be addressed for cities to provide healthy and sustainable living environments. <p>“Green spaces” include parks, playgrounds or vegetation in public and private places. They offer nature-based solutions that can help ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents have adequate opportunities for exposure to nature. • Biodiversity is maintained and protected. • Environmental hazards such as air pollution or noise are reduced. • Impacts of extreme weather events (heatwaves, extreme rainfall and flooding) are mitigated. • Quality of living (Liveability benefits) is enhanced. • Health and wellbeing of residents is improved. <p>The brief includes planning and design advice based on an extensive evidence base reviewed as part of the brief. Key planning considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put the green space close to people. • Consider simple design features to improve the comfort of green space use. • Plan for a diversity of green space types. • Think of the maintenance needs of green space.
<p>World Health Organisation: Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health (2010)</p>	<p>Physical inactivity is now identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. Physical inactivity levels are rising in many countries with major implications for the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the general health of the population worldwide.</p> <p>The focus of the Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health is primary prevention of NCDs through physical activity at population level and the primary target audience for these recommendations are policymakers at national level.</p> <p>The recommendations address three age groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children and young people aged 5–17 years old physical activity includes play, games, sports, transportation, recreation, physical education or planned exercise, in the context of family, school, and community activities. To improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, the following are recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. • Physical activity of amounts greater than 60 minutes daily will provide additional health benefits. • Most of daily physical activity should be aerobic. Vigorous-intensity activities should be incorporated, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, at least three times per week. 2. Adults 18–64 years old physical activity includes recreational or leisure-time physical activity, transportation (e.g., walking or cycling), occupational (i.e., work), household chores, play, games, sports or planned exercise, in the context of daily, family, and community activities. To improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health and reduce the risk of NCDs and depression the following are recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity activity. • Aerobic activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes duration. • For additional health benefits, adults should increase their moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes per week or engage in 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity activity.

Other Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle-strengthening activities should be done involving major muscle groups on two or more days a week. <p>3. Adults 65 years old and above, physical activity includes recreational or leisure-time physical activity, transportation (e.g., walking or cycling), occupational (if the person is still engaged in work), household chores, play, games, sports or planned exercise, in the context of daily, family and community activities. To improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone and functional health, and reduce the risk of NCDs, depression and cognitive decline, the following are recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity activity. • Aerobic activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes duration. • For additional health benefits, adults aged 65 years and above should increase their moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes per week or engage in 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity activity. • Adults of this age group with poor mobility should perform physical activity to enhance balance and prevent falls on 3 or more days per week. • Muscle-strengthening activities should be done involving major muscle groups on two or more days a week. • When adults of this age group cannot do the recommended amounts of physical activity due to health conditions, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow. <p>Overall, across all the age groups, the benefits of implementing the above recommendations and of being physically active outweigh the harms. At the recommended level of 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity activity, musculoskeletal injury rates appear to be uncommon. In a population-based approach, to decrease the risks of musculoskeletal injuries, it would be appropriate to encourage a moderate start with gradual progress to higher levels of physical activity.</p>
National	
<p>Sport 2030: Sport Australia (2018)</p>	<p>This Strategy is Australia’s first national sport plan; it is the vision and the plan for sport and physical activity in Australia over the next 12 years to be delivered in partnership with Australia’s sporting, physical activity, technology, education and corporate community. The Plan on a page summary:</p> <p>The impact/effect of Sport 2030 on local government is within the first Strategic priority (Building a More Active Australia) with the role of local government being recognised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the sporting ecosystem. • A partner with Australian and state governments, non-government organisations and corporate sector that share the vision for a more active Australia. • Working alongside Australian and state governments in funding infrastructure that meets the ever-changing needs of Australian communities.

Other Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations																	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Australian government and national sporting organisations to create database of sports infrastructure and to develop a national approach to mapping infrastructure across the country. <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Australia: To be the world’s most active and healthy sporting nation, known for its integrity and sporting success.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">STRATEGIC PRIORITIES</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">Building a More Active Australia</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">Achieving Sporting Excellence</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">Safeguarding the Integrity of Sport</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">Strengthening Australia’s Sport Industry</td> </tr> </table> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px;">MISSION</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px;">Reduce inactivity amongst Australians by 15% by 2030</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px;">National pride, inspiration and motivation through international sporting success</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px;">A fair, safe and strong sport sector free from corruption</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px;">A thriving Australian sport and recreation industry</td> </tr> </table> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px;">TARGET</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px;">More people of all ages engaged in sport and physical activity throughout every stage of their life</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px;">A world class high performance system that is empowered to achieve sporting success through tailored approaches for sports and athletes</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px;">Australian sport is seen as safe, trustworthy and fair with secure, reliable systems for deterring, detecting and dealing with threats to competition</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px;">A strong, viable, contemporary and inclusive sports industry with high quality successful organisations driving economic and social benefits</td> </tr> </table> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #FFC107; color: white; padding: 5px;">OUTCOMES</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FFC107; color: white; padding: 5px;">Improved physical health</td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FFC107; color: white; padding: 5px;">Improved mental health</td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FFC107; color: white; padding: 5px;">Personal development</td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FFC107; color: white; padding: 5px;">Strengthening our communities</td> <td style="width: 20%; background-color: #FFC107; color: white; padding: 5px;">Growing the economy</td> </tr> </table> </div>	Building a More Active Australia	Achieving Sporting Excellence	Safeguarding the Integrity of Sport	Strengthening Australia’s Sport Industry	Reduce inactivity amongst Australians by 15% by 2030	National pride, inspiration and motivation through international sporting success	A fair, safe and strong sport sector free from corruption	A thriving Australian sport and recreation industry	More people of all ages engaged in sport and physical activity throughout every stage of their life	A world class high performance system that is empowered to achieve sporting success through tailored approaches for sports and athletes	Australian sport is seen as safe, trustworthy and fair with secure, reliable systems for deterring, detecting and dealing with threats to competition	A strong, viable, contemporary and inclusive sports industry with high quality successful organisations driving economic and social benefits	Improved physical health	Improved mental health	Personal development	Strengthening our communities	Growing the economy
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<p>Sport Australia Australian Physical Literacy Framework (2019)</p>	<p>Physical Literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is lifelong holistic learning acquired and applied in movement and physical activity contexts. Reflects ongoing changes integrating physical, psychological, social and cognitive capabilities. Is vital in helping us lead healthy and fulfilling lives through movement and physical activity. <p>A physically literate person can draw on their integrated physical, psychological, social and cognitive capabilities to support health promoting and fulfilling movement and physical activity – relative to their situation and context – throughout the lifespan.</p> <p>The Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Categorises a range of movement-related skills, knowledge and behaviours into interrelated domains, elements and stages. Helps identify a person’s capability across all four domains and allows people to make informed decisions about their physical literacy. 																	

Other Strategies	Relevant Themes/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a common language around effective development of physical literacy. • Accommodates the entire range of abilities, ages and backgrounds of all Australians. <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>This diagram demonstrates the four domains that the Framework is arranged around.</p> <p>The role and relationship of community/ industry segments to the Framework is articulated; with Policy makers being the most relevant to this Strategy; and the Framework application to policy makers helps them embed physical literacy through systems and policies (health, education, sport and physical activity), using physical literacy as a tool to improve individual and societal health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines</p>	<p>For Children and Young People (5-17 years)</p> <p>Physical Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accumulating 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day involving mainly aerobic activities. • Several hours of a variety of light physical activities. • Activities that are vigorous, as well as those that strengthen muscle and bone should be incorporated at least three days per week. • To achieve greater health benefits, replace sedentary time with additional moderate to vigorous physical activity, while preserving sufficient sleep. <p>Sedentary Behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible. • Limit sedentary recreational screen time to no more than two hours per day. • When using screen-based electronic media, positive social interactions and experiences are encouraged. <p>For Adults (18-64 years)</p> <p>Physical Activity Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing any physical activity is better than doing none. If you currently do no physical activity, start by doing some and gradually build up to the recommended amount. • Be active on most, preferably all, days every week. • Accumulate 150 to 300 minutes (2 ½ to 5 hours) of moderate intensity physical activity or 75 to 150 minutes (1 ¼ to 2 ½ hours) of vigorous intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both moderate and vigorous activities, each week. • Do muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week. <p>Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the amount of time spent in prolonged sitting. • Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.

2.7 Research Findings

How do people use our open spaces and sport and recreation facilities today and into the future?

What are the benefits of public open spaces?

Our parks, sport and recreation facilities are critical for community health and wellbeing, helping to benefit our community:



Physically and mentally by promoting physical activity and active lifestyles, reducing illness and disease, improving mental health and creating a sense of wellbeing.



Socially by generating stronger and more connected communities with improved social interaction and inclusion through provision of active and vibrant community hubs, access to facilities and resources, opportunities for volunteering and involvement.



Environmentally by developing well-planned and attractive settings encouraging active transport and use of public parks and leisure services. The provision of parks and green environments also include temperature reduction and mitigation of the urban heat island effect; air quality improvement; management of storm water reducing the incidence of flooding and water-borne disease; ecosystem support and biodiversity enhancement.



Economically by assisting to reduce health care cost through reduction in disease and illness associated with lack of physical activity and social interaction. A park and public space network can also provide local employment and investment opportunities and contribute to maintaining a healthy workforce.

“Evidence from around the world for building cities and regional areas around public open space, active recreation areas, green streets and walking and cycling infrastructure, has repeatedly demonstrated this approach will deliver improved health, social cohesion, vibrant local economies, productivity, and environmental benefits.” (State of New South Wales 2020 Draft Greener Spaces Design Guide).

Public open space, sport and recreation infrastructure could be defined as a critical investment in current and future populations. This “Urban Health Infrastructure” delivers multiple returns on investment.

The National Heart Foundation observes:

- The health effects of physical activity are compelling. However, the potency of physical activity as a policy investment for Australia extends far beyond health. Active living plays a key role in broader economic and social goals for our nation; walking, cycling and public transport are affordable and sustainable solutions to traffic congestion.
- These same behaviours contribute to cleaner air, reduced carbon emissions and sustainable environments.
- Active neighbourhoods and cities are more liveable, with higher levels of social capital and community cohesion and lower levels of crime.
- In the context of an ageing community, physical activity enables older Australians to live more active lifestyles with reduced risk from disabling and costly chronic diseases.
- Fit and active workers are more productive, take fewer sick days and make a positive contribution to our economic wellbeing.

(A Blueprint for an Active Australia, Heart Foundation, 2019)

In 2019 the National Heart Foundation of Australia released its third edition of the **Blueprint for an Active Australia**. The report highlights the importance of sport and physical activity to our health and wellbeing.

Some key evidence cited in this report includes:

- Physical activity can significantly reduce heart disease risk and the burden of a range of other chronic diseases, as well as improve mental health.
- Heart disease remains the single leading cause of death in Australia.
- Nearly 6 in 10 adults, 3 quarters of seniors and over 8 in 10 children and young people are not active enough for good heart health. This ranges Australia among the world's most inactive nations.
- 1 in 3 Australians aged 15 and over do very little or no exercise at all.
- 70% of Australian men and 56% of Australian women are overweight or obese.
- 1 in 5 Australians experience a mental illness.
- Physical inactivity contributes to 19% of diabetes cases, 16% of bowel cancer cases, 16% of uterine cancer cases, 14% of dementia cases, 11% of breast cancer cases, 11% of coronary heart disease and 10% of strokes.

These statistics are even more severe across disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that suffer two to three times worse off on most social and health indicators reported.

What is the economic cost of physical inactivity?

The University of Sydney study found in 2013 that physical inactivity costs Australia \$805 million each year (Source: Lancet Journal, 2016). This cost is made up of direct health care expenses linked to chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease and indirect costs of productivity losses when people die prematurely because of physical inactivity.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently conducted research into the global cost of physical activity. Key findings were:

- 499.2 million new cases of preventable major non communicable diseases (NCDs) would occur globally by 2030 if the prevalence of physical inactivity does not change, with direct health-care costs of INT\$520 billion.
- The global cost of inaction on physical inactivity would reach approximately \$47.6 billion per year. Although 74% of new cases of NCDs would occur in low-income and middle-countries, high-income countries would bear a larger proportion (63%) of the economic costs.
- The cost of treatment and management of NCDs varied—although dementia accounted for only 3% of new preventable NCDs, the disease corresponded to 22% of all costs; Type 2 diabetes accounted for 2% of new preventable cases but 9% of all costs; and cancers accounted for 1% of new preventable cases but 15% of all costs.

What is the role of government in reversing this trend?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Constitution (1947) best defines the rights of Australians and the government's role: "Having the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition and that governments have the responsibility for the health of their peoples which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures".

In 2017, the World Health Organisation (WHO) released a **Brief for Action on Urban Green Spaces**. The brief is based on extensive evidence supporting the need for urban green space and includes blue spaces, water bodies and corridors.

WHO explains that urban green spaces are a feature of healthy settlements and that the evidence proves *“green spaces benefit cities and urban quality of life”*.

Our urban green spaces including parks, civic spaces, active transport corridors, sport and recreation facilities and spaces, streets, water bodies and open space corridors, enable people to live a healthy and active lifestyle. These spaces and places help people escape from the built environment and reconnect with nature. They provide social spaces for us to connect with each other and strengthen our sense of community. They help us learn. They protect natural environments, important habitats and cultural heritage. They offer opportunities for tourism, sustainable economies and investment in social capital. Our green spaces are the lungs of our growing cities and the solution to overheating as the climate continues to change.

We need to have urban environments that make it easy and attractive to exercise as well as provide a range of opportunities to enable activity. While it is important to promote the benefits of physical activity to children and adults, there is a need to ensure that our parks can support and encourage physical activity for all ages, abilities, genders, cultures and socio-economic groups.

The **Healthy by Design Framework** supports availability of green spaces, including parks, playgrounds and streetscapes that are safe, accessible, walkable and inviting are a key component of an environment that supports physically active lifestyles.

2.8 Key Findings of the Strategic Review

There is strategic support for improving the accessibility, diversity and quality of recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services to improve community health and wellbeing in Loddon.

Sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services are integral to achieving the visions of Loddon Shire Council and are recognised as key ingredients to achieving community health and wellbeing in Loddon and an important part of the social fabric and character of our agricultural/farming communities. They provide opportunities to be active and are highly valued by the Loddon communities, delivering social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits.

The Strategy aligns with Loddon Shire Council’s strategic plans and commitments. Specifically, the Strategy will respond to the *Loddon Council Plan 2021-2025* directions to ‘Plan for Future Facilities and Infrastructure That Meet Community Needs’ and ‘Maintain Sports and Recreation and Open Public Spaces to enable and Promote Access and Participation’.

The Strategy will supersede the Recreation Strategy 2014 and be an overarching strategy that consolidates strategic priorities identified in the:

- *Activating Open Space Strategy 2019-2024*
- *Swimming Pool Improvements Plan 2018-2022*
- Outstanding actions identified in recreation reserve masterplans.

The Strategy will also align with State Government policy. Specifically, Sport and Recreation Victoria’s *Active Victoria (Strategic Framework)* and the *Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan*.

This Strategy now requires a planning framework that will help guide and inform the Council on what types of sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities are required to meet the short, medium and aspirational needs of the Loddon Shire community.

The Strategy will prioritise and align project outcomes with Council's Annual Budget, Council's Asset Management Strategy and other potential funding mechanisms.

Loddon Shire Council has invested significantly in the improvement of sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities following flooding events

Loddon Shire Council has improved the sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services over the last 10 years. This includes upgraded sports fields, courts, lighting and pavilions. The Council has also invested in developing walking and cycling trails and streetscape improvements within township areas.

A program of sport and recreation reserve master plans has been implemented over the last 10 years that has improved the function, capacity and quality of facilities. Continued investment in the implementation of master plans will ensure contemporary facilities that meet user needs and experiences.

Asset condition varies, and the asset renewal funding gap is widening

The assets vary in condition, with several ageing and needing renewal. Council's asset management obligation is a key consideration for the project. The Asset Plan 2022 projects a funding shortfall to meet the current asset replacement and maintenance requirements in the next 10 years.

A strategic approach that considers a hierarchy and agreed design and maintenance standards is required to improve sport and recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities in the future.

Further, condition audits for Council's five outdoor public swimming pools and a review into the operational performance of Loddon Shire's aquatic service found the asset condition and ongoing operation of the outdoor pools is a concern. The pools do not meet current industry standards and are now 50+ years old. They are currently costing Council \$40-50 per visit. The Strategy will need to explore how a sustainable aquatic service can be provided in Loddon Shire.

Council will need to consider the long-term financial capacity to renew assets. An examination of the need for an asset at the time of renewal is required to ensure the current and future needs of community are met within a funding profile available to Council.

Sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services will need to respond to State, National and International issues and strategies

Sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services follow trends being influenced by broader state, national and internal policy. Loddon Shire Council must ensure future planning for sport and active recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities is adaptable to this changing environment.

WHO Urban Green Spaces: A Brief for Action (2017) highlights the important role green spaces (our parks, playground and vegetated areas) play to ensuring:

- People have adequate opportunities for exposure to nature.
- Biodiversity is maintained and protected.
- Environmental hazards such as air pollution or noise are reduced.
- Impacts of extreme weather events (heatwaves, extreme rainfall and flooding) are mitigated.

- Quality of living (Liveability benefits) is enhanced.
- Health and wellbeing of residents is improved.

Delivering accessible “green spaces” is critical to our health and wellbeing. WHO Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health (2010) highlight that physical inactivity is now the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. This challenge is further evidenced by Sport 2030: Sport Australia (2018) report which incorporates a mission to reduce physical inactivity amongst Australians by 15% by 2030.

The WHO suggests a multifaceted approach to supporting increased physical activity levels and differentiates the targeted duration and intensity of physical activity goals by age, as follows:

- Aged 5 – 17 years - Accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
- Aged 18 – 64 years - At least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity.
- Aged 65+ years - At least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity.

Whilst Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines differ slightly from the above goals, the overall objectives remain the same. That is, to increase physical activity levels by Australians across all age cohorts. Sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services play a critical role in achieving this through maximising opportunities for people to be physically active and facilitating a connection to nature. With limited resources available to local governments to support these outcomes, strategies must be realistic and focus on maximising participation and environmental outcomes.

3. Demand Assessment

Who are we planning for?

This section assesses the different drivers of demand on our sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services, including population and demographic influences and local and national participation trends.

3.1 Demographic Influences

Current Population

The following table represents the demographics of Loddon Shire broken down into townships and is categorised by population, age and cultural diversity. Data is sourced from the *Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021*.

The total population of Loddon Shire in 2021 was 7,759. The biggest township in the Shire is Boort with a population of 808, followed by Inglewood with a population of 779.

There is an almost even split of the population between males and females, with 50.6% of the population being male and 49.4% female.

Table 7: Current Population

Township	Total Population 2021	Males	Females	Median Age	Overseas population	Aboriginal
Loddon Shire	7,759	50.6%	49.4%	52	1,572	170
Boort	808	46.1%	53.9%	58	220	14
Inglewood	779	49.6%	50.4%	55	132	23
Wedderburn	650	48.2%	51.8%	57	145	12
Pyramid Hill	475	48.3%	51.7%	47	159	14
Bridgewater	341	50.0%	50.0%	50	56	8
Serpentine	222	48.4%	51.6%	40	40	0
Dingee	195	50.3%	49.7%	50	20	0
Laanecoorie	179	54.9%	45.1%	57	38	3
Newbridge	171	52.9%	47.1%	58	6	3
Tarnagulla	153	52.9%	47.1%	59	29	9
Korong Vale	143	52.7%	47.3%	57	28	9
Mitiamo	116	48.2%	51.8%	50	26	0
Eddington	113	48.3%	51.7%	42	8	4

Future Population

The following graph shows an increase of 0% and 1% over the last 10 years. Loddon Shire Council takes the view that the estimated population growth rate for Loddon Shire over the next decade is, on average, 0.5%.

The 2022 estimated population rate of 7,748 is projected to grow to 8,144 by 2032 (+396). The townships identified for population growth in the Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan are Bridgewater and Inglewood.

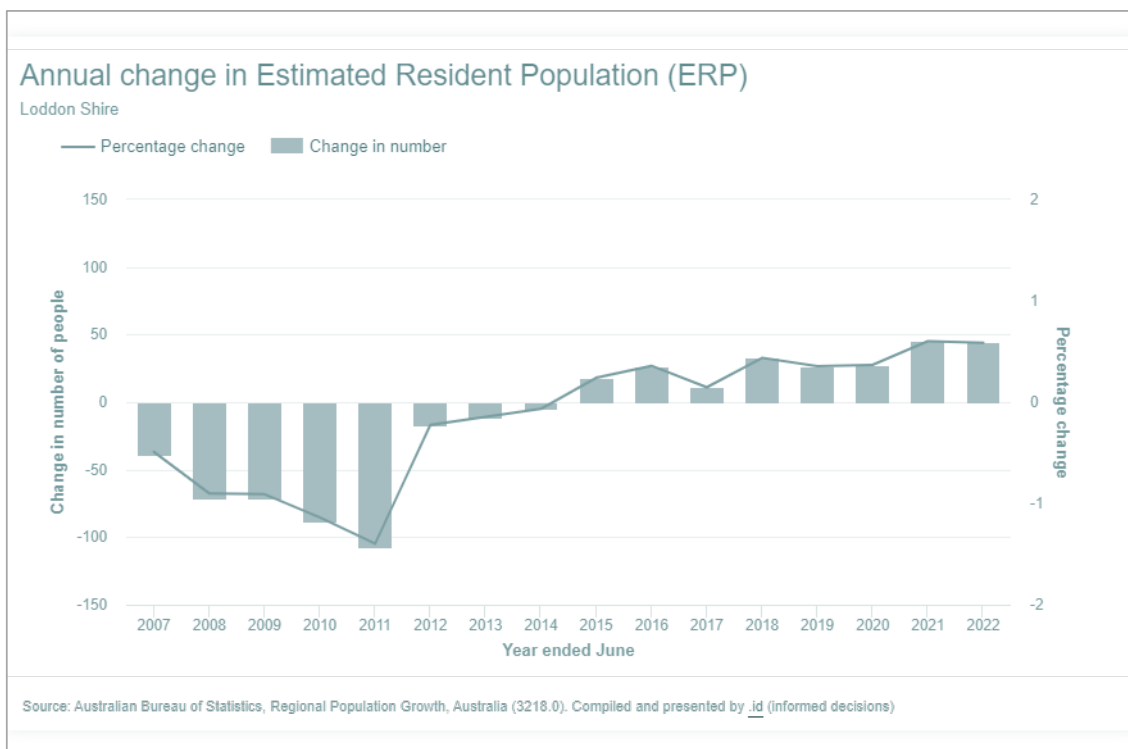


Figure 5: Loddon Shire Population (Source: .idcommunity)

Age profile

Loddon Shire is ageing. Key statistics show:

- The median age of Loddon Shire residents is 52 years. While most townships reflect the same median age, Serpentine (40), Eddington (42) and Pyramid Hill (47) have a relatively younger population.
- The age group with the highest population in most townships is 60 to 69 years.
- There are 24.6% of the population under 25 years, 30.4% between 22 and 54 years and 44.9% over 55 years.

Loddon Shire’s older demographic will need accessible active recreation facilities, programs, and services to support fitness, therapy and socialisation.

Diversity

Loddon Shire has a moderate level of diversity. Key statistics show:

- 2.2% of the population are Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander, compared to 1.9% in Regional Victoria.
- 8.6% of the population was born overseas (Cultural and Linguistically Diverse), compared to 12.4% in Regional Victoria.
- 7.5% of the population reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability, compared to 6.9% in Regional Victoria.
- The highest number of people born overseas were born in England (185), followed by Philippines (107) and New Zealand (74).

- There are pockets of CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) communities in Loddon Shire. Particularly in Boort, which has the highest number of Indian population (17) and Pyramid Hill, which has the highest number of Philippines population (74).

Aboriginal and CALD populations in Loddon Shire townships highlight the need for inclusive and culturally sensitive sport and active recreation facilities, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

The high rates of disability in Loddon Shire mean accessible facilities and participation opportunities like adaptive sports and therapy-based programs are required to encourage participation.

To address the diverse needs of different cultural backgrounds in the Loddon Shire community, the Strategy will engage with representative groups and understand preferences with a view of offering tailored programs and services that leads to greater participation.

Social disadvantage

Loddon Shire has a high level of social disadvantage when compared to Victoria. It is ranked 72 out of 79 councils in Victoria on the socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA). Key statistics show:

- SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for Loddon Shire in 2021 was 948.
- The median weekly personal income in Loddon Shire is \$554 which is lower compared to the Victorian median weekly income of \$803.
- The median weekly household income in Loddon Shire is \$1,039 which is lower than the Victorian median household income of \$1,759.

The high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage experienced in Loddon shows the need for affordable and inclusive sport and active recreation facilities, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

The Strategy will explore targeted interventions that may be necessary to deliver equitable access to participation opportunities for people experienced social disadvantage.

Health and wellbeing characteristics¹

Loddon Shire is part of the Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership, which also includes the Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Greater Bendigo, Macedon Ranges and Mount Alexander Shires. The regional partnership has prioritised health and wellbeing through the Healthy Loddon Campaspe initiative which continues to fund place-based projects to address rates of obesity, chronic disability and high-risk behaviours.

The following figure highlights the key statistics in relation to health and wellbeing of Loddon residents when compared to Victoria.

¹ Source: Australian Health Policy Collaboration: Australia's Health Tracker Atlas, published Sept 2020; Australian Health Policy Collaboration (AHPC) at Victoria University and the Public Health Information and Development Unit (PHIDU) at Torrens University

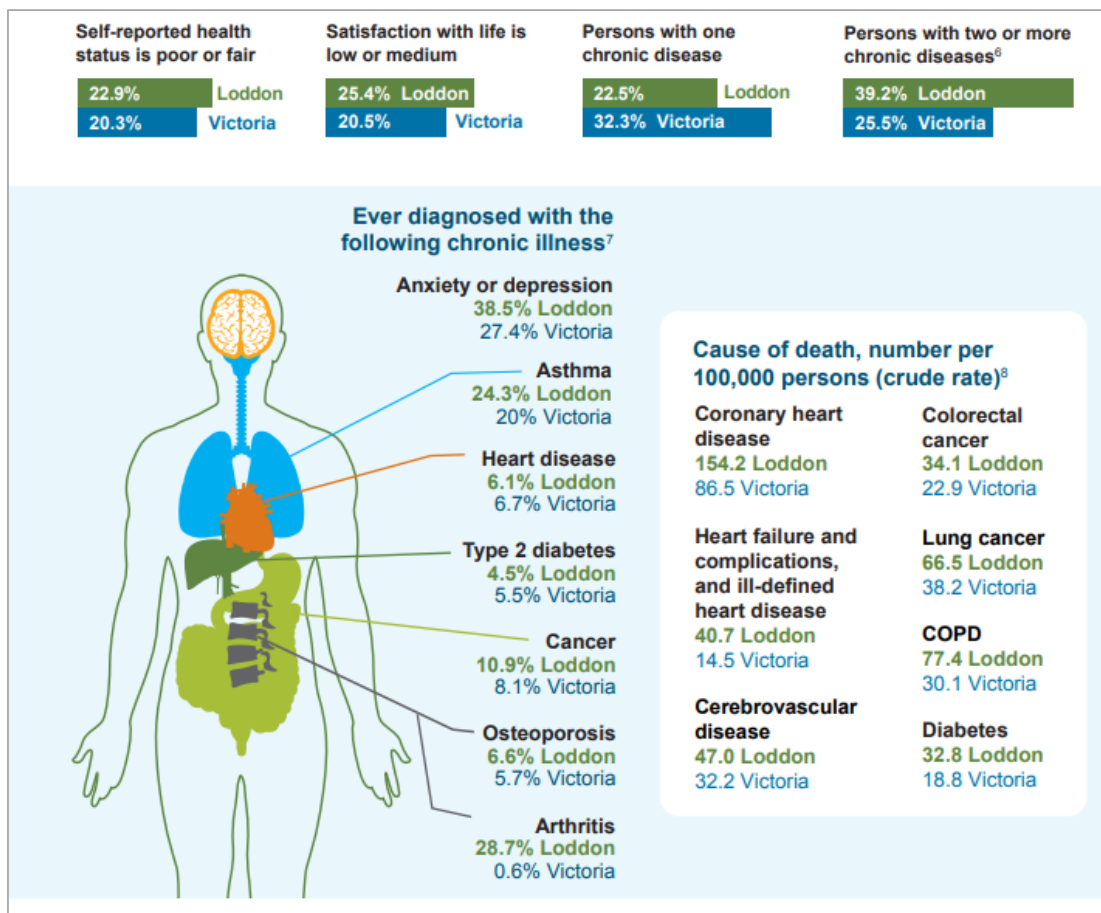


Figure 6: Loddon Shire Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 snapshot

Other key health and wellbeing statistics:

- One-third (36.6%) of Loddon people (compared to 24.4% of Victoria) self-reported dental health status as fair/poor.
- Nearly one-third (30.1%) of Loddon people (compared to 33.9% of Victoria) avoided or delayed visiting a dental health professional due to cost.
- One quarter (26.95%) of Loddon people (compared to 16.7% of Victoria) reported as a current smoker with most (25.5%) smoking daily.
- Half (50.1%) of Loddon people (compared to 50.8% of Victoria) are pre-obese or obese.
- Community members highlighted increased social isolation as a major mental health issue related to the pandemic. Associated with this is the increased importance of self-care during these times.
- There were 43.1% of people reporting insufficient physical activity time and sessions as per physical activity guidelines. This compares to 41.1% in Victoria. Main barriers to meeting daily physical activity guidelines were time poor (45.1%), poor health or disability (21%) and cost (19.6%).
- On average, Loddon residents travel 20.6km to get to their activities. Walking is the most popular physical activity among residents, with 19.6% of the population reporting that they walked for exercise in the previous 12 months. Most residents who walked for exercise in the past 12 months did so once per week or more (72.1%).

A key objective of the Strategy is to **get Loddon active** and reverse the significant health issues being experienced in Loddon Shire such as heart diseases, cancer, anxiety, depression, and diabetes. The Strategy will explore ways to promote physical fitness, mental wellbeing, and community engagement and offering preventive and rehabilitative measures. This will in time reduce healthcare costs and improve the overall health and quality of life for Loddon Shire residents.

3.2 Local Participation Trends

Active Living Census 2019

This section summarises the findings from the 2019 Active Living Census for Loddon Shire.

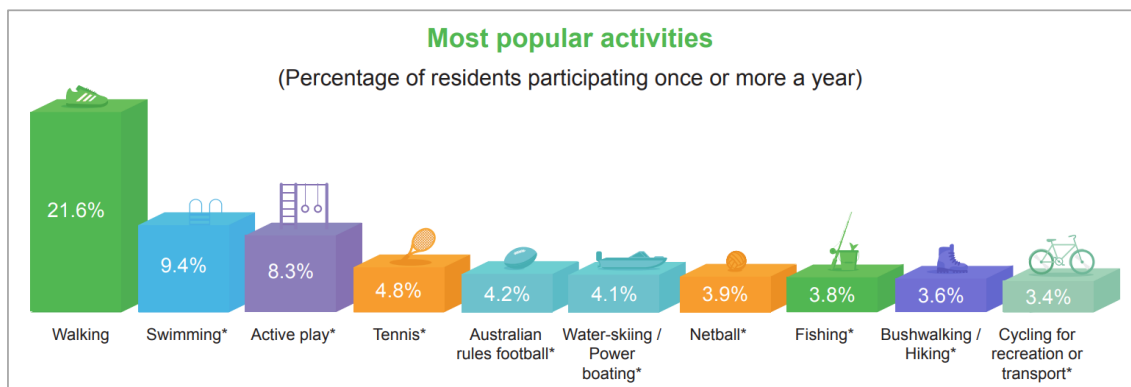












Figure 7: Most Popular Activities in Loddon Shire

The table below shows the 20 activities with the highest rates of annual participation (participating at least once per year). It also displays the rates of weekly participation for those activities (participating at least once per week during the previous 12 months).





















Table 8: Participation, Quality and Accessibility

Activity	Total	Weekly	Quality (out of 5)	Accessibility (out of 5)
Walking	19.6%	72.1%	4.0	4.2
Swimming	9.0%	46.9%	4.1	4.1
Active play	6.6%	54.1%	4.2	4.2
Tennis (indoor / outdoor)	5.8%	68.6%	4.0	4.2
Bush walking / Hiking	5.3%	28.5%	4.1	4.0
Australian rules football	4.3%	83.3%	4.1	4.1
Netball (indoor / outdoor)	3.8%	93.7%	4.2	4.3
Lawn bowls	3.6%	62.1%	4.3	4.2
Fishing	3.5%	8.8%	3.6	3.7
Golf	3.3%	42.9%	3.8	4.2

	Activity	Total	Weekly	Quality (out of 5)	Accessibility (out of 5)
	Fitness: Gym	3.1%	79.0%	4.3	4.5
	Cycling: General cycling for recreation or transport	3.1%	54.3%	4.0	4.4
	Horse riding/Equestrian	1.9%	35.2%	4.3	4.3
	Fitness: Indoor group activities	1.7%	79.7%	4.5	4.3
	Fitness: Outdoor fitness	1.7%	79.9%	4.3	4.6
	Canoeing/Kayaking/Rowing/Paddle boarding	1.6%	15.8%	3.9	3.9
	Water-skiing/Power boating	1.5%	8.9%	3.8	3.9
	Jogging/Running	1.4%	83.4%	3.9	4.3
	Hockey (indoor/outdoor)	1.3%	94.8%	4.2	4.1
	Martial Arts/Tai Chi	1.3%	75.3%	4.1	4.4

The table below indicates the percentage of residents aged three years and over, participating once or more a year, broken down by gender.

Table 9: Sport Participation Broken Down by Gender

Male participation			Female participation		
	Walking	16.5%		Walking	22.2%
	Swimming	8.1%		Swimming	9.7%
	Australian rules football	8.0%		Active play	6.7%
	Active play	6.4%		Tennis	5.5%
	Tennis	6.1%		Bushwalking/Hiking	5.6%
	Bushwalking / Hiking	5.1%		Australian rules football	1.0%
	Lawn bowls	4.9%		Netball	6.6%
	Fishing	4.9%		Lawn bowls	2.5%
	Golf	4.8%		Fishing	2.3%
	Cycling for recreation or transport	3.7%		Golf	2.0%

Following were the main recreation facilities used in Loddon Shire as reported in the Active Living Census:

- Little Lake Boort Trail, Boort
- Boort Park
- Donaldson Park, Wedderburn
- Bridgewater River Walk/Bridgewater foreshore, Bridgewater on Loddon
- Serpentine Recreation Reserve
- Boort Swimming Pool
- Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre, Kangaroo Flat
- Wedderburn Pool
- Bridgewater Recreation Reserve, Bridgewater on Loddon
- Boort Bowls, Croquet and Tennis Facility.

The figure below shows the reported barriers to being more active in Loddon Shire:

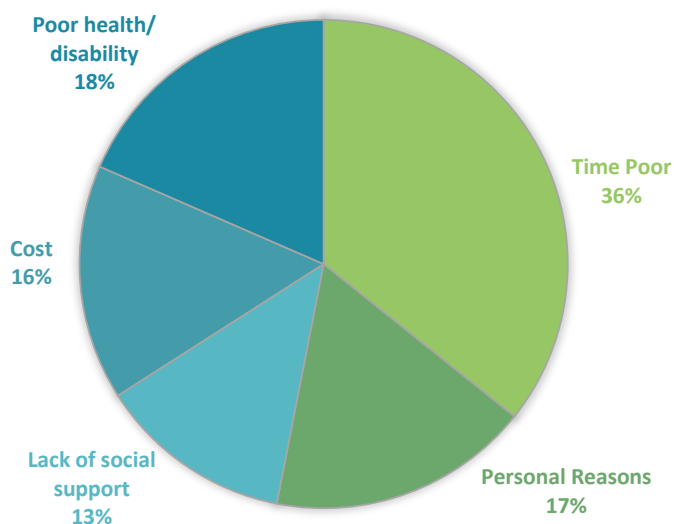


Figure 8: Barriers to people being more active in Loddon Shire

Some groups were particularly affected by certain barriers to participation in physical activities. For example, cost was identified at high rates by people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and by food insecure or low-income households.

People in Loddon Shire reported wanting to be more active. There were 54.6% of people who want to participate in more activities, including adult females, males between the age of 18 and 69, low-income households, food insecure households, people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Key findings of the participation data for Loddon Shire captured by the Active Living Census included:

- Sport Participation: The data shows that walking is the most popular physical activity, with 21.6% of the population participating in the activity. Swimming, active play, tennis, and bush walking/hiking also have notable participation rates, although they are less popular than walking.

- **Weekly Participation:** Walking has the highest weekly participation rate at 72.1%, followed by active play (54.1%) and tennis (68.6%). This suggests that these activities are part of regular routines for many individuals.
- **Quality Ratings:** The quality ratings for these activities range from 4.0 to 4.2, indicating that they are generally well-regarded in terms of the quality of the experience they provide. Higher quality ratings suggest that participants have positive experiences and are satisfied with the activities.
- **Accessibility Ratings:** Accessibility ratings for these activities are relatively high, ranging from 4.0 to 4.2. This implies that these activities are accessible to a wide range of people, making them convenient and available for the community.
- **Use of Open Spaces:** A significant 79.6% of people reported using open spaces, with more than half (51.9%) using open spaces weekly or more often. This highlights the importance of open spaces in promoting physical activity and recreation within the community.
- **Meeting Physical Activity Guidelines:** Approximately 50.8% of Loddon residents meet the physical activity guidelines, which is a positive sign. However, there is still room for improvement to increase the number of people meeting these guidelines.
- **Age and Gender Differences:** The data indicates that physical activity levels tend to decline with age for both males and females. This finding underscores the need for strategies to promote physical activity among older populations. Additionally, there is a desire for more physical activity, especially among females aged 18+ and males aged 18 to 69, which suggests an opportunity for targeted interventions.
- **Low-Income Households:** Cost is a significant barrier to physical activity, particularly for individuals identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, as well as for those in food insecure or low-income households. This finding underscores the importance of addressing financial barriers and making physical activities more affordable and accessible for these specific groups. Strategies to reduce the financial burden associated with participation in sports, recreation, and aquatic activities may be needed to promote inclusivity and equity in these activities.

3.3 Local Sports Participation Trends

AusPlay participation rates in sport

To gain an insight into the local participation level of major participation sports in the Loddon Shire Council area, the AusPlay participation rates were applied to the current (2021) and 2041 population forecasts. State participation rates were used for sports where data was reported. National participation rates were used for sports where State participation rates were not available.

The table below summarises the outcomes of applying the adult and children AusPlay participation rates to the current (2021) and 2041 population forecasts for major participation sports played at Loddon Shire sport and active recreation reserves.

Please note that the following sports were not assessed because they are supported by 'regional' sports facilities in Bendigo and Kerang: cycling, athletics, basketball, volleyball, swimming, table tennis, badminton and soccer.

The following sports have regional centres in Bendigo but are included in the assessment because there is a local competition provided in Loddon Shire. These are Australian Rules football, cricket, netball, tennis and hockey. The regional sports facilities are profiled in the supply analysis chapter.

Table 10: Population Projections 2022-2042

Loddon Shire Council Population	Adult (15yr+)	Children (0-14yrs)	Total
2021	6,592 (85%)	1,159 (15%)	7,751
2041	6,926	1,218	8,144

The table below shows minimal participation growth by 2032 if the current participation rate is maintained for major participation sports models.

There is a potential for additional participants if new playing formats and competitions are introduced. Recent improvements at sport and recreation reserves have improved the capacity for these facilities to meet any future participation growth over the next 20 years if there is an upsurge in participants through these initiatives.

Table 11: Participation Projections 2021-2041

Sports	2022 Total Participation – Model Participation Rate	2041 Total Participation – Model Participation Rate
Outdoor Field Sports	689	724
Australian Football	393	413
Cricket	227	239
Hockey	68	72
Outdoor Court and Green Sports	1,080	1,135
Netball	289	303
Tennis	375	394
Bowls	79	83
Golf	337	354
Total	1,769	1,858

3.4 National and State Participation Trends

Since 2001, data has been collected on participation in exercise, recreation and sport by adults aged 15 years and over. Consistent data was collected via the Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) between 2001 and 2010. Similar data was collected by the ABS between 2011 and 2014. The **AusPlay Survey** was introduced by the Australian Sports Commission in 2015 and collects sports participation data for children aged 0-14 and adults aged 15 and over. The latest data was released in October 2022, with results for the 2021-22 financial year. Annually, about 20,000 interviews are conducted with adults aged 15 and over and about 3,500 interviews with parents/guardians of children under 15 years of age.

The AusPlay survey results are summarised in this section.

Key physical activity participation statistics from AusPlay show:

- Children (0-14 years) are getting back to regular participation, at least 1+ per week. 42% of children participated in organised out-of-school hours sport and physical activity in 2020-21 increasing to 47% in 2021-22. This shows participation levels in organised sport and physical activity is returning to pre-COVID pandemic levels.
- Mental health is a growing motivator of participation across all age groups and genders.

- Inactive adult Australians reporting that physical activity is not a priority has increased from 7% in 2020-21 to 11% in 2021-22.
- Adult participation in sport and physical activity remained at similar levels since 2016-17 to 2021-22:
 - 81% of adults participate at least 1+per week in 2021-22 compared to 80% in 2020-21 and 81% in 2016-17.
 - 41% of adults participate in sport-related activity at least 1+ per week in 2021-22 compared to 41% in 2020-21 and 42% in 2016-17.
 - 21% of adults participate through a sports club or association at least 1+ per week in 2021-22 compared to 21% in 2020-21 and 21% in 2016-17.
- Physical health and fitness remain the primary motivators for 83% of 15+ year olds and for all ages and abilities. A greater percentage of 15–19-year-olds recorded health and fitness as their motivation, the most significant increase (14%) of all age/ability groups from 62%-84% between 2016-17 and 2021-22.
- Nearly double the percentage of the population were motivated by mental health benefits over the same period, increasing by 15% from 16% to 31%. This trend occurred equally across all age/ability groups apart from the 55+ age group for whom the increase was 11%.
- Fun and enjoyment have continued to be the second most significant motivator for engagement in physical activity across all age and ability groups (46%), the increase being more significant in the 55+, LOTE (Language other than English) and disability cohorts. However, it continues to be the primary motivator for 70% of 15-19-year-olds, followed by fitness and health.
- Young people 15-19 (39%) are also more motivated by the social benefits compared to the general population (39%). Benefits associated with being in the outdoors is now significantly more important to females (23%) than males (17%) than in 2016-17 when it was important to 16% of females and 13% of males.
- Poor health or injury (27%), not enough time/too many other commitments (24%) and not a priority (11%) are major barriers to participation.
- Children’s participation (0-14 years) in sport and physical activity has increased in the last 12 months but is still below 2016-17 levels:
 - 47% of children participate in out-of-school hours sport and physical activity at least 1+per week in 2021-22 compared to 42% in 2020-21 and 62% in 2016-17.
 - 43% of children participate in out-of-school hours sport and physical activity at least 1+ per week in 2021-22 compared to 37% in 2020-21 and 57% in 2016-17.
 - 43% of children participate through a sports club or association at least 1+ per week in 2021-22 compared to 41% in 2020-21 and 46% in 2016-17.

The following figure shows the adult frequency of participation rates:

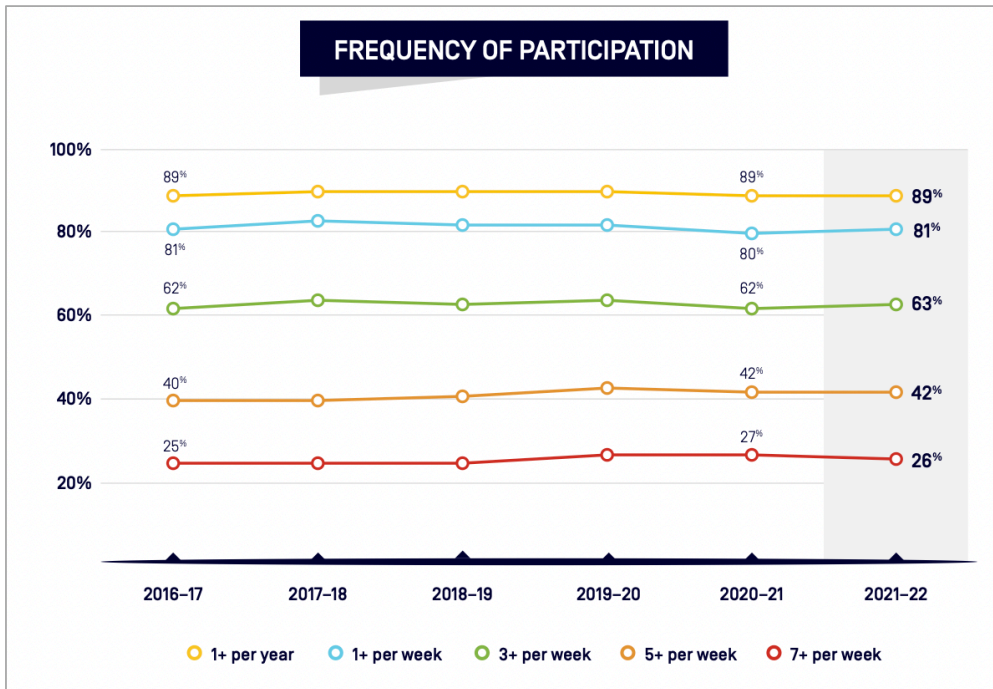


Figure 9: Adult Frequency of Participation 2016-17 to 2021-22

The figure below shows the children frequency of participation rates:

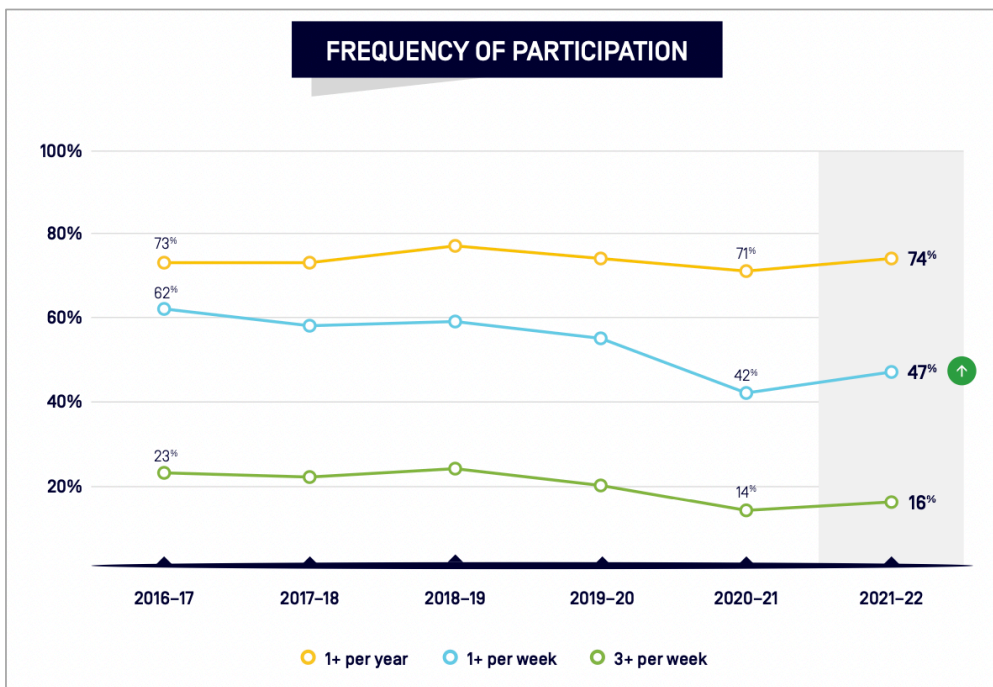


Figure 10: Children Frequency of Participation 2016-17 to 2021-22

Key organised sport participation statistics from AusPlay show:

- The top 15 club sports (organisation/venues used by activity) in Victoria for adults are shown in the table below. Golf, Australian Rules football, tennis, basketball and cricket are identified as the top five sports.
- The top 10 organised participation by activity in Victoria for children are shown in the table below. Swimming, basketball, gymnastics, Australian rules football and football are identified as the top five sports.
- Key sports played in Loddon Shire are identified in the top club sports and include golf, Australian Rules football, tennis, cricket, netball, bowls and hockey.

Table 12: Adult Club Sport Participation

Sport (Organisation/venues used by activity – club sports)	Participation rate
Golf	5.1%
Australian football	4.0%
Tennis	4.5%
Basketball	4.2%
Cricket	2.6%
Football/soccer	3.7%
Netball	3.2%
Bowls	1.2%
Athletics, track and field (includes jogging and running)	5.3%
Badminton	2.0%
Hockey	0.7%
Swimming	11.8%
Equestrian	0.7%
Volleyball (indoor and outdoor)	0.7%
Rugby union	0.4%

Table 13: Organised participation by activity

Sport (Organised participation by activity)	Participation rate
Swimming	40.3%
Basketball	13.7%
Gymnastics	13.5%
Australian football	11.2%
Football/soccer	9.3%
Tennis	6.8%
Netball	6.7%
Dancing (recreational)	6.2%
Cricket	4.8%
Athletics, track and field (includes jogging and running)	3.4%

Key swimming participation statistics from AusPlay show:

- Swimming is the organised activity of choice for a large proportion of Australian children aged 0-14 years, ahead of football and gymnastics.
- For children aged under 15 years, Victoria has the highest participation rate across the country at 36.8%.
- For adults (aged 15 +), the dominant reason to participate in swimming was physical health and fitness (51%) with fun/enjoyment also a key motivator at 34%.
- Swimming was also listed as one of the activities with the most gender equity amongst adults.
- The annual population estimate of Australian Adults (15+ years) participating in swimming was 2,984,880 or 14.8% of the adult population.
- Overall, females accounted for 56% of participants and males 44%.
- Swimming participation rates increased steadily from early adulthood to their peak in the 35 to 54-year age groups.
- Conversion to club participation was low with only 6% of participants a member of an organised swim club.
- An estimated 1.5 million children (under 15 years) participating in organised swimming out of school e.g. learn to swim or squad classes. This accounts for around one third of all Australian children.
- The peak participation rates for children in organised out of school swimming were five and eight years.
- Adult swimmers participated regularly with a median frequency of 48 sessions per annum for a duration of 45 minutes.
- The highest rating reasons for participating in swimming was 'physical health/fitness (51%) and 'fun/enjoyment (34%).'.
- The highest rating reasons for drop out were 'not enough time/too many commitments (19%) and poor health or injury (16%).'.

3.5 Demand Analysis Model

A facility demand model has been developed to inform the current and future field requirements to meet field sports participation demand in the short-term, medium term and long-term.

The Otium Analytics **Demand Analysis Model** determines the estimated participants, required hours of access, number of facilities, playing space and total space for activities, and by user sharing potential. The key inputs into the model include:

- Participation rates by activity
- Available facility capacity
- User access needs
- Typical field size and ancillary space required
- Demographic information
- Current supply.

The interactive model allows us to adjust individual aspects of the inputs to ensure the model is a true reflection of the local context, including adjustable inputs on:

- Participation rate in adults and children.
- Season length, users per field, access needs per week.
- Facilities lighting across the network.
- Field size and ancillary spaced needed.

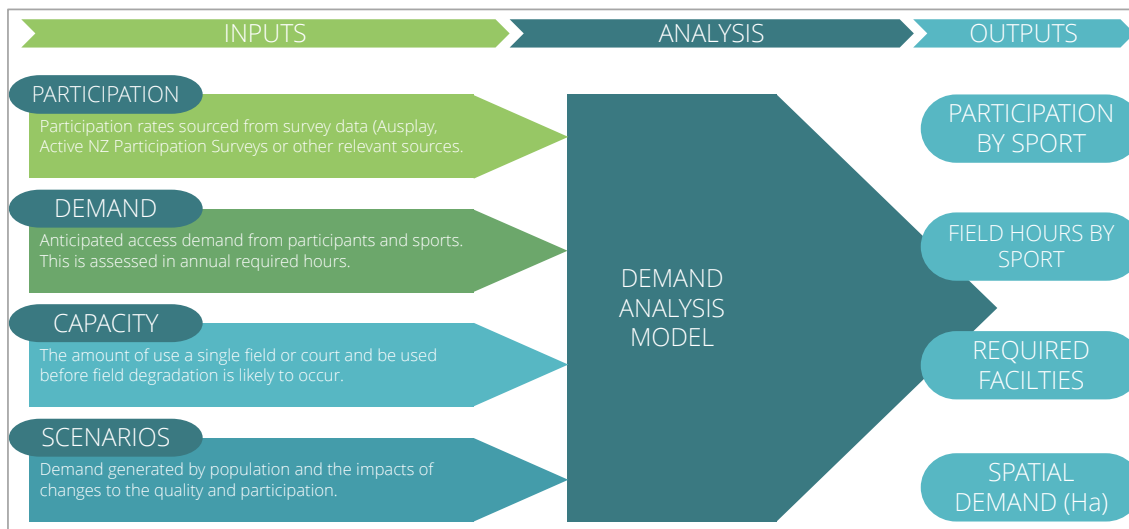


Figure 11: Diagram of the Otium Analytics Demand Analysis Model

The model considers the current field capacity, participation rates, and usage levels. Other factors such as the capacity of a field to accommodate playing numbers, the current distribution of clubs to fields, and opportunities for clubs to share need to be overlaid.

Demand Analysis Model Assumptions

The model applies full optimisation of all fields and courts for average field and court capacity, based on participation and usage assumptions. A field or court is only added if a field is fully optimised.

The following fields usage (training and competition) and capacity levels have been assessed and categorised as follows:

- **Level 1** – A grass sports field with no drainage or irrigation, winter grasses = approximately 15 to 20 hours per week.
- **Level 2** – A grass sports field with basic drainage, irrigation and winter grasses and lighting = approximately 20 to 25 hours per week.
- **Level 3** – A grass sports field with full drainage, irrigation and warm season grasses and lighting = approximately 25 to 30 hours per week.
- **Level 4** – A synthetic sports field with lighting = up to 54 hours per week.

The model is used as a guide to facility demand requirements. It has been applied to major field and court participation sports played in Loddon Shire, except golf.

Table 14: Model Assumptions

Category	Assumption												
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loddon Shire population will grow from 7,751 (2021) to approximately 8,144 by 2032. The proportion of people aged between 0-14 years (children) was 15% and for 15+ years (adults) was 85%. The population forecast shows that this proportion is the same in 2021 and 2032. 												
Sport Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation rates for major participation sports identified in the recent AusPlay Participation Survey 2021-22 for once-a-week organised sport participation. The table below shows the participation rate for each sport. 												
Field Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 2 natural grass field capacity has been used for Australian Rules football and hockey sports fields with a capacity of 25 hours of use per lit field and 15 hours of use per unlit field each week. Level 3 natural grass field capacity has been used for cricket sports fields with a capacity of 30 hours of use per lit field and 25 hours of use per unlit field each week. Outdoor tennis courts have a capacity of 40 hours of use per lit court and 15 hours of use per unlit court each week. Outdoor netball courts have a capacity of 40 hours of use per lit court and 15 hours of use per unlit court each week. 80% of sports fields in Loddon Shire are lit. 												
Utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The benchmark average training and competition hours each week and participant numbers per field has been informed by State Sporting Associations. <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Rules football </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 5 hours per week and 40 participants per oval Child – 3 hours per week and 60 participants per oval Seasonal – Winter (6 months) </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cricket </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 7 hours per week and 24 participants per oval Child – 4 hours per week and 24 participants per oval Seasonal – Summer (6 months) </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hockey </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 3 hours per week and 24 participants per field Child – 2 hours per week and 24 participants per field Seasonal – Winter (6 months) </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Netball </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 3 hours per week and 18 participants per court Child – 2 hours per week and 18 participants per court Seasonal – Winter (6 months) </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tennis </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 2 hours per week and 4 participants per court Child – 1 hours per week and 8 participants per court All Year </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bowls </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 3 hours per week and 32 participants per green Child – 1 hours per week and 32 participants per green All Year </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Rules football 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 5 hours per week and 40 participants per oval Child – 3 hours per week and 60 participants per oval Seasonal – Winter (6 months) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cricket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 7 hours per week and 24 participants per oval Child – 4 hours per week and 24 participants per oval Seasonal – Summer (6 months) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hockey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 3 hours per week and 24 participants per field Child – 2 hours per week and 24 participants per field Seasonal – Winter (6 months) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Netball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 3 hours per week and 18 participants per court Child – 2 hours per week and 18 participants per court Seasonal – Winter (6 months) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tennis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 2 hours per week and 4 participants per court Child – 1 hours per week and 8 participants per court All Year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bowls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 3 hours per week and 32 participants per green Child – 1 hours per week and 32 participants per green All Year
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bowls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult – 3 hours per week and 32 participants per green Child – 1 hours per week and 32 participants per green All Year 												

Table 15: Model Sport Participation Rates

Sport	Model Adult Participation Rates	Model Children Participation Rates
Outdoor Field Sports		
Australian Football	4.00%	11.20%
Cricket	2.60%	4.80%
Hockey	0.70%	1.90%
Outdoor Sports Courts and Greens		
Netball	3.20%	6.70%
Tennis	4.50%	6.80%
Bowls	1.20%	0.01%

Demand Analysis Model – Facility Requirement Modelling

For each sport, the model shows a current and future demand for access to the number of playing fields, courts and greens.

The model found no demand for additional outdoor sports fields or outdoor sports courts and greens in Loddon Shire.

Table 16: Facility Requirements for Major Sports

Sport	Current Field Access	Current Field Access Requirement for Participation Demand (2021)	Surplus / Deficit of Field Access	Future Field Access Requirements for Participation Demand (2032)	Surplus /Deficit of Field Access
Outdoor Sports Fields					
Australian Rules Football	10 fields	2 fields	+8 field	2 fields	+8 field
Cricket	9 fields	3 fields	+6 fields	3 fields	+6 fields
Hockey **	2 fields	1 field	+1 field	1 field	+1 field
Outdoor Sports Courts and Greens					
Netball	19.5 courts	2 courts	+17.5 courts	2 courts	+17.5 courts
Tennis **	80 courts (70 lawn and 10 synthetic)	5 courts (synthetic)	+75 courts	5 courts	+75 courts
Bowls	11.5 rinks	1 rink	+10.5 rinks	1 rink	+10.5 rinks

* All fields are full-size equivalent. The field requirement does **not** mean new fields are needed. It means the sport will require access to this number of fields to meet participation demand. This could be achieved through shared fields with other sports.

** Loddon Shire is serviced by regional facilities with multiple sports fields, courts and greens in Bendigo for these sports.

The modelling indicates an oversupply of outdoor sports fields and outdoor sports courts and greens in Loddon Shire. However, overlaying with local factors impacting a field’s use is important particularly the distance between rural townships. These include:

- **Importantly**, distribution and accessibility of fields. This is a particular factor impacting Loddon Shire that is rural in nature and townships are dispersed (in most cases over 20 minutes from the nearby township) making it difficult to share fields.
- Capacity of the field to accommodate the number of players for training and competition.
- Quality and condition of fields.
- Practicality of clubs sharing.
- Participation numbers within clubs changing from year to year.
- Programming of sports competitions.
- Inequitable participation distribution and other users (i.e., community and school use).
- Lack of validated data on how many hours each team plays and trains for.
- Location of facilities that have a wider catchment beyond a municipal boundary.

The modelling shows the key focus of this Strategy is on **activating sport and active recreation facilities (excluding aquatic and indoor stadiums)** rather than needing to improve the capacity of existing facilities or build new facilities.

3.6 Key Findings of Demand Assessment

The Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy should be inclusive, accessible, and tailored to the specific needs of the population. It should prioritise programs and facilities that promote physical health and mental wellbeing, address socioeconomic disparities, and promote cultural diversity and sensitivity.

Providing sport and active recreation, diverse open spaces and access to aquatic facilities and services opportunities is important to maintaining vibrant rural townships

The current Loddon Shire population of 7,759 (ABS Census 2021) has grown over the last 10 years, and by 243 people since 2016 (7,516). The population is projected to grow by an average 0.5% annually to 8,144 by 2032. The townships identified for population growth in the Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan are Bridgewater and Inglewood.

The population is distributed across many rural townships that support a strong agricultural/farming industry. Providing services like sport and recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services and in local townships that support farming communities is an important social and economic driver.

Sport and active recreation in the Loddon Shire are considered the “heartbeat” of these rural communities and important for participation, community gathering, capacity building and economic development. Maintaining this benefit is important for rural living and the success of our townships. There is a history of migration of people to small townships to support local sports clubs.

Accessible, social and therapy participation opportunities will be important to meet the needs of an ageing Loddon community

The median age of the Loddon Shire is 52 years, indicating a predominantly older population. To address the unique needs and interests of older residents, a sport, recreation, and aquatic strategy should prioritise programs and facilities that focus on social engagement, fitness, and therapeutic activities.

Serpentine, Eddington, and Pyramid Hill have relatively younger populations. The Strategy should consider diverse offerings to engage residents of all age groups in these areas.

Intergenerational play and universally accessible spaces and places will be important design features of future open spaces.

Culturally sensitive participation opportunities will encourage Loddon Shire’s Aboriginal and CALD community

The presence of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and diverse overseas-born populations in townships like Boort and Pyramid Hill, highlights the need for an inclusive and culturally sensitive strategy. Tailored programs, cultural competency, and accessibility for all residents, regardless of their cultural background, should be prioritised.

Affordable participation opportunities are important to encourage Loddon Shire to lead healthy and active lifestyles

The low median income and SEIFA Index of Disadvantage emphasise the need for an inclusive and affordable strategy. Prioritising affordability, community outreach, and programs addressing specific challenges faced by disadvantaged populations is crucial to promote wellbeing and reduce barriers to participation.

Loddon Shire is facing a health crisis – We need creative ways to reverse this trend

The high rates of dental health problems, smoking, and pre-obesity/obesity underline the importance of a strategy focusing on physical and mental wellbeing. Such a strategy can offer preventive and rehabilitative measures, reduce healthcare costs, and improve overall health.

The impact of two flooding events and the COVID-19 pandemic has seen a decline in participation and an impact on social connectedness, physical health and mental wellbeing as residents endured isolation from family, friends and community. Addressing these concerns and exploring ways to encourage a return to participation in sport and active recreation will be important to improving levels of community health and wellbeing in Loddon Shire's rural communities.

Time constraints, poor health or disability, and cost are identified as common barriers to meeting daily physical activity guidelines. The Strategy should address these barriers and provide solutions to make physical activity more accessible.

To address this challenge, we need to adapt and design sport and active recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services for the Loddon Shire communities in a way that responds to participation trends, leisure patterns and community expectations.

Traditional competition sport is in decline and Loddon Shire residents now seek diverse active recreation activities and flexible playing formats

Key organised sports played in Loddon Shire include Australian Rules football, netball, cricket, hockey, tennis and lawn bowls. These sports are often played at a centralised sports precinct within each township. Providing fit for purpose venues that meet universal design, female friendly and industry sport standards will be important to maintain participation.

Sports clubs have been struggling to attract participants in Loddon Shire. A further two clubs (bowls clubs) have disbanded in the last 12 months. Junior teams are struggling with participation and volunteerism is in decline. The same volunteers are running sports clubs. Further exacerbating this issue is the flood impact that has impacted local contributions and resulting in volunteer fatigue. Loddon Shire sporting clubs rely on strong family connections. Distance and cost are a challenge. Leagues are getting larger, and people are having to travel further.

In general, competition structures still operate a traditional format of play. New modified formats are only being offered in Loddon Shire if a club volunteer drives the change i.e. tennis competition still operates an eight game Saturday competition, and cricket is a one-day competition. Engagement with Local and State Sporting Associations is important for the project. Exploring how we create flexible structures to support clubs is a key investigation with Local Sporting Associations. Also, defining the roles of Local Government, State Sport Association, Local Sport Association, Regional Sports Association will be an important outcome of the project. We must recognise the State Sporting Association resourcing is a challenge and are State Sporting Association programs fit for purpose for country clubs. What is sustainable product in country Victoria?

Recent consultation by Sports Focus with young people has shown they seek places to play that include active recreation and social play space opportunities. There needs to be a focus on active recreation and structured sport.

The recent Active Living Census survey shows the importance of active recreation in Loddon Shire with over 80% of residents utilising open spaces weekly with walking, play, and swimming being amongst the most popular types of active recreation in Loddon (Healthy Heart of Victoria, 2020). Providing diverse open spaces for social recreation, play and trail-based activities will be important ingredients in the network of places and spaces in Loddon Shire townships.

There is no demand for additional outdoor sports fields or outdoor sports courts and greens in Loddon Shire.

Total current participation across major sports played in Loddon Shire is 1,769 players in 2021, which will grow marginally to 1,858 players by 2032. This will only be achieved if new sport formats are introduced in Loddon Shire.

Using the AusPlay 2021 Participation Survey, the current participation for outdoor field sports played in Loddon Shire (Australian Rules football, cricket and hockey) is 689 players. The current participation for outdoor sports courts and greens played in Loddon Shire (netball, tennis, bowls and golf) is 1,080. If a 0.5% population growth rate is used and current participation rates maintained, participation in outdoor field sports will grow to 724 players whilst participation in outdoor court and green sports will grow to 1,135.

The modelling indicates an oversupply of outdoor sports fields and outdoor sports courts and greens in Loddon Shire. However, overlaying with local factors impacting a field's use is important particularly the distance between rural townships.

The modelling shows the key focus of this Strategy is on **activating sport and active recreation facilities** rather than needing to improve the capacity of existing facilities or build new facilities.

4. Trends Analysis

What participation and facility trends will influence the development and management of recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities?

This section reviews participation and facility trends and how they will influence the programming and facility requirements of recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire Council.

4.1 General Participation Trends

Factors affecting participation and facility provision

Otium research has identified a range of general participation trends that are likely to impact on local communities in the future. These are:

- **A gradual ageing of the population.** As life expectancy increases, birth rates stay low and the “baby boomers” of the 1950s and 1960s grow older. The percentage of population of 5 to 14-year-olds will continue to decrease with the greatest growth in the 55+ age group. This will create a demand for programs and services that go beyond a focus on junior and adult participation.
- **Flexibility in the times when people recreate.** As demands on people’s time increases and work practices change, people are seeking to take their sport and recreation at different times, over a broad spread of hours and at facilities that offer a lot of activities in one place.
- **Increased variety in sport and recreation options.** People’s sport and recreation options are changing towards newer, more varied activities offered over a greater range of timeframes compared to previous decades where limited variety in activities and scheduling occurred. This has supported the trend to more multi-use facilities to attract a broader range of users, multiple programs to meet different needs at the one facility, and different playing formats that support junior and social sport.
- **Constraints to sport and recreation participation.** Lack of time, lack of facilities nearby, family and work constraints, health problems and cost of service or use of facilities are the main constraints to many people’s sport and recreation participation. The development of new playing formats for junior and social sport, new competitions for girls and women, targeting specific markets of users through tailored programs and services has assisted in reducing some of these participation constraints.
- **Changing employment structures, trading and work hours.** These trends often make participation in traditional sport and recreation activities difficult and therefore people are looking for facilities that are open longer hours and have a lot of activity options at the one site. This makes opportunities such as indoor sports courts attractive as their long opening hours and days open per year means usage can be made in a wide range of social, training, competition and educational settings.
- **Different people want different activities.** The different population characteristics sees the need for facilities to offer potential users a much more varied range of programs and services than previously offered. Year round available indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities is an example where a greater diversity of activities can be provided throughout the different seasons and limiting the impact of poor weather.
- **Provision of high standards and quality of facilities and services.** People are more and more looking for high standard, high quality facilities and services to meet their sport and recreation needs. This has also seen the trend for indoor facilities becoming very popular as they allow activity in safe and secure spaces in all weather and environmental conditions. This leads to

indicating that building low standard, low-cost facilities will not attract the maximum user market. The development by several peak sporting bodies of sport specific facility standards and guidelines has also placed pressure on facility providers to meet higher standards of provision.

- **Desire for activities to be affordable.** The development of multi-purpose recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities has enabled the high operating cost activities to be cross subsidised by more profitable activity areas such as health and fitness, food and beverage and entertainment areas. This has enabled many facilities to keep general entry fees low to encourage use whilst seeking users who want special services to contribute at a greater level to the cost of such activities. In general, there is a greater reliance on locally accessed and lower cost opportunities by those without the resources to travel and pay for more expensive activities.
- **Recognition of strong links between physical activity and health.** Preventative health care and active lifestyles are very important to many people. There is increased recognition of the strong links between involvement in recreational activity and good health, and the development of appropriate activities and services which support this.
- **Expectations of equity and access.** Today's society expects all people to have equitable access to public facilities. There is a particular demand to provide sports facilities for the growing female participation across all sports. There are a growing number of competitions and programs for people all abilities to participate. This means we need to improve the design of our recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and ensure we provide accessible facilities.
- **Sustainable development.** In addition to the trends above, there are specific trends relating to the design and operations of recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities that responds to more sustainable and eco-friendlier practices.

All recreation facility, open space and aquatic facility providers are operating in an environment of change. Providers will need to respond to the following challenges:

- **Consumer expectations.** As a result of consumers being exposed to high quality programs, events and services through the media and other leisure industry providers they are expecting more and more from their programs. This includes quality of facilities, support amenity, player and spectator comfort, quality of service, coaching and expecting the service to be provided when they want it. However, this has meant that significantly less program space can be achieved per investment dollar.
- **Competition for participants.** All of Australia's sporting codes have recognised the need to recruit young players into their sport at an early age. Many of the sports face competition from large, well-funded junior programs and high-profile sports as well as other forms of entertainment competing for the time and interest of young people. A key challenge for many sports and recreational activities is the retention of those recruits beyond their early to mid-teen years.
- **Reliance on external revenues.** Participants provide a large proportion of funding for most activities, programs and services. Competition is intense for funding, sponsorship, users and members. Providers will need to clearly differentiate and market products and benefits to seek to access other revenue streams. This is particularly important in the development and upgrade of facilities and equipment.
- **Funding challenge.** Developing new and maintaining existing facilities and services is a major challenge for Local Government and the industry. The future may require providers to partner in multi-activity developments either in local government or commercially built complexes.
- **Well-trained personnel:** Volunteers predominantly service most sport and recreation clubs together with supporting aquatic facility operations in local communities. Recruiting and retaining paid staff and volunteers are critical to operations. In an increasingly regulated world, volunteers need and demand access to training and education in a flexible delivery model that responds to

their busy lives. Coaches, officials and administrators must be supported to ensure the delivery of quality programs and competitions. Supporting and recognising volunteers is a task not to be underestimated.

4.2 Sport Participation Trends

Peak sporting bodies are using Sport Australia’s megatrends research - **The Future of Australian Sport**, conducted by CSIRO in 2013 and again in 2022, together with their participation data (existing and potential markets), to design new participation programs to attract a broader audience or improve the retention rates of players.

The 2022 megatrends are patterns of social, economic, or environmental change that will shape the Australian sports sector over the next decade and beyond.

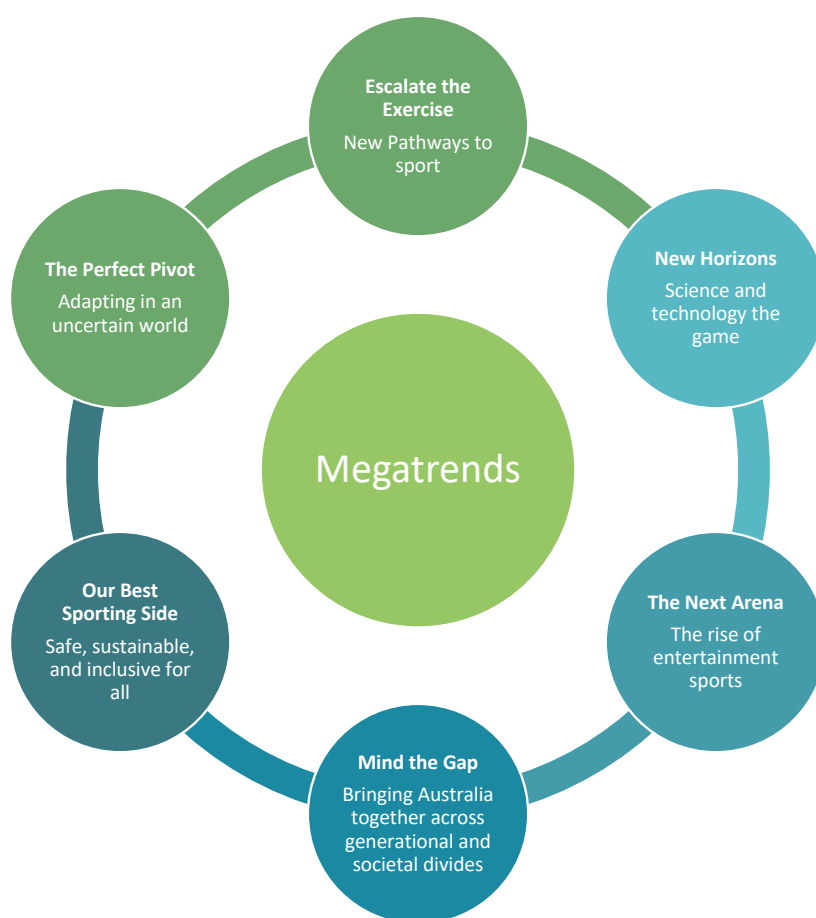


Figure 12: Sport Megatrends (Source: Sports Australia, 2023)

These 2022 megatrends are described in detail in the next section with supporting case study examples about how sports are responding to these trends.

Escalate the Exercise - New pathways to sport

Organised sports across Australia bring communities together and provide a platform where volunteers, players, sponsors, local businesses and organisers can form relationships on and beyond the sporting fields.

This is particularly apparent in regional and rural communities where sporting competitions build deep social connections and create a meeting place for people who live across larger distances.

Participation in organised sports across Australia has remained relatively steady over the past decade, but there has been a rise in participation in non-organised physical activities such as walking, running, cycling and gym-based fitness. This trend was further boosted by the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing, periods of home isolation, and the subsequent increase in adoption of home-based gym equipment, fitness apps, and wearable technologies. Much of the increase in fitness-based activity has been through non-formal or semi-formalised participation in fitness centres, home gyms, exercise groups, online communities, and individuals accessing outdoor recreational infrastructure and green space within their communities.

The increase in convenient and ad-hoc exercise by a proportion of the population hasn't generally translated to involvement in more formalised sports competitions and leagues. The rise of fitness-based activities presents new opportunities for sports organisers who can bring the game to the people, increase inclusion, promote the social benefits of playing together and utilise new technologies to increase convenience.

Barriers to participation in formalised sports remain significant for some groups, including older populations, people from regional and remote areas, First Nations peoples, low socio-economic individuals, LGBTIQ+ people, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and people with disability. These groups may benefit from specialised or modified sporting services and competitions. Overall, the pathways into organised sport are changing and diversifying.

Social Sport, a Melbourne-based organisation established in 2007, aims to 'take the hassle out of playing sport'. It started as a weekly social futsal game among friends in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. In 2022 Social Sport had grown to run competitions for over 10,000 players of all ages and abilities in four different sporting codes.

New horizons - Science and technology changing the game

Australia has long been seen as a global leader in sport. Despite having a population of just over 26 million, Australia has been in the top ten on the medal tally of Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games since Sydney 2000, and in many games before then.

Our global reputation in this sector can be linked to several factors including support for sport at all levels from Australian governments, and a strong high-performance system led by the Australian Institute of Sport [AIS].

Over the next decade the world will look to Australia as we approach the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Much of the success of Australian high-performance sports teams to date can be attributed to advances in sports science and medicine, coaching, organisation, and ongoing investment in the potential of Australia's elite athletes.

New technologies and advances in areas of technical expertise that support the enhancement of performance (including but not limited to human physiology, nutrition, psychology, genetics, engineering and materials science) are now changing the game in sports. A better understanding of the individual and biological diversity of athletes is leading to an individualised approach to performance support across a range of technical direction disciplines, from coaching to sports medicine and training. Training programs tailored to the individual, resulting from the work of multi-disciplinary teams, can optimise sports performance, assist with injury prevention, enhance physical and mental recovery, and maximise the wellbeing and long-term psychological benefits of sport. The adoption of new and emerging technologies

will support this individualised approach but comes with issues to be negotiated around ethical implementation and privacy protections.

The global sport technology and innovation market continues to see significant growth. Australia will host a significant number of international sporting events over the next decade, and this will provide our science, technology, health, education and manufacturing sectors with an opportunity to invest in sport innovation and showcase and export their know-how and products to the world.

CSIRO is currently working on creating a human digital twin. A digital twin is a virtual or digital representation of a physical object or being. The human digital twin project uses readily available cameras on mobiles, iPads, webcams and computers to capture the movements of a human body and creates an overlay of biomechanical modelling of bones and muscles. By combining deep-learning algorithms with knowledge of a person's musculoskeletal mechanics, the human digital twin could identify movements that present a risk of injury. The digital twin can be used to devise modifications to these movements aimed at increased efficiency and decreased injury risk. Over time a human digital twin will likely have additional information on blood flow, digestion, and respiration and be able to provide comprehensive real-time analysis of athletic physiological performance during training and competition.

The next arena - The rise of entertainment sports

Australians consume sport across a range of markets and platforms. Many Australians love to be entertained by sport, whether this is attending a live event or listening to or watching sport through the various broadcast and online options available.

Over-the-top (OTT) video-streaming platforms, with the ability to deliver sports content to many Internet-enabled devices, are increasingly challenging traditional sports broadcasting business models on satellite, cable, free-to-air (FTA) television and radio, creating new audiences and connecting viewers globally.

Some sporting organisations – particularly the major codes in Australia – generate significant revenue streams through broadcast rights deals, major events, merchandising, sponsorship activities, endorsements and branding.

Digital sport and e-sports are becoming increasingly popular, offering access to new activities in virtual environments. Some of these digital sport variants more recently supplemented or provided redundancy for cancelled real-world sporting events during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, urban and adventure sports are engaging the next generation of sports fans as they become more visible and available to mainstream audiences.

Over the coming decade we will see more sporting organisations and products compete for a share of national and global audiences. As a result, both established sporting codes and sports new to these markets will consider how to engage contemporary consumers and adjust their view of spectators to take advantage of the increasingly dynamic and diverse global media landscape.

Sports, including BMX, skateboarding, sport climbing and snowboard half-pipe, have become increasingly mainstream and part of the Olympic Games program. These sports may no longer be considered extreme, but the lifestyle elements are especially important to many participants, and the degree of organisation is still developing.

Mind the gap - Bringing Australia together across generational and societal divides

Sports organisations can champion positive change across society. They do this by emphasising sporting values of fair play, egalitarianism, inclusivity, and teamwork.

By showcasing these values and creating a meritocracy based on commitment, fitness and skills development, sports offer a source of inspiration, create shared experiences, and build pride.

Sport can bridge the cultural and demographic gaps existing and emerging across Australian society. Australia's population overall is ageing increasingly diverse. In 2022, nearly a third of Australians are born overseas, 3.2% are members of First Nations groups, 17% live with disability, and just over half of the population are women. Young Australians are growing up with new technologies and global connections, creating distinctly different behaviours and values.

Over the coming decades, sports organisations and individual athletes will play a unique role in broader societal change and help bridge the gaps between demographic groups. Sport will provide a sense of common purpose, identity and belonging to Australians from many different backgrounds and abilities.

In 2015, the Australian Women's Football Team (the Matildas) went on strike for equal pay from the Football Federation Australia and in November 2019, a ground-breaking equal pay agreement was announced. This has now become part of a global movement to eliminate gender discrimination in pay in elite team sport. Equal pay deals for women's football teams in England, Brazil, Norway and New Zealand have now been announced. Groups such as 'Women Sport Australia' and 'Male Champions of Change: Sport' are actively mapping pathways for gender pay equality across all major sporting codes in Australia.

Our best sporting side - Safe, sustainable, and inclusive for all

As Australia's demographic profile becomes more diverse and social values shift, organised sports in Australia will also transform and reflect these changes.

Persistent societal challenges such as racism, violence, abuse and other poor behaviours in sport have elevated the importance of sports integrity, safety and ethics in the sports industry at all levels. Stronger accountability, reporting structures and advocacy for vulnerable Australians will place further pressures on sports to provide a safe and welcoming place for all.

Community-driven sports clubs will increasingly seek to tap into the benefits of engaging a broader cross-section of Australian society. Many will place more emphasis on providing positive participant experiences and promoting inclusive behaviours on- and off-field. Growth in competing markets and competition for new participants will also provide further impetus for sporting organisations and clubs to implement positive change.

In the coming decades sports organisations will be faced with even stronger social licence obligations and will seek well-informed practices to encourage diversity, inclusivity and fair-play and offer athletes more choice, advocacy and individual expression.

Since the first 'Green' Olympic and Paralympic Games in Lillehammer (1994), sporting events have been seeking to minimise their environmental impact, including waste and carbon emissions, sustainable sourcing of construction materials, and understanding potential impacts of facilities and events on biodiversity. Some research has ranked the sustainability of previous Olympic and Paralympic Games as 'medium' and shown that its sustainability rating has declined over time. For example, between 1992 and 2020 the most sustainable Games were in Salt Lake City in 2002, while the least sustainable were Sochi 2014 and Rio de Janeiro 2016. The Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games are now expected to have sustainability and human rights strategies and outcomes as part of their planning and legacy.

The perfect pivot - Adapting in an uncertain world.

The world is entering historically uncertain times. Climate change is increasing seasonal temperatures and the frequency of extreme weather events. Heightened geopolitical tensions have given rise to more wars

along with the threat of further military conflicts globally, trade sanctions, and threats and acts of terrorism.

Pandemics, like the COVID-19 pandemic, have increased in likelihood – with a 47% to 57% chance of a second pandemic of the same magnitude occurring in the next 25 years.

These factors have all disrupted scheduled sporting activities over recent years and this disruption is likely to continue and increase in frequency over the coming decades. This uncertainty will affect all sports, including event planning, infrastructure design and the types of sports that can be played in certain seasons. It will increase the need for some sports and their associated business models to make strategic 'pivots' or rapidly deploy alternative approaches and resources, move venues and competitions at short notice, or respond to other unexpected challenges when required.

This megatrend is far broader than just sport but has relevance to a sector with multiple points of exposure to geopolitical, extreme climate and pandemic-related risks. Australian sporting organisations will need to be flexible and ingenious over the coming decades.

Military conflicts, threats and acts of terrorism, pandemics, and climate change, including increasing temperatures and extreme weather events, have disrupted scheduled sporting activities over the previous decade. For example, following the conflicts in Russia, Formula 1 has decided not to partner with the Russian promoter for any future races.

4.3 Open Space Trends

Changes in how we value open spaces

We value our parks and open spaces more. We expect to have bikeways and walking tracks available in our neighbourhoods, and we are increasingly getting out and using the path and park networks for exercise and activity.

We have also increased our expectations for the quality of development in our parks and open spaces:

- **Increased participation in walking**, combined with rising participation in cycling and running in parks and natural areas means that the demand for pathway networks within open space is probably the largest emerging infrastructure need.
- Research has shown the importance of a **supportive environment** to encouraging participation. This means parks and shaded pathways, natural landscape settings, a sense of safety and good access to public open space increases participation.
- Many local governments are facing **increasing financial constraints** to funding of infrastructure and future maintenance. Planning and finance controls such as contributions caps and borrowing restraints have meant that funding parks and recreation facilities is increasingly difficult. A key challenge is to deliver open space and recreation infrastructure in a timely manner as demand emerges.
- Community **expectations are increasing** as to the quality of parks and sporting areas and the level of access to these. There is increasing awareness of "high quality" destination parks with regional scale play and active recreation elements.
- The rise of **exercise and fitness as recreation** has meant that public parks have become the new venues for formal and informal group fitness and social exercise. This is increasing pressure on local parks as well as increasing demand for shade and water as key elements.
- The **infiltration of technology throughout our lives** means we have unlimited access to knowledge, information and engagement and expect instantaneous communication. There is

potential for increased digitisation of public spaces through virtual and augmented play experiences and use of “smart” features, such as smart lights which can double as a Wi-Fi node, smart benches with solar powered USB charging docs and interactive kiosks that provide information on weather and local news.

- Increased value on the importance of our **environment and sustainability** will drive incorporation of sustainable design into parks and play spaces and creation of green spaces and corridors that mitigate urban heat island effects.
- There is an increasing desire to **exercise with our pets** which will lead to increasing demand for dog-friendly parks, particularly in urban areas.

4.4 Aquatic Facility Trends

Changes in how we use aquatic and leisure facilities

There has been a much greater emphasis in the development of a variety of water spaces within public aquatic centres including:

- Program pools designed for learn to swim and a variety of aquatics programs.
- Warm water pools which are used for rehabilitation and therapy, one of the highest use spaces within public aquatic and leisure centres.
- Water play including large, enclosed slides, water jets and other leisure play opportunities.

Health and fitness programming have also advanced with a greater emphasis on programs for older adults as well as a much broader range of opportunities including Pilates, Yoga and Boot Camp.

Components that contribute to successful contemporary aquatic and leisure facilities are summarised in the figure below.

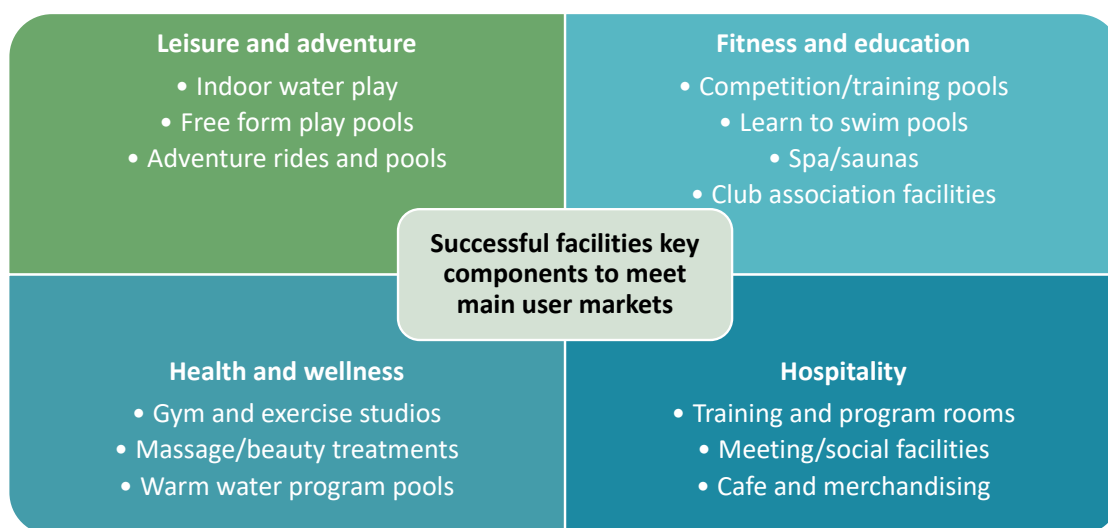


Figure 13: Successful Aquatic and Leisure Facility Model

Detailed planning and comprehensive feasibility studies show targeted user profiles with the majority of aquatic facility market research indicating complexes must equally cater for four distinct aquatic user markets, summarised in the figure below.

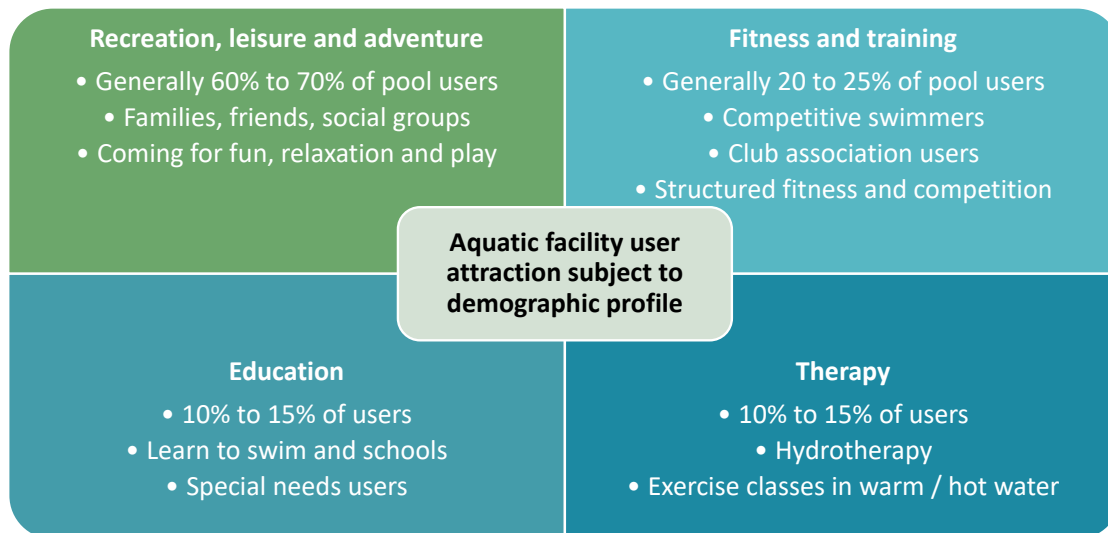


Figure 14: Main Aquatic and Leisure Facility User Markets

What makes a successful aquatic and leisure centre?

The most successful facilities attract all user markets, draw users from a large catchment and should be set up to allow people to participate in a range of activities at the one site.

Successful future facility trends indicated several common success factors:

- **One stop shop:** Large range of activity areas at the one site to maximise use/help share the costs.
- **Reduce operating losses:** Need a mix of community and commercial activities at the one site, however the location needs to be right to make this viable.
- **Programmable spaces:** Need to offer programs and memberships to keep users coming back.
- **Cater for all ages and interests:** Need to develop facilities for broad range of people.
- **Community/social hub:** Needed to offer quality food, beverage, social and entertainment spaces. This could also provide a range of other services like community and cultural services, health and allied services and/or commercial precincts.

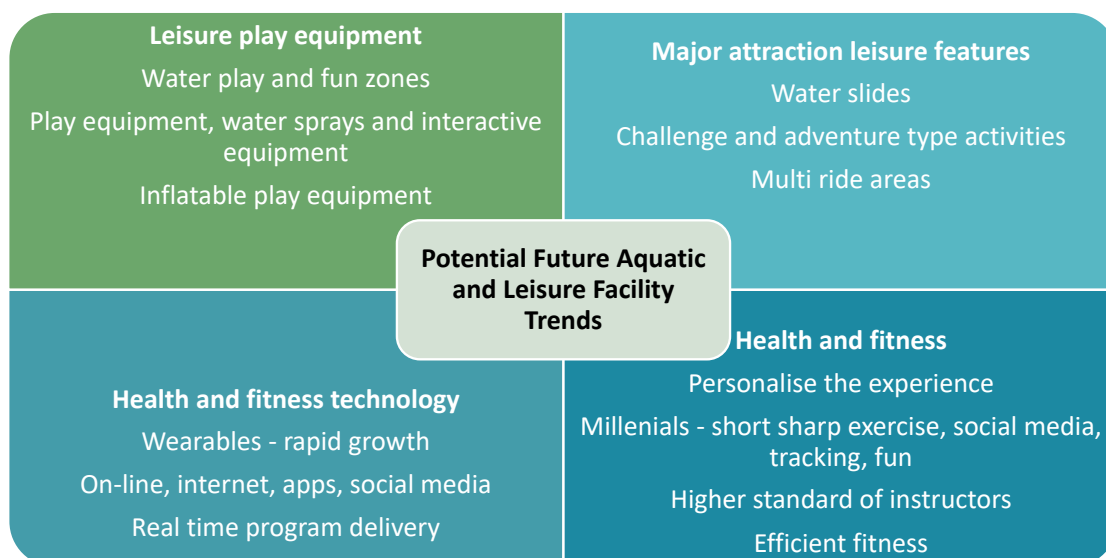


Figure 15: Potential Future Aquatic and Leisure Facility Trends

Residents do not necessarily access services within their local government area

Service catchment mapping shows that the use of services can be seen to be linked to travel to work patterns, where children attend schools, travel times and direct road/public transport link as well as types of experiences being sought. The aquatic service in Loddon Shire would primarily service a local catchment with major aquatic centres in Bendigo, Kerang and Echuca, providing for some school and swim club carnivals and aquatic programs like learn to swim and aqua aerobics.

Aquatic, fitness and leisure services and experiences are offered by a range of providers

Providers include:

- State Government, through accessible natural waterway sites.
- Local government through major aquatic, fitness and leisure centres.
- Range of private business providers, including swim schools, fitness centres and personal trainers.
- Community groups taking on the management of outdoor pools.

Private businesses continue to successfully operate in the ‘learn to swim’ and health and fitness market with an increased growth in this type of facility in many communities. Some of these pools are also offering aquatic program opportunities such as aqua aerobics. These pool facilities tend to be 15m to 20m indoor heated pools. Privately operated health and fitness facilities include 24/7 budget gyms as well as group fitness gyms offering cross fit, Pilates and yoga classes, personal training and women only gyms.

Golden Square Outdoor Pool in the City of Greater Bendigo is an example of a community group successfully managing an outdoor pool. They have designed a service that complements the aquatic and leisure centre programs at Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre, Faith Leech Aquatic Centre and Peter Krenz Leisure Centre. They have over 50 volunteers who support the operations of the pool and host programs and events including a swim safe program for those disadvantaged in the community, a pool fit bootcamp, yoga and Zumba classes and a full events calendar that includes a live beats music concert series and a range of community partnerships that deliver targeted community programs.

Growth of water play

There has been a growth in the development of water play parks in Victoria.

The Seville Water Play in Yarra Ranges Council was one of the first outdoor water play spaces. It includes sprays and water flow within the footprint of the 25m pool retaining the pool walls as seating areas. It also includes boulders for scrambling over and a dry nature-based playspace creating a community destination for not only the summertime but year-round. Seville Water Play has been very successful with 200 people regularly visiting daily in the summer holiday period. The facility has received awards and featured as a best practice facility in many news and Australian Leisure journal articles.

Yarra Ranges Council has since opened the Warburton Water World that has attracted 500 people visiting daily. This water play park is located next to a caravan park and includes a community event space. They have also included a splash pad in the regional Lillydale Lake playspace that has also been very popular.



Figure 16: Seville Water Play and Warburton Water World (Source: Yarra Ranges Council)

The success of these water play parks has encouraged other municipalities to invest in water play parks including in Swan Hill, Shepparton, Bendigo and Ballarat. Local, State and Federal Government funding has been provided to these developments together with introducing water play in play spaces for learning and development of children. This has been possible through Local Government's acceptance of maintenance requirements and costs e.g. Hadfield Park (Splash Pad) in Mitchell Shire Council and Creswick Skate and Splash Park.

There is an opportunity to reimagine leisure, adventure and water play for children and young people at Loddon Shire aquatic facilities. An example to learn from could be the Darling Quarter at Sydney Harbour that has water damping and sprays with social 'beach style' seating options.



Figure 17: Darling Quarter Water Play Park (Source: Darling Harbour)

Natural water swimming areas

Natural water swimming areas offer a swimming and water play experience in nature, providing significant health and wellbeing benefits to people. The Loddon River swimming hole in Bridgewater is considered a unique place that attracts local communities and visitors to the region.

The future Loddon Shire aquatic service should complement the local natural swimming areas and offer a safe regulated place for people to learn to swim.



Figure 18: Bridgewater Swimming Hole (Source: Visit Loddon Valley)

Innovative ways of activating aquatic centres

There is a recognition that the old 1950’s pools don’t embrace all key markets and there is an opportunity to explore different ideas. Water play parks are one idea, however an exploration of a range of ideas to diversify the experiences for young and old will create a new concept of aquatic centre as a community destination. Ideas could include places for fun and adventure, fitness, for socialising and eating. They could be commercialised or community spaces.

Activation ideas:

- Blacktown City Council hosts a family fish-in day at the Mount Druitt Swimming Centre in the wintertime when the seasonal pool is closed.
- Solo rock climbing that relies upon the presence of water at the base of a climb. The image below is of the U.S. National Whitewater Centre.
- Spaces for young people. These include multisport activity spaces or beach volleyball court.
- Spaces for women and girls. These include places to hang, jump and cartwheel, socialise and role play.
- Café with lunch style social seating areas.
- Spaces for seniors. These include social and therapy spaces, warm water bathing, senior fitness station, sensory garden. The image below is of the Australian Royal Botanic Gardens sensory garden.
- Movie nights and music concerts at the pool. The image below is of Wet n Wild Theme Park.

2023 Blacktown City Family Fish In

Next date: Friday, 11 August 2023 | 05:00 PM to 08:40 PM

Blacktown City’s fishiest event is back in 2023 - the Family Fish In!

Held over the weekends of 4 - 5 and 11 - 12 of August, 600 trout will be game for all fishing enthusiasts wanting to try their luck at the perfect catch. All you need to bring is your own fishing rod, fishing line and bait (power bait is also available to purchase on the night).

This event is proceeding under a permit from NSW Department of Primary Industries.



Figure 19: Ideas for diversifying use and experiences

4.5 Facility Trends

Contemporary sports facility design principles

Otium research has identified the following design principles for contemporary sports facilities:

- **Take a place-making approach.** The Creating Places for People urban design protocol should be used in designing sports facilities. This approach will be supported by adherence to Universal Design and female-friendly design principles.
- **Be hub precincts.** Sports facilities can be provided within a hub for sport, entertainment, community, health and/or tourism activities. A regional sports hub should complement other precincts in a city/township for retail, food, arts, and culture, etc.; and connect via pedestrian and public transport links.
- **Meet contemporary standards** for building and sports including for community, regional, national and international competition, depending on the hierarchy classification of the sports facility.
- **Design and maintain facilities to hierarchy level.** This will mean Council can strategically invest in quality sports facilities to the level the sports facility provides for, whether that is delivering for local (community) standard competition or for regional (elite) standard competition. If a regional facility, the facilities will offer a higher level of service and quality design standard.
- **Be multi-purpose, promote shared-use and offer mixed-use programming.** Sports facilities will be active places that operate seven days a week in peak and off-peak times. Use should be optimised. This is particularly relevant for rural and regional areas such as Loddon with limited access to funding resources.
- **Be designed to deliver multiple solutions.** The design of sport facilities should include a canopy that provides shade for daily activities and capture rainwater; a roof structure with solar panels that generate energy for the building; maximise the use of natural light and double glazing for climate control; flexible lighting systems that offer security and safe passage for pedestrians.
- **Be sustainable.** The design should include strategies like harvesting water, creating energy, turning waste into food, enhancing the habitat and adding value for the surrounding community.
- **Respond to the community.** Sports facilities will interact with and support a mix of community sport and event activity. The design will include a future expansion area that will future-proof sports facilities if additional facility needs or opportunities are identified.
- **Consider biomimicry in design.** Sports facilities will respond to the local climate, allowing the building to breathe, provide comfort for every human sense and adapt to year-round requirements.
- **Embrace technology.** Sports facilities will respond to new technology in terms of entertainment, operations and monitoring facility performance.
- **Efficient.** Sports facilities will consider the maintenance and operational requirements of facilities with a view to making them efficient and easy to maintain.
- **Keep budget in mind.** Government is operating in a tight fiscal environment and therefore the design must balance the above principles with delivering the service objectives of sports facilities and to a reasonable budget.

Making spaces for girls and women

The design for sport and active recreation facilities and services has been more suited to male participation. The following design guidelines and resources respond to extensive research and engagement with women and girls that focus on barriers faced when participating.

Make Space for Girls Design Resource

The 'Make Space for Girls' is a resource that includes research, design principles and case studies for making space for women and girls in a public space.

Specifically, the website refers to research and guidelines developed by the University Leads titled Safer Parks – Improving Access for Women and Girls". The guidelines included extensive research and reports the concern about safety as the "biggest single barrier to women and girls' enjoyment of parks and green spaces". The guidelines include the following design principles:

- Eyes on the park:
 - Busyness and activation – Provide alternative seating options, locate spaces popular with women and girls in busier areas of the park, encourage businesses to use the park increases activity, a broad range of activities to activate the park and encourage new users and circular running or walking routes.
 - Staffing and authority figures – Arrange working patterns to maximise staff presence.
- Awareness:
 - Visibility and openness – Provide canopies above head height to enable a clear view, maintain bushes and shrubs alongside paths to ensure visibility, locate facilities close to main routes and busy areas of the park, mounds and high points give good prospects.
 - Escape – Provide wide and clearly visible park entrances and park edges as open and accessible as possible with regular breaks and regular exits with clear signposts.
 - Lighting – Provide human-scaled lighting rather than floodlights - low and even light can be safer than bright lights that create strong contrast and glare. Using lighting helps activate key routes and spaces, and lighting should enable good colour rendering.
 - Wayfinding and layout – Provide a clear hierarchy of paths that connect with routes beyond the park, a circular path around the perimeter with regular exit points, paths should connect key facilities with each destination and clear signage with directions to key destinations.
- Inclusion:
 - Belonging and familiarity – The naming of facilities to signal multiple uses broadens their appeal, statues and artworks can indicate belonging, and specific facilities aimed at women and girls signal that they are welcome.
 - Image – A tidy park signals care, remove graffiti and repair any vandalism, well-maintained vegetation around paths and well-maintained signage and information boards.
 - Access and location – Access should be via safe and well-used routes. Prioritise entrances close to public transport connections and signpost nearby places as safe zones.
 - Co-production and engagement – Engagement with existing women's and youth groups can be a good starting point for co-production, co-designing parks might change what is included and how spaces feel, engagement must be intersectional and involve existing and potential park users and safety walks help to articulate perceptions of safety in the park.

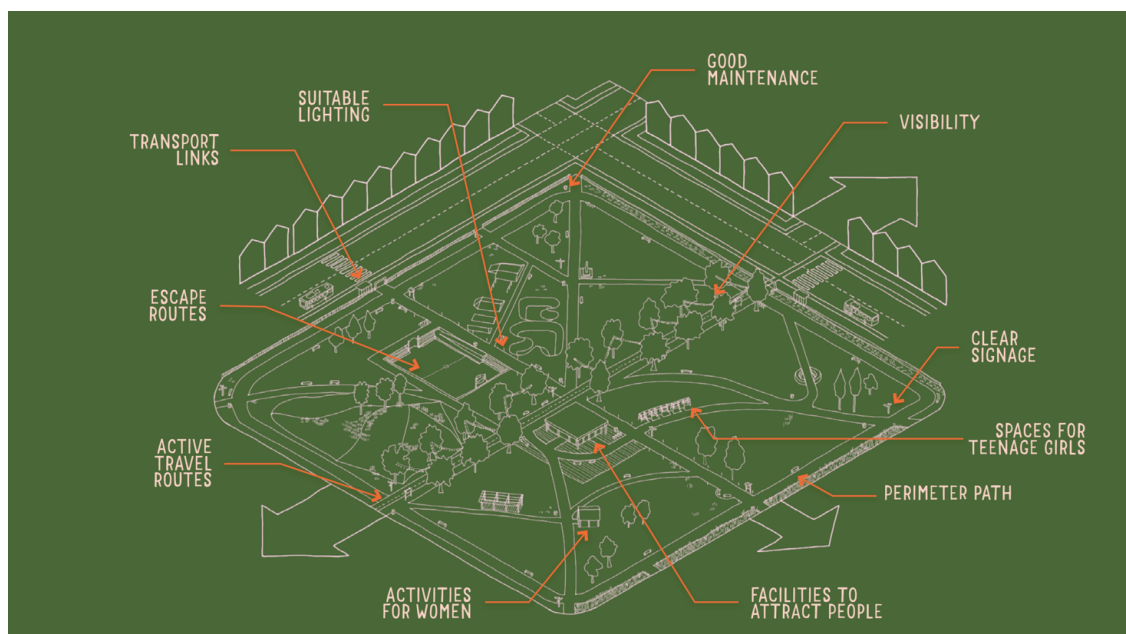


Figure 20: Design Advice for Improving Access to Parks for Women and Girls (Source: Safer Parks, 2023)

Female-Friendly Sport Infrastructure Design Guidelines

Female sports participation at the elite and peak of athlete pathways is increasing and rapidly in line with an increase in grassroots participation in sport and physical activity. This represents an exciting time for Australia but also presents challenges for sports administrators and facilities.

Sport and Recreation Victoria has developed the Female Friendly Guidelines that include the following design principles to create female-friendly facilities:

- **Fit for purpose:** While promoting a flexible and multi-use approach, ensure female-friendly design elements and specific requirements meet the level and type of activities being delivered, as well as occupant, club or tenant needs.
- **Multi and shared use:** Infrastructure should be efficiently designed to promote equitable and flexible use by a mixture of users capable of sharing facilities and usage times. The facility space planning and design of public spaces should adopt a multi-purpose approach.
- **Compatibility:** Identification of compatible sports, teams, activities, clubs or organisations with similar objectives and requirements for facility design, use and management should be promoted.
- **Universal Design:** The principles of Universal Design should be applied to community sport and recreation facilities so that they accommodate users of all ages, gender, ability and cultural backgrounds.
- **Public Safety:** Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) takes into consideration the relationship between users and the physical environment in the design of public spaces in crime prevention and assists with public safety.
- **Health and safety:** Security and safety of users should be paramount. Sport and active recreation facilities and their surrounds should be designed, built and maintained in accordance with relevant occupational health and safety standards. They should also incorporate child safe and safer design principles into facility design.
- **Functionality:** Facility design and layout should promote safe and optimal functionality to accommodate formal, competitive, social and recreational forms of usage and participation.

Making spaces for people with disabilities

Otium has engaged with Disability Sport and Recreation Victoria about key drivers and barriers for participants with disabilities engagement and facility, program and service ideas for delivering their meaningful engagement in sport and recreation.

The following key drivers were identified by participants engaged with sport:

- Providing opportunities for physical activities.
- Ability to play sport they enjoy, as close to able-bodied rules as possible.
- At the same time, considering their various needs to ensure they enjoy the activity.
- Clear pathways of progression as skills improve.
- Where possible, integration and understanding between able and disabled participants.
- Providing opportunities for social connection and emotional support.

The following key barriers were faced by participants' engagement with sport:

- A lack of awareness of the sport and where to play.
- Time, cost and effort involved in travel.
- The cost involved in getting kitted out.
- Lack of critical mass of participants.
- Lack of consistent and convenient scheduling.
- General lack of organisation and administration, needing them to step into this role to ensure gameplay goes ahead.

Disability Sport and Recreation Victoria advocates for 'Disability Sport Hubs' that service a regional catchment. These hubs are seen as an important ingredient to encouraging people with disabilities to participate.

Loddon Shire has high rates of disability. Partnering with City of Greater Bendigo and advocating for a Disability Sports Hub in Bendigo would service the Central Victoria region.

The Disability Sports Hub would provide:

- An information portal for how people with disabilities can get involved in sport.
- A central physical location, a dedicated fit-for-purpose space for adaptive (disability) sport.
- A place for bringing people together and cross-pollination of experience and expertise.

The Disability Sports Hub would involve project partners who would connect and engage with various stakeholders including the local community of people with disabilities, State Sporting Associations, disability sport organisations and local disability service providers.

The programs and services at a Disability Sports Hub would be:

- Driven by people with disabilities.
- Low-cost participation opportunities.
- Encourage engagement with local schools, sport clubs, coaches, leisure providers and disability organisations.

The physical activities and programs would be complemented by an information and education hub for the delivery of capacity-building training amongst local providers of sport and recreation programs. This would create a welcoming and skilled environment that supports greater participation by people with disabilities, addresses the key barriers and delivers more sustainable long-term outcomes.

The facility requirements of a Disability Sports Hub would consider:

- Indoor sports courts are ideal for most disability sports.
- Netting/walls.
- Ample circulation space.
- Access to facilities is important – older venues are set up for one or two people in a wheelchair (one accessible toilet and car park). When you have competition, you could have up to 40 people.
- Storage areas for wheelchairs (10 chairs) for programs.
- Lifts (bigger is better).
- Light switches at the right height.
- Braille signage.
- Access keys/downloadable information.

Disability Sport and Recreation identified the **Phoenix USA – Ability360 Sport and Fitness Centre** as the best example of a fit-for-purpose Disability Sports Hub for adaptive sports. It is a best practice in terms of welcoming and functional requirements for people with a disability.

The centre has wheelchair-accessible weight machines, an aquatic area equipped with lifts and elevators, accessible locker rooms, indoor courts, a climbing wall (35ft), an indoor track, personal training, swim lessons, group fitness classes, recreation therapy, team sports, etc. All programs, facilities, and activities are inclusive.

See the following weblinks to a fly-through of the facility:

<https://ability360.org/sports/>

<https://nirsa.net/nirsa/portfolio-items/ability360-sports-and-fitness-center/>

Universal Design Principles

The seven Principles of Universal Design were developed in 1997 by a working group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers. The following principles will guide the design of the new Sports Performance Event Activity Centre in terms of place and function, environment and sustainability, products and communications:

- Equitable use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- Flexibility in use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- Simple and intuitive use: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language, skills, or current concentration level.
- Perceptible information: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- Tolerance for Error: The design minimises hazards and errors – most used elements, most accessible; hazardous elements eliminated, isolated or shielded.
- Low physical effort: The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

- Size and space for approach and use: Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

4.6 Key Findings of Trends Analysis

There is an opportunity to explore innovative ideas that diversify the experiences in an aquatic centre environment that creates a community destination year-round.

Diverse and accessible network of sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities are needed to deliver the full range of activities and benefits

Key trends influencing the provision and design of sport and recreation facilities and services are:

- There is a trend for new or improved sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities to be designed as multi-use and multi-functional. This is partly due to facility investment being used smarter to not put unnecessary financial pressure on Council by duplicating facilities with available capacity.
- Insights from the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of local open spaces and the growing expectations from the community around the quality of their open spaces. The community is increasing their informal active recreation use of sports precincts which is resulting in conflict with formal sport programming and facility capacity issues.
- The large growth in female participation within traditionally male-oriented sports is increasing pressures on playing facilities and increasing the need to diversify amenities to be universally accessible.
- Whilst the nature and intensity of participation in sport may change over time, the need for suitable and adaptable spaces to accommodate demand will remain. Future facility provision and design needs to ensure spaces are adaptable to accommodate changing participation trends.
- The location of sports precincts needs to be accessible to most of the community to maximise use. They should be well connected by active transport links and public transport.

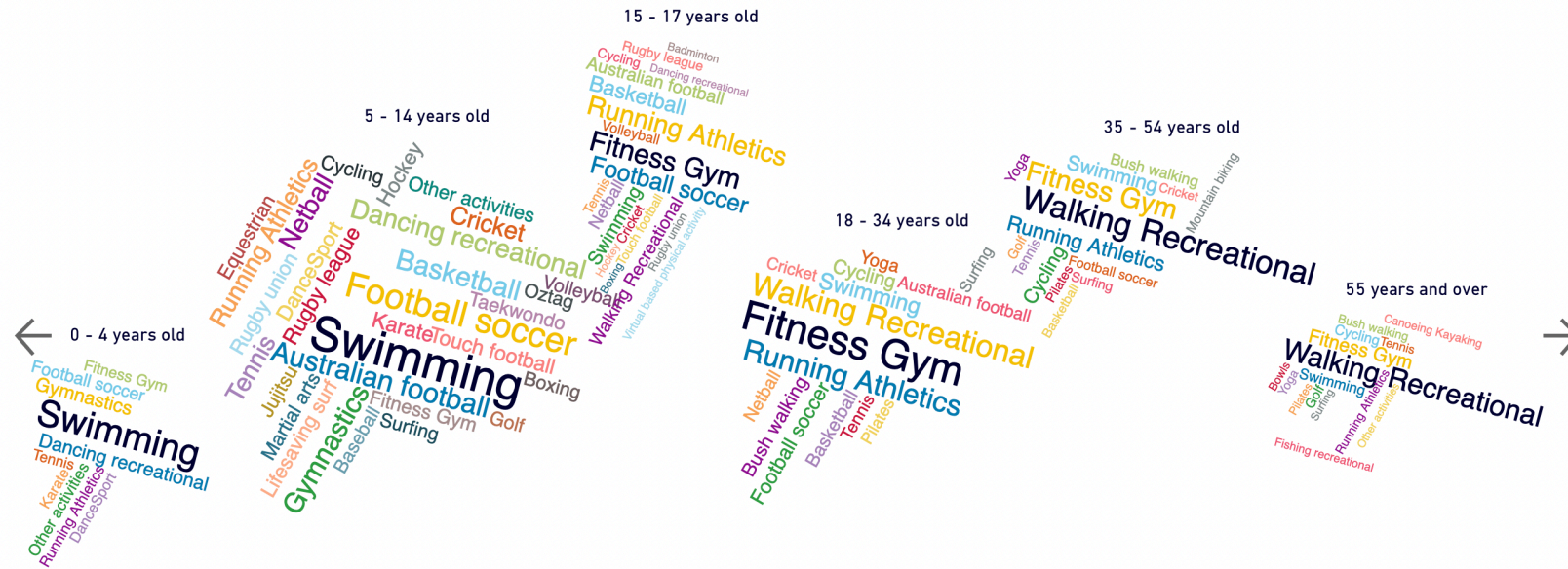
There is no demand for additional formal sport facilities

The Demand Analysis Model found an oversupply of outdoor sports fields (Australian Rules football +8 fields, cricket +6 fields, Hockey +1 field) and outdoor sports courts and greens (Netball +17.5 courts, tennis +75 courts and bowls +10.5 rinks) in Loddon Shire. **However**, overlaying with local factors impacting a field's use is important. Specifically, the distribution and accessibility of fields to communities. This is a particular factor impacting Loddon Shire which is rural in nature and townships are dispersed (in most cases over 20 minutes from the nearby township) making it difficult to share fields.

The modelling shows the key focus of this Strategy is on activating sport and active recreation facilities rather than needing to improve the capacity of existing facilities.

Sports facilities in the future will need to respond to emerging sports and new formats

The sporting landscape can rapidly change. The graphic below shows the most recent AusPlay Survey 2021 results for the most popular sport and physical activities across age groups. The graphic shows a wide range of sports and physical activities are now being played, outside traditional sports. This is particularly the case for adult participation where unstructured sports that can be played at flexible times and support a person’s lifestyle, health and wellbeing are now preferred.



While a high proportion of children are active in organised sport out-of-school hours, as people age the focus of physical activity shifts more and more from organised sport to recreational non-sport physical activities. This is reflected in the most popular physical activities at each life stage, as shown here above.

Figure 21: AusPlay Survey 2021 results for the most popular sport and physical activities across age groups

We have seen traditional sports introduce new formats that are gaining in popularity and growing participation. These new formats of traditional sports have broadened the audience of participants to sports. Examples include:

- New formats that are derivatives of traditional sports. Examples include pickle ball and padel are derivatives of tennis now being played in indoor courts and outdoor tennis court venues, footgolf and disc golf are derivatives of golf, football and ultimate frisbee.
- Social fast paced competition formats that are played on smaller fields, takes less time to play and are more accessible. Examples include AFL9's Netball Fast 5, Cricket T20, and Rugby Sevens.

The recent AusPlay Survey 2021 also shows several new emerging sports and trends in Australia. These include:

- Female sports – Women and girls sports have been the fastest growing participation across traditional and emerging sports.
- eSports (Exergaming) – eSports or competitive gaming has been gaining popularity not just in Australia but worldwide. There are now several eSports leagues and tournaments.
- Virtual training and racing – Zwift is an example of an online platform that allows cycling to connect their indoor trainers or stationary bikes to a virtual environment through a computer or smart phone. Zwift features include gamification elements, allows for multiplayer and social cycling, and hosting of racing events and challenges.
- Adventure racing: Trail based events that are hosted in nature and include extreme sports like mountain biking and trail running. These sports are growing in popularity.
- Adaptive and inclusive sports – Adaptive sports for people with disabilities are gaining recognition and support. These sports promote inclusivity and support people with a wide range of abilities. There is a growing number of adaptive sport competitions offered from local community to elite level. These include blind cricket and wheelchair sports for Australian Rules Football, rugby, basketball and tennis.
- Combat sports – Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is an example of a combat sport in Australia growing participation with more gyms and competitions emerging and greater visibility of the sport through the global popularity of Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC).
- Climbing and bouldering – Indoor and outdoor climbing and bouldering facilities have become more popular.

The redesign of sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities should adopt industry design principles that deliver inclusive, multi-use and sustainable facilities and programs

The following design principles have been developed to help inform the future design of the sporting infrastructure within Loddon Shire. It will be used to guide the future prioritisation framework.

- **Accessible and Inclusive:** Facilities and spaces will be universally designed and inclusive, fostering participation in physical activity by all our community, across all life stages, genders and cultures.
- **Diverse and Equitable:** Facilities and spaces will offer a diverse mix of facilities, programs and experiences. Council will provide an equitable access to facilities across the Shire.
- **Safe and Welcoming:** Facilities and spaces and programs are designed to be visible, open and welcoming to the community, creating a safe place for girls and women to participate.
- **Multi-Use:** Facilities and spaces will be multi-use, offering several activities, programs and experiences for users.

- **Connected:** Well-planned recreational facilities and areas of public open space will provide connectivity across our localities and provide access to our unique natural environment.
- **Sustainable:** Facilities and spaces will be designed to operate efficiently, whilst being well managed and maintained.

The following reference documents are provided for guiding design principles:

- [Creating Places for People](#)
- [Making Places for Girls](#)
- [Healthy Active by Design](#)
- [Crime Prevention through Environmental Design](#)
- [Universal Design Principles](#)
- [Female Friendly Sports Infrastructure Design Guidelines](#).

Contemporary aquatic and leisure facilities are community destinations or hubs offering a mix of facilities, diverse programming and experiences

The key factors of successful aquatic facilities that deliver an operational surplus or break-even position, as compared to a facility not performing as well, was that they respond to aquatic and leisure facilities trends by providing diverse participation opportunities and programmable components. This includes providing a range of contemporary 'wet' and 'dry' elements that appeal to broader market segments:

- Recreation, leisure and adventure
- Health, fitness and wellness
- Competitive and recreational swimming
- Aquatic education and learn to swim
- Therapy, and rehabilitation
- Food/beverage and merchandise services.

The five outdoor pools in Loddon Shire are missing key markets impacting participation and financial position. These are leisure adventure facilities and therapy users. They also don't meet industry standards for pool depths to support fitness and training and education users.

There is reduced financial capacity of Councils to fund future aquatic facility development

Providing equitable access to aquatic and leisure facilities (and other services like health, education, cultural, recreational and other community services) in rural and regional areas is a challenge, particularly in smaller townships. Particularly with the capital and operational costs of aquatic and leisure facilities having risen significantly over the last ten to 20 years, and even more so in recent times post the COVID-19 global pandemic.

These factors raise some key questions for Council:

- What is the financial capacity to provide capital funding to future aquatic facility projects in Loddon Shire?
- The current "management model" for aquatics in Loddon is effective, yet avoidably expensive. The current financial input of public money is unsustainable. The need to explore and evaluate other potential management models is critical and must occur over the next three year in order to preserve any chance of retaining the current number of aquatic facilities beyond 2028.

- The high cost associated with managing and operating aquatic facilities across the Shire (10% of Council's operating budget) and the benefit/impact to the community given the outdoor nature of the pools and the short season.
- How will we support our communities to access to aquatic facilities given their reliance on these places that offer a relief from the hot summer periods in Northern Victoria, social connection, a safe regulated space for people to learn to swim, and for health, fitness and play.

5. Supply Analysis

What recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities do we have?

This section identifies the key issues and opportunities impacting the current supply of recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities.

5.1 Current Supply

Loddon has a diverse range of open spaces, including sport and active recreation reserves, parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, tracks and trails, and natural places, including bushland reserves and waterways (rivers and lakes).

There are over 113 parcels of public open spaces within the municipality. There is a good distribution and supply of quality sport and recreation reserves, open spaces and aquatic facilities across the townships:

- The major towns of Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn have a central sport and recreation reserve, a playground, a swimming pool, a golf course, a public hall and walking/cycling tracks.
- The medium-sized townships of Mitiamo, Calivil, Dingley, Newbridge, Serpentine and Tarnagulla don't have as many public open spaces, but most have a central sport and recreation reserve, public hall and playground.
- Small towns generally have a public hall and park or village green.
- The sport and recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities are supported by a network of local walking tracks and regional trails that connect key destinations.

Sport and Recreation Reserves

There are nine major and 19 minor recreation reserves. Each major and medium-sized township has a central sport and recreation reserve that caters to various sports and places for active recreation. Local parks and gardens support these key open spaces within close proximity to where people live within rural townships but also service the rural district area surrounding the township area.

Sport and recreation reserves are managed and maintained by Reserve Committees of Management, comprised of representatives from user groups and local community. These volunteer committees are appointed directly by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) or by the Loddon Shire Council (as owner or the appointed Committee of Management under the *Crown Land Reserves Act 1978*), depending on the ownership of the land.

Key sport and recreation reserves are listed in the table below.

Table 17: Sport and recreation reserves

Sport and Recreation Reserve	Location	Description	Responsibility
Arnold Recreation Reserve	Arnold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One oval with cricket pitch. • Clubhouse. • Cricket practice net. 	Committee of Management/Club
Bears Lagoon Tennis Centre	Bears Lagoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The precinct is Crown Land. • The tennis facilities include five grass tennis courts (irrigated), pavilion, toilets, rebound wall, seating and playground. 	Committee of Management

Sport and Recreation Reserve	Location	Description	Responsibility
Boort Bowls, Croquet and Tennis Centre	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. The bowls facilities include one synthetic bowling green with 11 rinks with lights, pavilion (being redeveloped), storage shed, seats and shelters. The croquet facilities include a green with three courts and lights, a basic pavilion, toilets, seats and shelters. The tennis facilities include 14 lawn tennis courts and pavilion. 	Committee of Management
Boort Golf Club	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18-hole golf course and club house. 	Committee of Management/Club
Boort Park	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. Sports pavilion. One sports oval with turf cricket pitch and lights (irrigated) and coaches Cricket practice nets. Portable grandstand. One turf hockey pitch and hockey storage shed. Two netball courts (one with lights) and one warm up 1/3 court, netball shelters and storage shed. Harness racing track, stewards' towers, harness racing sheds. Playground. Boort Historical Society Machinery Shed. Boort Agricultural Show Sheds. 	Council
Bridgewater Bowls Club	Bridgewater on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is privately owned. Sports pavilion. Two bowling greens with 11 rinks and lights. Storage, water tank, shelters and seats. 	Club
Bridgewater Recreation Reserve	Bridgewater on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. One sports oval with synthetic pitch and lights and coaches' boxes. Two netball/tennis courts with lights. Two tennis courts without lights. Cricket practice nets. Sports pavilion. Playground, water tank and scoreboard. Toilets are only open on days the reserve hosts an organised sporting event. 	Committee of Management
Calivil Recreation Reserve	Calivil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. One sports oval with turf pitch and lights and coaches' boxes. Two netball courts with shelter Two tennis courts with lights. Cricket practice nets. Sports pavilion (shared). One synthetic bowling green with 8 rinks and lights. 18-hole black soil scrapes golf course. Golf and bowls clubhouse. Playground, water tank and scoreboard. 	Committee of Management

Sport and Recreation Reserve	Location	Description	Responsibility
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilets are only open on days the reserve hosts an organised sporting event. 	
Dingee Recreation Reserve	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. One bowling green with 8 rinks and lights. 8 lawn tennis courts with shelter and clubrooms and rebound wall. One sports oval with synthetic cricket pitch and lights and coaches' boxes. Cricket practice net. Sports pavilion. Playground, water tank, scoreboard, walking track. 	Committee of Management
Inglewood Bowls Club	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. Sports pavilion. One bowling green with 11 rinks and lights. Club toilets, storage, water tank, shelters and seats. 	Committee of Management
Inglewood Recreation Reserve	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. Sports pavilion. Six lawn tennis courts, shelter and pavilion. Public toilets, storage, water tank, shelters and seats. Cricket wicket, lights and coaches' boxes. Cricket practice nets (in poor condition, infrequent use by nearby clubs for informal training). Two netball courts and shelter. 	Committee of Management
Inglewood Golf Course	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18-hole golf course and pavilion. 	Committee of Management
Kingower Cricket and Recreation Reserve	Kingower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18-hole golf course and club room. 	Committee of Management/Club
Korong Vale Recreation Reserve	Korong Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. One sports oval. Cricket practice nets. Sports pavilion. Two netball courts and shelter. One bowling green with 8 rinks and lights. Four lawn tennis courts, shelter and pavilion. Playground. 	Committee of Management
Mitiamo Recreation Reserve	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. One sports oval with lights and coaches' boxes. Sports pavilion. Two netball courts with lights and shelter. Five lawn tennis courts, shelter and pavilion. Club toilets. Playground, storage, water tank, shelters and seats. 	Committee of Management
Mitiamo Golf Course	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18-hole golf course and pavilion. 	Committee of Management
Newbridge Recreation Reserve	Newbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. One sports oval with synthetic cricket pitch and lights and coaches' boxes. Sports pavilion. 	Committee of Management

Sport and Recreation Reserve	Location	Description	Responsibility
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two netball courts with lights and shelter. Four synthetic tennis courts, shelter and pavilion. Playground, camping area, shelters and seats. 	
Mitchell Park	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. One sports oval with lights and coaches' boxes. Sports pavilion. Two netball courts and shelter. Playground, old machinery sheds, shelters and seats. Toilets are only open on days the reserve hosts an organised sporting event. 	Committee of Management
Pyramid Hill Bowls and Tennis Centre	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. 15 lawn tennis courts and tennis pavilion. Two bowling greens with 16 rinks, lights and bowls pavilion. Seating and shelters. 	Committee of Management
Pyramid Hill Quarter Horse Club	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arena. Club room. Yards. 	Committee of Management/Club
Serpentine Recreation Reserve	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Crown Land. One sports oval with turf cricket pitch and lights and coaches' boxes. Cricket training nets (unusable). Sports pavilion. Two netball courts and shelter. Community hall. Playground, storage, water tank, shelters and seats. Toilets are only open on days the reserve hosts an organised sporting event. 	Committee of Management
Serpentine Bowls and Tennis Centre	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. Five lawn tennis courts and tennis shed. One bowling green with 8 rinks and lights. Sports pavilion. Water tank, seating and shelters. 	Committee of Management
Market Square Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. One sports oval. Cricket training nets. Sports pavilion. Two sheds used by Engine Club. One shed used by Men's Shed Program. 	Committee of Management
Donaldson Park Recreation Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precinct is Council freehold land. One sports oval with lights and coaches' boxes. One grass hockey pitch. Sports pavilion. Two netball courts and shelter with lights. Two synthetic and 8 lawn tennis courts with lights and clubhouse. Two bowling greens with 12 rinks, lights and clubhouse. Harness racing track. Playground, water tank, shelters and seats. 	Committee of Management

Sport and Recreation Reserve	Location	Description	Responsibility
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilets are only open on days the reserve hosts an organised sporting event. 	
Wedderburn Golf Club	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18-hole golf course and club house. 	Committee of Management/Club
Woodstock Recreation Reserve	Woodstock on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two synthetic tennis courts. Public hall. 	Committee of Management

Parks and Gardens

The central sport and recreation reserves are supported by local parks and gardens offering community places for play, social gathering, community events, relaxation and reflection. These parks and gardens feature play spaces, seating and picnic facilities and landscaped areas, including gardens and shade trees.

Key parks and gardens are listed in the table below.

Table 18: Parks and gardens

Parks and Gardens	Location	Description	Responsibility
Jubilee Park	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playground 	Council
Nolens Park	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible toilets BBQ Table and seats Playground Lake Exercise equipment Water fountain 	Council
Rotary and Historical Parks	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BBQ Table and seat 	Council
Sunnyside Court Playground	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playground 	Council
Sloans Park	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BBQ Table and seats Playground 	Council
Swimming and Fishing Piers	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilets BBQ Swimming hole (not supervised/no lifeguards on duty) Tables and seats Water fountain 	Council
Progress Park	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playground Toilets Tables and seats BBQ 	Council
J Sloan Park	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible toilets BBQ Table and seats Playground Skate ramp Water fountain Exercise equipment 	Council
Village Green	Kingower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotunda BBQ 	Council
Borella Park	Korong Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playground BBQ 	Council

Parks and Gardens	Location	Description	Responsibility
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shade sail • Table and seats 	
Progress Park	Newbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and cycling trail. 	Council
Kelly Park	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • BBQ • Table and seats • Playground • Half basketball court and netball ring • Kangaroo chair • Exercise equipment 	Council
Lions Park East	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBQ • Playground 	Council
Pyramid Hill Reserve – The Hill	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • BBQ • Table and seats • Walking track 	Council
T J Rudkins Reserve	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • BBQ • Table and seats • Water fountain 	Council
Tarnagulla Soldiers Memorial Park	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • BBQ • Table and seats • Playground 	Council
Cooper Park	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table and seats 	Council
Wedderburn Soldiers Memorial Park	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • BBQ • Table and seats • Playground • Half basketball court • Kangaroo chair 	Council
Nardoo Linear Park	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Track • Exercise equipment 	Council
Teds Garden	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kangaroo chair 	Council

Aquatic Facilities

Loddon Shire's five outdoor pools are located at Boort, Inglewood, Mitiamo, Pyramid and Wedderburn. A leisure service management contractor manages the outdoor pools.

Aquatic facilities are listed in the table below.

Table 19: Aquatic facilities

Aquatic Facility	Location	Description	Responsibility
Boort Outdoor Pool	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 m pool – solar heated • Toddlers pool • Infant wading pool • Basketball ring • Barbeque 	Leisure Services Contractor
Inglewood Outdoor Pool	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33m pool – solar heated • Infant wading pool • Basketball ring 	Leisure Services Contractor

Aquatic Facility	Location	Description	Responsibility
Mitiamo Outdoor Pool	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 m pool – solar heated • Infant wading pool 	Leisure Services Contractor
Pyramid Hill Outdoor Pool	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 m pool – solar heated • Toddlers pool • Infant wading pool • Barbeque 	Leisure Services Contractor
Wedderburn Outdoor Pool	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 m pool – solar heated • Infant wading pool • Basketball ring • Cricket nets • Barbeque 	Leisure Services Contractor

Recreation Trails

The sport and recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities are supported by a network of local walking tracks and regional trails that connect key destinations. A popular local trail is Nolens Park in Boort which hosts the local Parkrun.

Key recreation trails are listed in the following table.

Table 20: Recreation trails

Trail	Location	Description
Bridgewater River Track	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6km along banks of Loddon. Formed footpaths, gravel path and dirt road. • Trail head - Loddon River, Bridgewater (adjacent to hotel)
BullaBul Trail	Inglewood/ Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13km trail links Inglewood and Bridgewater. Via bushland, dirt roads, and river track. Involves road crossing - local and VicRoad roads. • Trail head: Verdon St (old gaol), Inglewood West Side, Loddon River Bridgewater
Inglewood Reservoir Track	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2km loop through bush land and around reservoir. • Trail head: Inglewood Botanical Gardens
Laanecoorie River Trail	Laanecoorie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5km loop from camp ground, along Loddon River to the weir. Return track is on sealed road. • Trail head: Laanecoorie Loddon River Recreation Reserve
Tarnagulla Cemetery Track	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3km return from extension from township walk to cemetery. • Trail head: Wimmera HWY, Tarnagulla
Tarnagulla Reservoir Track	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3km loop with shorter option available at recreation reserve. Gravel path, majority is dirt road. Some sealed road crossings. • Trail head: Poverty St, Tarnagulla
Tarnagulla Town Heritage	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 5km taking in heritage sites of Tarnagulla. Paved paths, bush tracks, road reserves and dirt tracks. • Trail head: Tarnagulla
Queens Gully Trail	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.8km Loop. Starting at Wedderburn Reservoir Walk. Small section of single track, then follows dirt roads. • Trail head: Hospital St, Wedderburn
Wedderburn Reservoir Track	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1km Loop around Wedderburn Reservoir on trail. • Trail head: Hospital St, Wedderburn
Blue Mallee Trail	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8km loop. Trail signed with post and yellow arrows. Dirt and sealed road crossings. • Trail head: Hard Hill Reserve
Nardoo Track Wedderburn	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2km loop along Nardoo Creek and Chapel St. • Trail head: Wedderburn

Trail	Location	Description
Pon Bon Track	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2km of trail through the Pon Bon. Trail begins at Travelers Rest. • Trail head: TJ Rudkins Reserve
Dingee Walking Tack	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500m formed path from Dingee to the Recreation Reserve • Trail around oval and through bushland at the reserve. • Trail head: Winzar Reserve • Trail head: Dingee Pavilion
Dunolly-Tarnagulla Cycle Tracks	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44k Forest ride includes nature conversation reserve - loop from Dunolly to Tarnagulla. • Trail head: Dunolly Town Hall
Dunolly-Laanecoorie Cycle Track	Laanecoorie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44k Forest loop from Dunolly to Laanecoorie. • Trail head: Dunolly Town Hall
Pyramid Hill Trail	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2km Loop around Pyramid Hill base. • Trail head: Hill Reserve
Pyramid Hill Connecting Trail	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1k path connecting township to hill. Ends at swimming pool. • Trail head: Hill Reserve
Little Lake Boort Trail	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4km path around Little Lake Boort. • 2.5km path circuit around Little Lake Boort. The trail hosts the local Parkrun. • Trail head: Nolens Park

Nature Conservation Reserves

Loddon Shire has spectacular bushland reserves and river corridors that offer opportunities for nature-based recreation.

Key nature conservation reserves are:

- **Kooyoora State Park** – The bushland reserve features Mount Kooyoora and Melville Caves. It is a great place to rock climb and abseil, boulder hop, camp, picnic and hike. This park is managed by Parks Victoria.
- **Terrick Terrick National Park** – The bushland reserve features Mount Terrick Terrick and rare remnant native grasslands. It is a place to camp and bushwalk. This park is managed by Parks Victoria.
- **Leaghur State Park** – The 2022-hectare bushland reserve is located on the Loddon River floodplain and features Victorian most significant areas of block box wetland and woodland. It is a place to picnic, camp and bushwalk. This park is managed by Parks Victoria.
- **Wanyarra Camping Grounds** – The camping grounds is located near the historic town of Tarnagulla. It is a popular recreation reserve for camping and picnics. This park is managed by Parks Victoria.
- **Pyramid Hill Summit Walk** – The bushland reserve features “The Hill” with popular walking trails that wind around the base, an adventurous track the extends across the “saddle” of the hill and links to the existing track from the Pyramid Hill township. It is a popular place to picnic and for bird watching.
- **Mount Hope Nature Conservation Reserve** – This bushland reserve features seven small granite hills. The park is a great place for hiking, rock climbing, boulder hopping and picnics.
- **Kow Swamp** – Kow Swamp wetlands is an aboriginal significant place with Indigenous ancestral remains found that date back at least 13,000 years. The swamp was also important to European settlement being a water source for sheep, cattle, dairy and grain farming. Today it is a popular recreation and fishing spot.

- **Boort Lakes and Wetlands** – Boort is a popular visitor destination and features the 400 ha Lake Boort used for swimming and water sports including fishing and water skiing. Lake Boort has the greatest number of scar trees in Australia. Boort also includes Little Lake Boort, an attractive recreation lake and caravan/camping spot and Woolshed Swamp and Yando Swamp that are known wildlife and bird watching spots.
- **Loddon River in Bridgewater** – The open water spot includes a popular swimming hole and a designated zone for water sports including fishing, water skiing/speed boats and paddling. The spot includes a park with picnic facilities and connects with a foreshore river trail.
- **Serpentine Creek and Loddon River** – There are popular canoe trails with all abilities canoe ramps, hidden beaches and gentle rapids on the Loddon River in Laanecoorie and Serpentine Creek in Durham Ox.

Regional Facilities

There are a range of regional sports facilities that service Loddon Shire located within Bendigo and Kerang. These include:

- **Tom Flood Centre (Velodrome)** – Cycling. The Centre supports track racing for the Bendigo and District Cycling Club. The club also ride road and gravel races.
- **Latrobe University Bendigo Athletics Centre** – Athletics. The Centre supports Athletics Bendigo which represents Little Athletics Victoria and Athletics Victoria in the Bendigo Region. There are four Athletics Victoria clubs in Bendigo including Bendigo Harriers, Bendigo University, Eaglehawk YMCA and South Bendigo Athletics clubs.
- **Bendigo East Aquatic Centre, Faith Leech Aquatic Centre, Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre and Kerang Outdoor Pool** – Swimming. These facilities have 50m heated pools and support Bendigo East Swimming Club, Bendigo Hawks Swimming Club, Kangaroo Flat Swimming Club, Kerang Swim Club. They support swim club meets and school carnival events.
- **Bendigo Table Tennis Centre** – Table Tennis. The regional table tennis centre has 12 tables permanently set up in a purpose-built stadium. The Centre supports the Bendigo and District Table Tennis Association.
- **Bendigo Badminton Centre** – Badminton. The regional badminton centre has 16 courts permanently set up in a purpose-built stadium. The Centre supports the Bendigo and Eaglehawk Badminton Association.
- **Red Energy Centre (Bendigo Indoor Sports and Entertainment Centre)** – Basketball, Netball and Volleyball. The centre also provides a regional netball centre for the Bendigo Netball Association. Whilst the centre provides for some Loddon Shire netball participants, most play in the local football and netball league competitions in Loddon Shire.
- **Bendigo Regional Tennis Centre** – Tennis. The regional tennis centre with 26 plexi-pave tennis courts. Tennis is included. Whilst the centre provides for some Loddon Shire tennis participants, most play in the local tennis association competitions in Loddon Shire.
- **Bendigo Regional Hockey Centre** – Hockey. The regional hockey centre with two international standard synthetic turf pitches. Hockey is included. Whilst the centre provides for some Loddon Shire hockey participants, most play in the local hockey association competitions in Loddon Shire.
- **Queen Elizabeth Oval (QEO)** – Australia Rules football and cricket. The QEO is the premier sports oval in Central Victoria. The oval has a capacity of 10,000 people and includes a grandstand and turf wicket pitches. The facility hosts finals and has the facilities to host Victorian Football League matches. Whilst the centre provides for some Loddon Shire Australian Rules football and cricket participants, most play in the local hockey association competitions in Loddon Shire.

- **Epson Huntly Recreation Reserve – Soccer.** The regional soccer facility features six soccer pitches and hosts the Bendigo Amateur Soccer League together with several local sports clubs, including the Bendigo City Football Club (NPL standard).

This means Loddon Shire does not need to provide competition fields for these sports, unless it services a local need i.e., local club training and competition venue or social competition. These venues host the regional associations and deliver athlete talent development pathways.

5.2 Planning Framework

To support best practice recreation and open space planning a planning framework has been developed that considers the roles different facilities, assets and spaces play in activating communities and the different places we live in. These different roles of recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities deliver a wide range of 'liveability' benefits. These include improved physical and mental health and wellbeing, providing a pathway from grass root to elite level sport, socialising and play, learn to swim, cooling off in hot weather, protecting and connecting with nature, attracting community and visitor activity that returns economic benefits and cultural connection.

Effective recreation facilities, open space and aquatic facilities planning requires a partnership with community and land managers (Committees of Management) across Local, State and Federal Governments. The planning should be integrated, holistic, and sustainable.

The Planning Framework classifies recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities by their primary functions and provides a classification system to apply service levels to guide the provision of recreation assets across the municipality.

State and Federal Government legislation, the planning scheme and reserve management plans will outline the design and management requirements of nature conservation reserves. These open space types are mostly managed by other land managers, including Parks Victoria. There is an opportunity for Council to advocate for nature-based recreation and adventure activities that will provide a unique experience and community with an important connection to nature.

The Planning Framework will guide the project scope during development of concept plans or detailed designs along with consideration of industry design standards and principles, universal design standards and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) guidelines.

Please refer to **Appendix 1** for the detailed Loddon Recreation Planning Framework.

5.3 Key Findings of Supply Analysis

Loddon Shire has a good provision and diverse mix of sport and recreation reserve, open spaces and aquatic facilities.

There are nine major and 11 minor recreation reserves, five community swimming pools, one swimming hole (Bridgewater) and over 113 parcels of public open spaces within the municipality. The facilities are in good condition and attractive to use. They are managed by Council, contractors and Reserve Committees. Activation and reasonable access to sport facilities, programs and aquatic centres is a key focus of the project.

The central sport and recreation reserves facilitate participation in a wide range of sports including Australian Rules football, netball, cricket, hockey and tennis. These are supported by other sports facilities including lawn bowls greens and golf courses. A network of recreation trails offers walking and cycling opportunities within townships that connect activity centres with key destinations.

Loddon Shire features spectacular bushland reserves and river corridors that connect people to nature and culture, whilst also holding high biodiversity values. They offer opportunities for nature-based recreation including bushwalking, rock climbing and bouldering, fishing, canoeing, camping and picnicking. The bushland reserves in the Loddon Valley are managed by Parks Victoria, with some managed in partnership with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation following the formalising of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement. There is an opportunity for Council to work with land managers and Traditional Owner groups to develop products and promote nature-based recreation opportunities.

The supply analysis has found a good provision and distribution of different types of sport and active recreation reserve, parks and gardens, recreation trails, aquatic facilities, local streetscapes and civic spaces and nature conservation reserves.

Within each major and medium-sized township there are centralised district sports reserves and parks and gardens that support social recreation, active recreation and play and a local walking trail.

These places respond to the rural township and locally to population settlements.

The sports reserves are in very good condition following significant investment by Council, the community and State and Federal Government in improving sports fields, lighting, courts and pavilions.

Five major townships have access to an outdoor swimming pool. These facilities are in average condition. The recent technical assessment of all pools has found all pools to be in an average but serviceable condition. They all require upgrades in the next 10 years to continue the existing benefit to community.

The local play spaces are very similar and a planned approach to upgrading and diversifying play experiences is needed at renewal. There has been recent investment in diversifying play spaces and providing active recreation facilities like fitness stations in townships. J Sloans Park in Inglewood has a shaded play space and fitness station area with picnic facilities.

Each township has a network of local and regional walking and cycling trails. There has been recent investment into walking trails, with an example being the Loddon River Trail in Bridgewater that provides a lit path from the caravan park to the town centre and onto the swimming hole.

There are national parks and regional parks located throughout the Loddon Valley, whilst waterways such as the Loddon River traverse through major townships. They help profile and shape the land and mean Loddon Shire residents and visitors to the Loddon Valley can access nature-based recreation activities that deliver liveability and tourism benefits to the region. There are opportunities to continue to encourage these activities and trail links that connect community with nature.

The local streetscapes and civic spaces in Loddon Shire townships are community spaces and offer opportunities for community events and activities, for people to lunch and to socialise and they encourage walkable communities. There is an opportunity to activate these community spaces through improving amenity and celebrating cultural heritage and identity. An example of where this is occurring is the Walk this Way project at Inglewood.

Councils are not the only providers of open space, sport and recreation facilities - A partnership approach with other land managers and providers is needed

The Council is not the only provider of open space and sport and recreation facilities in Loddon Shire. There are Reserve Committees that manage the central sport and active recreation reserves. Council contract manages the operation of the five outdoor pools to a leisure services management contractor.

Bowls clubs and golf clubs with courses located on private land or Crown Land are responsible for managing these facilities. These spaces are restricted open spaces for community use.

There are other land managers, including Parks Victoria and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, which manage regional nature conservation reserves including National Parks and Regional Parks.

There are regional sports facilities that service Loddon Shire located in Bendigo, Echuca and Kerang.

A partnership approach with these land managers is needed to deliver a complementary and regional network of sport and active recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services to the Loddon Shire.

6. Aquatic Service Review

The planning process includes a comprehensive service review of the Aquatic Facilities within the Loddon Shire. The review includes:

- Catchment and Competitor Review
- Performance Review
- Asset Condition Review and Renewal Plan.

6.1 Current Facility Provision

Council currently supports aquatic services through the provision of five aquatic facilities. The management of the five pools is currently contracted to Belgravia Leisure, with the contract having commenced in late 2021. The facilities and their components are detailed in the following table.

Table 21: Aquatic facilities

Aquatic Facility	Location	Description
Boort Outdoor Pool	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 m pool – solar heated • Toddlers pool • Infant wading pool • Basketball ring • Barbeque
Inglewood Outdoor Pool	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33m pool – solar heated • Infant wading pool • Basketball ring
Mitiamo Outdoor Pool	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 m pool – solar heated • Infant wading pool
Pyramid Hill Outdoor Pool	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 m pool – solar heated • Toddlers pool • Infant wading pool • Barbeque
Wedderburn Outdoor Pool	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 m pool – solar heated • Infant wading pool • Basketball ring • Cricket nets • Barbeque

6.2 Catchment Review

Leisure and sporting facility trends and benchmarking generally indicate that facilities located in regional areas have a primary catchment radius of approximately 0-15 minutes travel distance and a secondary catchment radius of 15–30-minute travel distance.

In general, approximately 75% to 85% of users will reside within a 0-15 drive time of a facility with the remaining 15% to 25% coming from areas within the 15-30-minute drive time of the facility.

The size and shape of the catchment area will be influenced by a number of factors including the range and quality of facilities and services offered, natural and built barriers i.e., highways, travel times and the availability of competing facilities. In metropolitan Melbourne, it is not uncommon for facilities to share catchment areas, particularly the secondary catchment areas.

The following map shows the primary (0-15-minute travel time) and secondary (15-30-minute travel time) catchment areas of the aquatic facilities located within Loddon Shire.

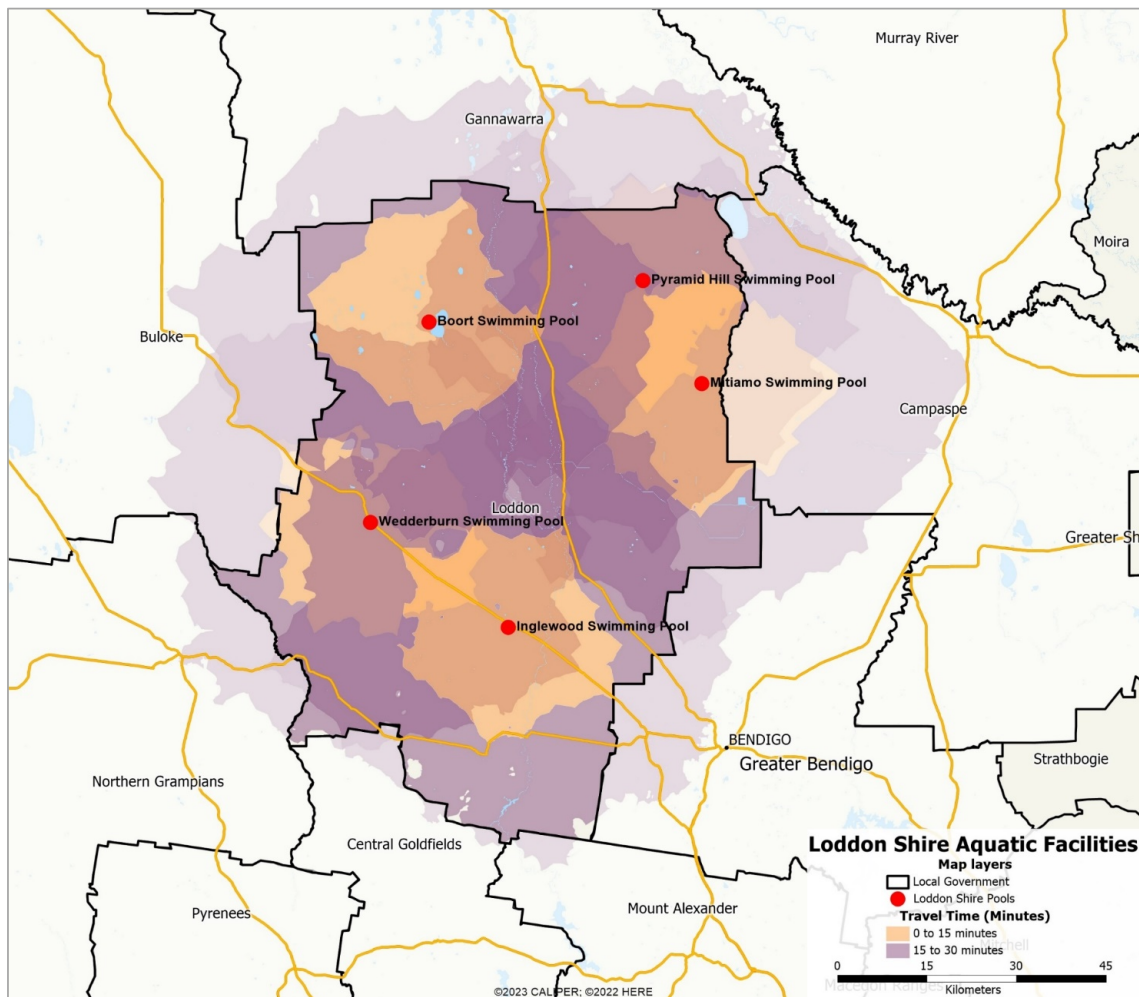


Figure 22: Loddon Shire Aquatic Facilities – 15 and 30-minute drive time catchment map

The below table shows the population catchment for the Loddon Shire Facilities according to catchment areas.

Table 22: Population of catchment areas

Facility	Primary Catchment 0–15-minute drive
Boort Outdoor Pool	1,157
Inglewood Outdoor Pool	1,848
Mitiamo Outdoor Pool	689
Pyramid Hill Outdoor Pool	972
Wedderburn Outdoor Pool	1,331

These mapping and population catchments indicate:

- There is an overlap of primary catchment zones between Pyramid Hill and Mitiamo Pools, and a significant secondary catchment overlap.
- Pyramid Hill has a secondary catchment overlap with Boort Pool.
- There is a small overlap of the primary catchment and a significant overlap of the secondary catchment areas between Wedderburn and Inglewood Pools (with a 20-minute drive time between the facilities).
- There is an overlap of secondary catchment areas between Wedderburn and Boort facilities.
- Mitiamo Pool has the smallest population within its primary catchment area of all the Loddon Shire facilities (689).
- Inglewood has the highest population within its primary catchment area of all the Loddon Shire facilities (1,848), followed by Wedderburn (1,331) and then Boort (1,157).

6.3 Competitor Review

This section provides a review of the competitors within the Loddon Shire and the surrounding LGA’s.

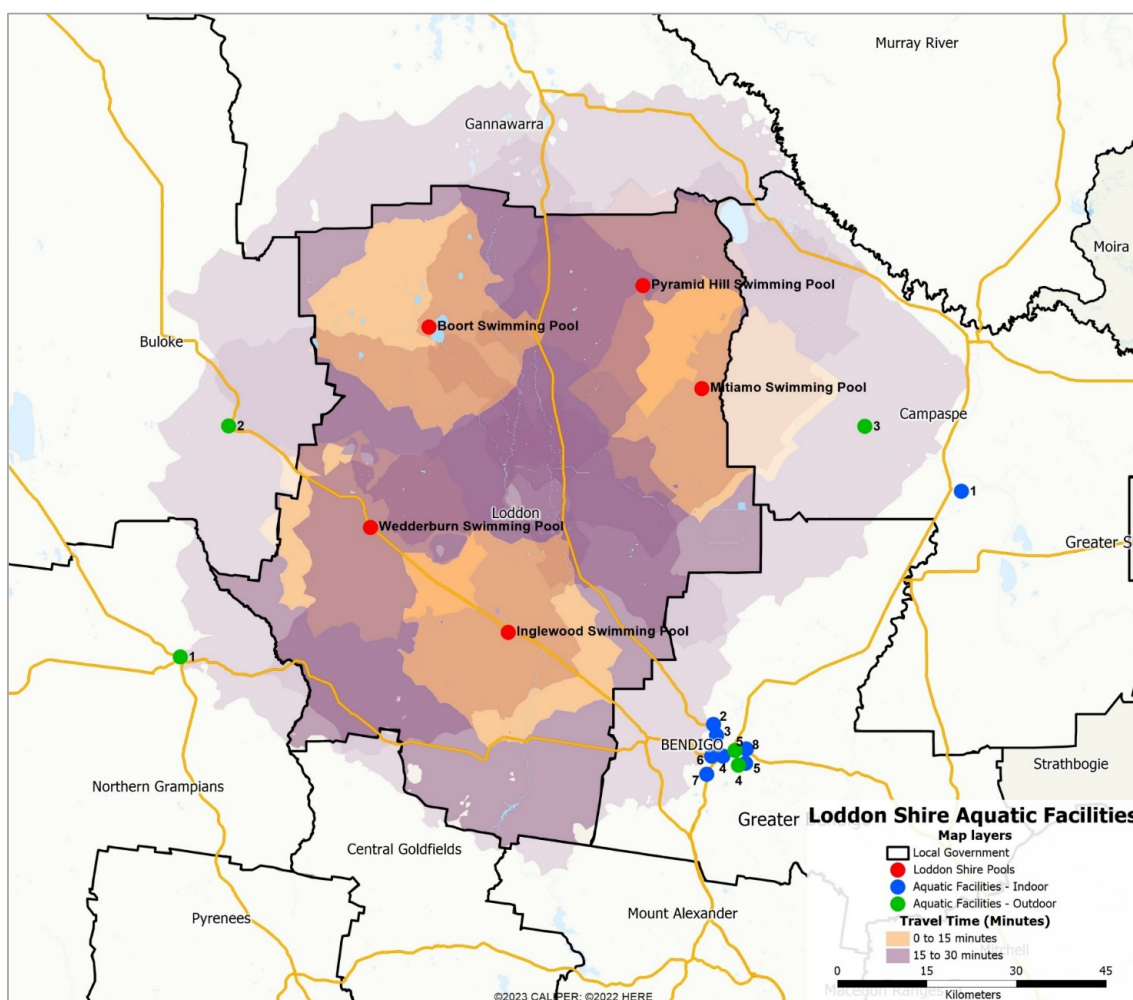


Figure 23: Aquatic Facility Competitors

The below table provides detail on the name and location of the facilities as shown in the above map.

Table 23: Aquatic Facility Competitors

Aquatic Facilities - Indoor		Location	Aquatic Facilities - Outdoor		Location
1	Splash 'n' Learn to swim	Rochester	1	St Arnaud Swimming Pool	St Arnaud
2	Peter Krenz Leisure Centre	Bendigo	2	Charlton Swimming Pool	Charlton
3	Sloan Swim School	Bendigo	3	Lockington Pool	Burns St, Lockington
4	Paul Sadler Swimland Bendigo	Bendigo	4	Brennan Park Swimming Pool	Kennington, Bendigo
5	Harley Street Swim School	Strathdale, Bendigo	5	Bendigo East Aquatic Centre	East Bendigo
6	Swim Culture	Golden Square, Bendigo			
7	Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre	Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo			
8	Swimz Bendigo	East Bendigo			

A review of the competitors indicates:

- There are no competitors in the primary catchment areas for any of the Loddon Shire facilities.
- Charlton Swimming Pool and Lockington Pool are just outside of the secondary catchment areas for Wedderburn and Mitiamo respectively.
- All indoor aquatic facilities, both Council owned and private except for one located in Rochester, are located in and around Bendigo, it can be assumed any residents of Loddon who wish to participate in a Learn to Swim program year-round (when the outdoor pools are closed) are required to travel to Bendigo.

6.4 Attendance Review

The following details the attendance of the Loddon Shire aquatic facilities across the 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons.

Table 24: Loddon Shire Aquatic Facilities Attendances

Facility	2021-22 Attendances	2022-23 Attendances
Boort Outdoor Pool	5,745	5,893
Inglewood Outdoor Pool	2,135	2,198
Mitiamo Outdoor Pool	1,854	1,650
Pyramid Hill Outdoor Pool	2,522	2,789
Wedderburn Outdoor Pool	2,672	2,736
Total Attendances	14,928	15,266

The graph below shows the attendances at the Loddon Shire aquatic facilities across 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons.

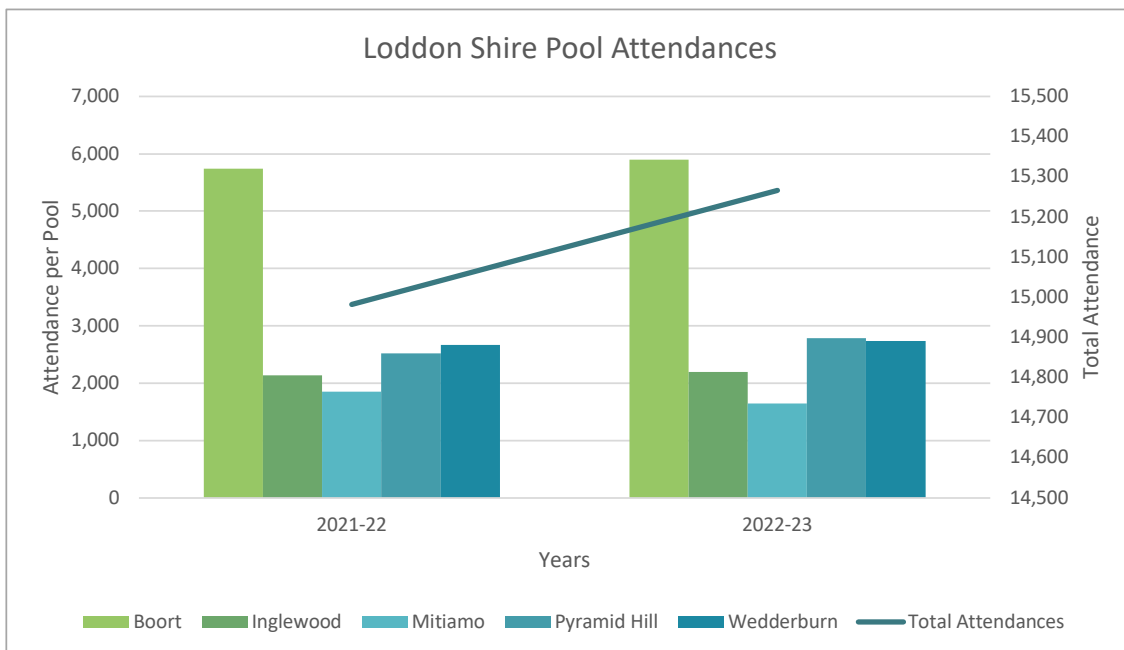


Figure 24: Loddon Shire Pool Attendances

The graph shows there was an increase in overall attendances between 2021-22 and 2022-23 of 338. This is an increase of 2.26% on the previous year.

An analysis of the attendances for each facility shows the following:

- **Boort Outdoor Pool** - There was a 2.57% increase in attendances from 2021-22 to 2022-23 seasons from 5,745 to 5,893, which equates to 148 visits.
- **Inglewood Outdoor Pool** - There was a 2.95% increase in attendances from 2021-22 to 2022-23 seasons from 2,135 to 2,198, which equates to 63 visits.
- **Mitiamo Outdoor Pool** - There was an 11% decrease in attendances from 2021-22 to 2022-23 seasons from 1,854 to 1,650, which equates to 204 visits.
- **Pyramid Hill Outdoor Pool** - There was a 10.59% increase in attendances from 2021-22 to 2022-23 seasons from 2,522 to 2,789, which equates to 267 visits.
- **Wedderburn Outdoor Pool** - There was a 2.39% increase in attendances from 2021-22 to 2022-23 seasons from 2,672 to 2,736, which equates to 64 visits.

6.4.1 Council Costs

The following table details the cost to Council to provide the Loddon Shire aquatic facilities. This data was provided by Council Officers.

Table 25: Loddon Shire Aquatic Facilities Costs to Council

Council Costs	2021-22	2022-23
Net Operating Performance	\$47,928	\$6,064
Contract Management Fee	-\$529,900*	-\$416,886
Utilities	-\$74,825	-\$78,223
Asset Maintenance	-\$95,488	-\$86,213
Council Salaries and associated costs	-\$117,068	-\$116,513
Miscellaneous	-\$7,499	-\$7,289
Pool Community Income	\$7,448	\$650
Total Council Subsidy	-\$769,404	-\$698,410
Attendances	14,315	15,266
Subsidy Per Visit	-\$52	-\$46

*Includes Contract Transition Fee of \$97,495

The graph below shows the cost to Council and attendances of the Loddon Shire aquatic facilities across the 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons.

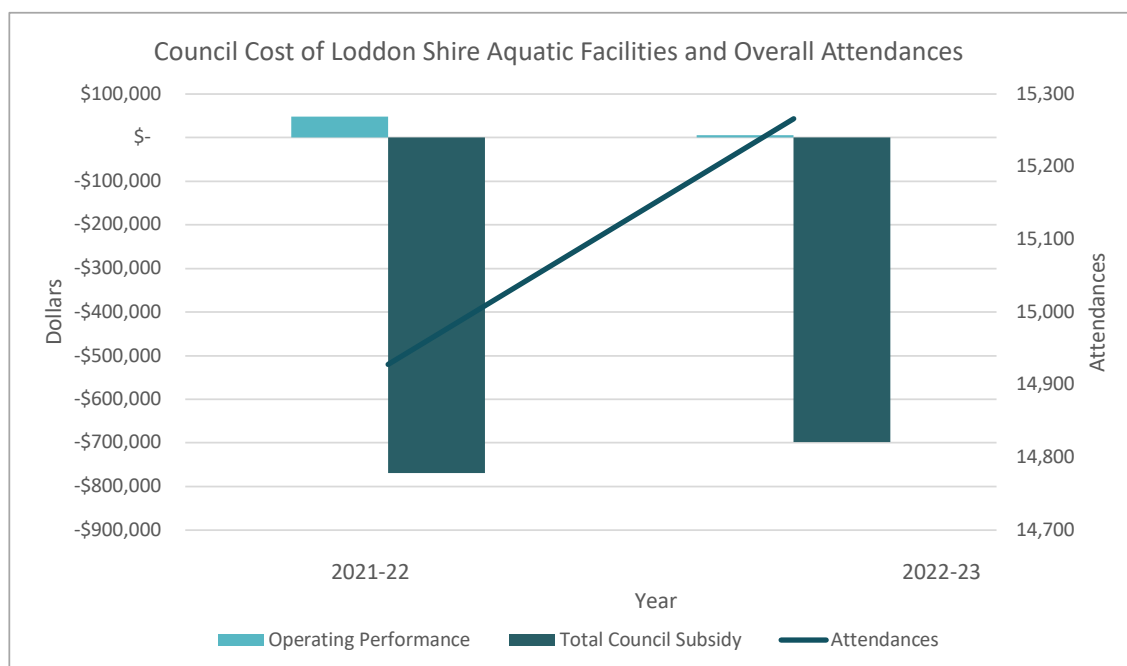


Figure 25: Loddon Shire Aquatic Facilities Costs to Council and Attendances 2022-23 and 2021-22

A review of the costs to Council indicates:

- The total Council subsidy decreased from 2021-22 to 2022-23 from \$769,404 to \$698,410. This, however, can be attributed to the Contract Transition Fee of \$97,495 included within the Contract Management Fee for 2021-22. If this was excluded from the calculations, the 2021-22 figure would be \$671,090.

- The highest cost to Council is the contract management fee for the external management company to operate the pools on Council’s behalf.
- Utilities were the only cost that increased from 2021-22, with surprisingly, all other costs to Council decreasing in 2022-23.
- Due to the low patronage numbers across the Loddon Shire aquatic facilities, the subsidy per visit average across the two seasons is \$47. This is an extremely high subsidy and well above the industry benchmark.

6.5 Asset Management Review

This section provides a high-level overview of a 10-year Asset Renewal Program and indicative associated costs for the Loddon Shire aquatic facilities. The information provided within this section comes from JWC Engineers, who conducted onsite inspections of each of the facilities and have provided a number of reports from 2022 to 2024 to Council Officers detailing current asset conditions and the below-proposed works.

6.5.1 Current Asset Conditions

All facilities are known or understood to be constructed circa 1960’s, or possibly into the 1970’s. The current conditions across the facilities are summarised below:

Table 26: Loddon Shire Aquatic Facilities Current Asset Condition

Asset	Condition
Main Pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shells generally are in average condition structurally, commensurate with their age, but there are specific structural issues at all (except Mitiamo), some are legacy (uplift) and some current (corrosion): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Boort – extensive corrosion around main pool hob where cut for wet-deck conversion. Legacy uplift cracks in floor; major crack in corner of Program pool. – Inglewood – legacy shrinkage and uplift cracks in floor. – Wedderburn – some cracks in walls and floor but not extensive. Some corrosion in hob. – Pyramid Hill – extensive erosion and corrosion in the hob/gutter of both main and medium pools. Legacy uplift movement/cracks in main pool floor.
Legacy and uplift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, after an uplift event there can be defined crack patterns in the floor, hydrostatic valves if fitted may ‘pop’ (but noting that the reliability of decades old valves should not be relied upon implicitly), differential settlement can occur, or individual floor slabs may move vertically. • All are evidence of the distress that the shell has suffered but evidence also shows that most pools can nonetheless remain operating for many years. • The key long-term issues are leakage through displaced joints, cracks or pipework, and the development of corrosion of reinforcing steel.
Depth Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily this comprises relatively new pole mounted signage around the pool concourse. • There is some legacy signage on hobs, but many letters/numerals are worn away and there is a mixture of imperial and metric depths.
Treatment Plant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All current water treatment plants are replacement upgrades of the original systems. Most appear to be circa 1990’s era. • Wedderburn’s treatment plant retains the original brick plant room which houses a few operational elements. This brick building is in poor condition with plans to demolish.
Chemical dosing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sodium hypochlorite and hydrochloric acid is used at all sites. This is conventional and used in many regional pools. All sites have modern automatic dosing control systems. Key notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some nesting bund tanks surrounding the hypo tanks are not high enough.

Asset	Condition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Proper storage of acid containers needs to be upgraded at several sites. – All sites need an EPA complying spill containment slab for ‘hypo’ tanker parking. Conversion to calcium hypochlorite dosing could be an alternative and avoiding spill containment requirements, but it would necessitate further study. It is an option actively considered by other Council’s in this situation. It has a longer shelf life but is a more expensive consumable.
Backwash discharge to sewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All towns except for Mitiamo have reticulated sewer. Therefore, backwash from the four other sites should be connected to sewer and be formalised under a Trade Waste Agreement (TWA) with the sewer authority (Coliban Water).
Backwash Tanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn have old concrete tanks embedded fully or entirely into the ground. • The pump discharge systems from both should be investigated to ensure compliance with the TWA.
Separate Toddler pool filtration system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only Wedderburn and Inglewood have dedicated Toddler’s pool system (refer to individual reports). • At Boort the Toddlers Pool is combined with the Program pool onto one system and this is considered acceptable in this case. • Separate systems are recommended and preferable.
Disabled Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only Inglewood has dedicated access provisions (platform lift and hoist) into the main pool. • For the other pools, community benefits will need to be considered by Council in deciding on the scope and scale of any specific access system into pools.

6.5.2 Overall Asset Renewal Costs

The table below provides a 10-year overview of indicative costs associated with recommended works from the audits conducted by JWC Engineers.

Table 27: 10 Year Asset Renewal Plan Estimates

Facility	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 6-10	Cost over 10 years
Boort	\$53,560		\$150,797	\$68,656			\$273,013
Inglewood	\$46,350						\$46,350
Mitiamo				\$50,648	\$37,097		\$87,745
Pyramid Hill			\$49,173			\$439,412	\$488,585
Wedderburn		\$366,010	\$34,967				\$400,977
Annual Total	\$99,910	\$366,010	\$234,937	\$119,304	\$37,097	\$439,412	\$1,296,670

GST excluded.

Cost escalations included from year 2.

Allowances included in the above table: Prelim/margin 15%, locality allowance 3%, design contingency 5%, construction contingency 25%.

Detailed Individual Facility Works and Costs

The table on the next page details the proposed 10-year Asset Renewal Plan and indicative associated costs. The items listed include renewal and refurbishment items, those that have been found needed for the ongoing operations of the pool. These works do not include regular Council maintenance program items (e.g., pool painting and expansion joint reinstatement).

There are a number of items that have been identified for renewal but have been excluded from the above table. They are:

- **Boort Outdoor Pool – Disabled Change Facilities** – such facilities are required to match with the above listed DA access into the pools, but Council advised that they would be done under a separate project with separate funding.
- **'Backwash Tanks/TWA'** has been removed and is suggested to be addressed as a maintenance item. Tanks are provided and the remaining task is for Council to ensure an appropriate TWA is in place and that the discharge to sewer complies.
- **'Depth Signage'** has been removed and is suggested to be addressed as a maintenance item. Relativity new signs on posts are already in place. Old sign writing on the hobs needs to be re-painted or even painted over. [Note: depth signage requirements are addressed in RLSS GSPO and are based on a risk assessment for each pool, they are not prescribed requirements].
- **Hypo Tank Bunding** has been removed from original lists and is suggested to be addressed simply and cost effectively by limiting the FULL capacity of the tank to match the bund volume and bund height to meet crest locus criteria. The FULL capacity level could be enforced by relocating the overflow to this lower level.

Table 28: 10-Year Asset Renewal Estimates

Location	Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Years 7-10	Total
Boort	Disabled Access Ramp				\$36,016				\$36,016
	Hypo Spill Containment Bay	\$53,560							\$53,560
	Disabled Access hoist into main pool				\$32,640				\$32,640
	Hob Remedial Work			\$132,220					\$132,220
	Shade Structure Mast			\$13,113					\$13,113
	Intermediate Pool - Crack			\$5,464					\$5,464
Total		\$53,560		\$150,797	\$68,656				\$273,013
Inglewood	Hypo Spill Containment Bay	\$46,350							\$46,350
Total		\$46,350							\$46,350
Mitiamo	Disabled Access hoist into pool					\$37,097			\$37,097
	Hypo Spill Containment Bay				\$50,648				\$50,648
Total					\$50,648	\$37,097			\$87,745
Pyramid Hill	Disabled Access hoist into pool						\$38,210		\$38,210
	Main & Program. Hob Remedial/ Wet deck conversion						\$401,202		\$401,202
	Hypo Spill Containment Bay			\$49,173					\$49,173
Total				\$49,173			\$439,412		\$488,585
Wedderburn	Plant room replacement		\$306,600						\$306,600
	Hypo Spill Containment Bay		\$59,410						\$59,410
	Disabled Access hoist into pool			\$34,967					\$34,967
Total			\$366,010	\$34,967					\$400,977
Overall Total		\$99,910	\$366,010	\$234,937	\$119,304	\$37,097	\$439,412		\$1,296,670

6.6 Key Findings of Aquatic Service Review

A detailed review of the asset condition and operational performance of Loddon Shire's aquatic service found the asset condition and ongoing operation of the outdoor pools is a significant concern.

All pools operate with low patronage and now cost the Council \$47 per visit.

The aquatic service review identifies the Council subsidising the use of the aquatic facilities by \$47 per visit with an annual cost of \$700,000 and attracting 15,000 visits.

When compared to other outdoor pools in the region, Boort is operating at a moderately high visitation. Pyramid Hill, Wedderburn and Inglewood are operating at a low patronage. This is consistent with small township pools in the area. Mitiamo is very low. Mitiamo had the least number of attendances with 3,504, followed by Inglewood (4,333), Pyramid Hill (5,311) Wedderburn (5,408) and Boort has the most attendances with 11,638.

Aquatic facility management and operations are subject to increasing costs across the industry. The increasing cost of qualified staffing, chemical supply and delivery are major contributing factors for rural facilities. Loddon Shire Council has also recently considered a proposed increased management fee by the current operator, whilst undesirable, represents market rates for pool management and operations. Staff (lifeguards) and chemicals (water treatment) are the major factors in managing operational risks and if underfunded, the risk to the Council and community increase.

Loddon Shire seasonal (October to March) pool attendances have continued to decline and when considered against the increasing costs, the Council will need to consider the benefit versus the cost of providing an aquatic service in the future.

The Council recognises that the Loddon Shire community value having access to swimming pool facilities and despite declining attendances there is strong support for them. Unfortunately, the high cost of swimming pools is placing considerable pressure on Council's capacity to fund them amongst other competing community and infrastructure needs. A strategic approach to addressing this issue is critical.

Mitiamo and Pyramid Hill pools have overlapping catchments and Echuca and Bendigo indoor pools service Loddon Shire.

Boort is the main tourism centre, and Wedderburn is the main service centre of Loddon, which has the largest population catchments. Inglewood pool and facilities are in the best condition, and its location is central to communities in the south, including Bridgewater, Newbridge and Serpentine. This area is identified for future growth.

Most residents can access a pool within an approximately 20 to 30-minute drive. Two outdoor pool facilities are located within the secondary catchment areas for Wedderburn (Charlton Swimming Pool and St Arnaud Swimming Pool) and Mitiamo (Lockington Swimming Pool).

Loddon Shire pools are not the only pools servicing Loddon residents. Bendigo, Dunolly, and Echuca pools also service Loddon communities. As the facilities in Loddon Shire are all outdoor seasonal pools, it can be assumed that if residents wish to participate in aquatic programs, i.e., learn-to-swim lessons or swim year-round, they will drive to Bendigo or Echuca indoor aquatic facilities.

The overlap of primary and secondary catchment zones between Pyramid Hill and Mitiamo Pools is significant, with both facilities servicing the catchment populations. The close proximity to each other may impact the operational performance and sustainability of these facilities.

The overlap of Wedderburn and Inglewood Pools is also within the primary and secondary catchment zone (15-to-30-minute drive time). However, both have the highest primary catchment populations of 1,012 and 1,393 respectively.

\$1.3 million is needed over the next 10 years to maintain the current aquatic service.

The Structural Engineer (JWS Engineers) has provided a detailed Technical Assessment of the aquatic facilities and identified the asset management (renewal) requirements of the facilities in the next 10 years. The total cost of these works is approximately \$1.3 million over 10 years to maintain the current benefit.

This funding only maintains the assets and does not provide any additional benefit to the community or address dignified accessibility and depth concerns with pools. The pools do not meet current industry standards and are now over 50 years old.

The asset management costs do not include regular Council maintenance program items (e.g., pool painting and expansion joint reinstatement). These items are still required to be completed, and therefore, consideration must be made as to how these will be funded and included in future budget planning.

Pyramid Hill has the highest estimated renewal plan cost at a total of \$488,585. This is followed by Wedderburn (\$400,977), Boort (\$273,013), Mitiamo (87,745) and Inglewood has the lowest of (\$46,350).

The current "management model" for aquatics in Loddon is effective, yet unavoidably expensive. The current financial input of public money has become unsustainable. The need to explore and evaluate other potential partnership management models is critical and must occur over the next three years in order to preserve any chance of retaining the current number of aquatic facilities beyond 2028.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

What issues and opportunities were identified by the community?

The planning process included a comprehensive community engagement process including interviewing land managers and surveying community, sport, and recreation groups.

The engagement process involved:

- Community survey
- Sports club/association survey
- Community drop-in sessions
- Public submissions
- Stakeholder interviews.

The following provides a summary of the key issues, opportunities and constraints identified through the stakeholder engagement process. The data will be used to help guide the strategic directions and key recommendations for the Open Space, Recreation and Aquatic Strategy

7.1 Previous Engagement Findings

This section summarises the recent engagement findings from the Activating Open Space Strategy 2019-2024 and Swimming Pool Improvement Plan 2022.

Activating Open Space Strategy 2019-2024 Engagement Findings

The Activating Open Space Strategy 2019-2024 conducted an extensive consultation process to identify ideas for activating Loddon Shire's public open spaces. Across all consultation methods, 273 residents responded with their ideas.

There were various ways through which people from Wedderburn and Boort P-12 schools provided their feedback. 44 respondents participated in the consultation with young people. Additionally, three listening posts were set up at Wedderburn IGA Supermarket, Calivil Recreation Reserve and Inglewood Recreation Reserve, and 95 people responded to them. Seven people participated in the Seniors Forum, while the Townscape Services staff meeting received feedback from four respondents and the Technical Services staff meeting got feedback from one respondent. Lastly, 122 respondents shared their feedback through the Community Survey.

Residents who completed a survey identified the following ideas that would encourage them to utilise public open spaces more often:

- More events, e.g. movies in the park, festivals, markets, etc
- More or better walking/cycling paths and linkages
- More shade
- Outdoor gym equipment
- More seats and shelters
- More/better play equipment
- Picnic tables
- Drinking fountains
- Physical activity programs, e.g. outdoor tai chi, yoga, Zumba dance.

Swimming Pool Improvement Plan 2022 Engagement Findings

An engagement process was undertaken as part of the plan that included a survey of pool users and the general community.

A total of 87 pool user survey responses were received. Key responses were:

- 88% wanted extended opening hours.
- 81% would like more activities, particularly more inflatable days.
- 76% indicated they like more recreation/play equipment.
- 72% wanted more information about services and programs.
- Introduction of early morning lap swimming.
- Introduction of morning adult-only time and hosting water aerobics/strength training.
- Re-introduction of diving boards for children and young people.
- More shade.
- Upgrade change rooms, showers, toilets and kiosks.
- Install water play splash parks.

A total of 46 community survey responses were received. Key responses were:


- 70% of respondents frequented a Loddon Shire pool.
- Seven respondents said they would visit more often if an adult-only lap swimming or water aerobics/strength training class was offered.
- Six respondents wanted more events.
- Four respondents wanted extended hours.
- Several respondents wanted more information about services and programs.

7.2 Community Survey Findings


This section summarises the key findings from the community survey conducted online. This survey took place between 04 December 2023 to 09 April 2024. A total of **59 people** completed the survey.

7.2.1 Respondent Profile


The following information provides details on who responded to the survey.



The majority (59%) of respondents were female.



Age group that represents the highest percentage of the respondents is 35 to 49 years (42%) followed by 60 to 69 years (21%).



The predominant postcodes where respondents lived were Bridgewater on Loddon 3516 (9 respondents), Pyramid Hill 3575 (9 respondents), Boort 3537 (8 respondents) and Wedderburn 3518 (8 respondents).

Figure 26: Survey Respondent Characteristics

The following tables summarise the user survey respondents' sample for Loddon Shire.

Table 29: User Survey Respondent Sample

Category	Sub-group	Number	%
Gender	Women	35	59%
	Men	17	29%
	Non-binary	0	0
	Prefer not to specify	5	12%
Age Range	Under 17	0	0
	18 to 24 years	0	0
	25 to 34 years	8	14%
	35 to 49 years	24	42%
	50 to 59 years	9	16%
	60 to 69 years	12	21%
	70 to 84 years	3	7%
	85 and over	0	0

Table 30: User Survey Population Statistics

Suburb	Count
Boort	8
Bridgewater on Loddon	9
Wedderburn	8
Serpentine	3
Pyramid Hill	9
Newbridge	2
Calivil	2

A review of the survey respondents indicates that:

- More females (59%) than males (29%) responded to the survey.
- The age group that represents the highest percentage of respondents is 35 to 49 years (42%) followed by 60 to 69 years (21%).
- The predominant postcodes where respondents lived were Bridgewater on Loddon 3516 (9 respondents), Pyramid Hill 3575 (9 respondents), Boort 3537 (8 respondents) and Wedderburn 3518 (8 respondents).

7.2.2 Aquatic Facilities in Loddon Shire

This section focuses on the survey questions relating to the aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire, the usage and residents' feedback on the condition of the facilities as well as suggestions for future improvements.

Usage times

The following chart indicates the number of respondents using the aquatics facilities at various time slots.

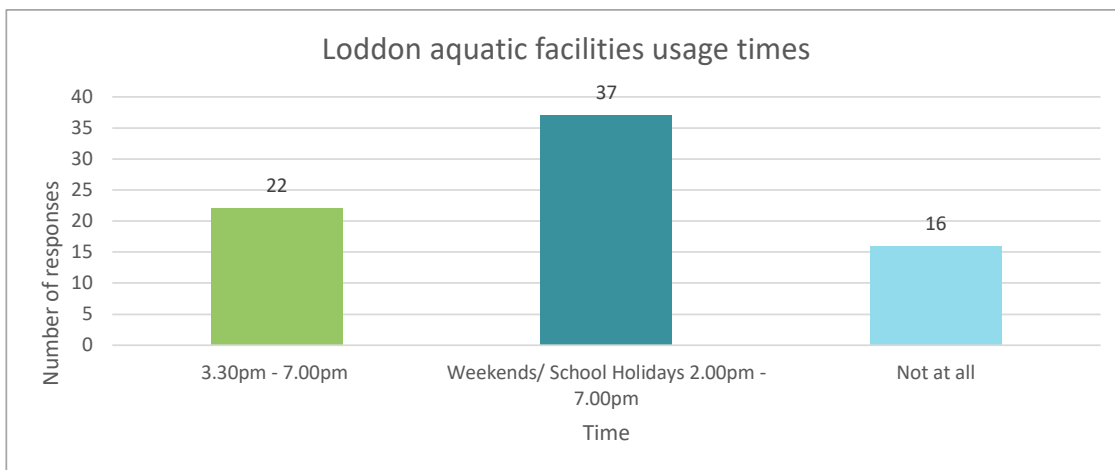


Figure 27: Loddon Aquatic Facilities usage times

The majority of pool use occurred during school holidays and on weekends (37 respondents). Approximately twenty-two respondents reported visiting an aquatic facility between 3.30 pm and 7.00 pm on weekdays.

Travel to aquatics facilities in Loddon Shire

The following table summarises how respondents travelled to the aquatic facilities and where they travelled from.

Table 31: Transport to aquatics facilities

Category	Sub-Group	Number	% of Respondents
Location of Origin	Home	46	77.9%
	Work	8	13.5%
	School	13	22%
	Other	4	6.7%
Mode of Transport	Bike	4	6.7%
	Car	44	74.5%
	Walk	12	20.3%
	Other	2	3.3%

Most survey respondents indicated that they travel to the pools from their home (77.9%), followed by school (22%) and work (13.5%).

The majority of respondents travelled by car (74.5%). Walking was also a popular method of travel (20.3%) indicating that the majority of residents are prepared to travel by car to access a facility.

Frequency of visitation to aquatics facility

The following graph indicates the frequency of visitation to the aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire.

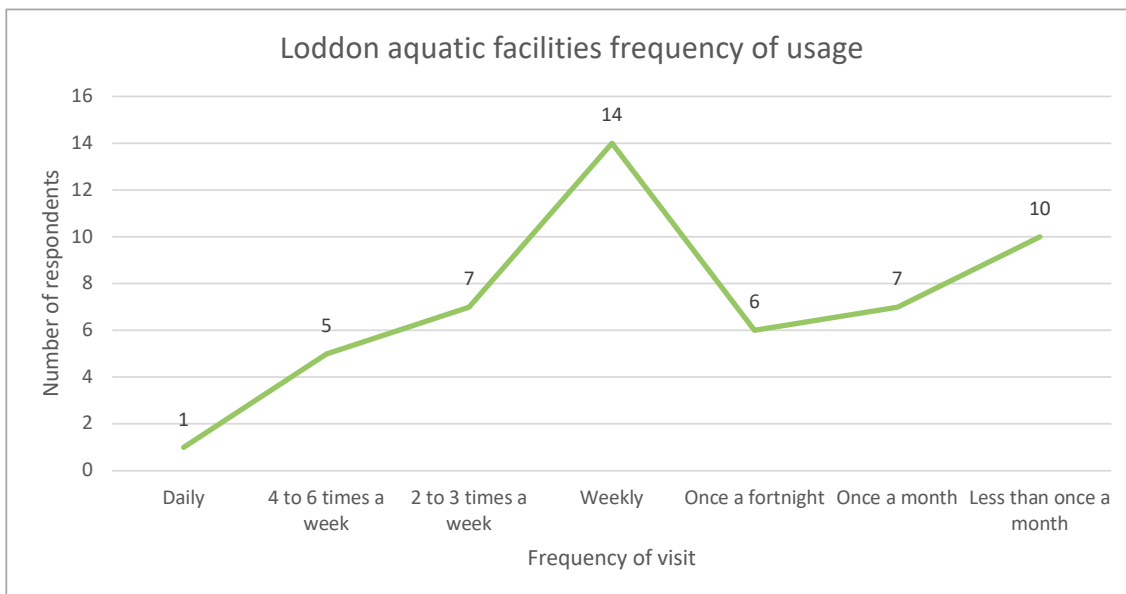


Figure 28: Loddon aquatic facilities frequency of usage

The results indicate that the respondents are regular users of aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire. The majority of the respondents used the pool once a week or more (27 respondents) with the most common being weekly visits (14 respondents). Ten respondents reported only using swimming pools once a month.

Reason to visit aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire

The following table indicates the reasons that residents chose to visit the aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire.

Table 32: Reasons to visit aquatic facilities

Main reasons to visit	Count	Percentage
Close to home	35	59.3%
To use outdoor pool	18	30.5%
Friends/family use it	15	25.4%
Close to work/school	12	20.3
Good facilities	9	15.2%
To attend aquatic program	3	5%
Low entry charges	2	3%
To attend swim club program	2	3%
To attend health and fitness program	3	5%
To attend leisure water/fun pools	3	5%
To attend learn to swim program	2	3%
Other (please specify)	7	11.8%

The survey results indicate that the most popular reason to visit the pool was proximity to home (59.3%) and to use an outdoor pool (30.5%) and the third most popular reason being to use the pool with friends and family (25.4%).

Reasons to not use aquatics facilities in Loddon Shire

The following table indicates the reasons that residents chose not to visit the aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire.

Table 33: Reasons not to visit aquatic facilities

Reasons to not visit an aquatic facility	Count	Percentage
Activity not available	7	16.2%
Go to river or open water	7	16.2%
Too busy	4	9.3%
Opening times don't suit	3	6.9%
No disabled access	3	6.9%
Don't know what is available	2	3.3%
Don't like swimming	2	3.3%
Not interested	2	3.3%
Prefer indoor pools	2	3.3%
Too old	2	3.3%
Work commitments	2	3.3%
Other	7	16.2%

Of the 43 respondents that indicated that they have not used an aquatic facility in the past, 16.2% indicated that the activity they were seeking was not available and 16.2% respondents preferred swimming in rivers or open water.

Aquatics facilities used outside of Loddon Shire

The following chart indicates what other facilities outside of the Loddon Shire that residents use.

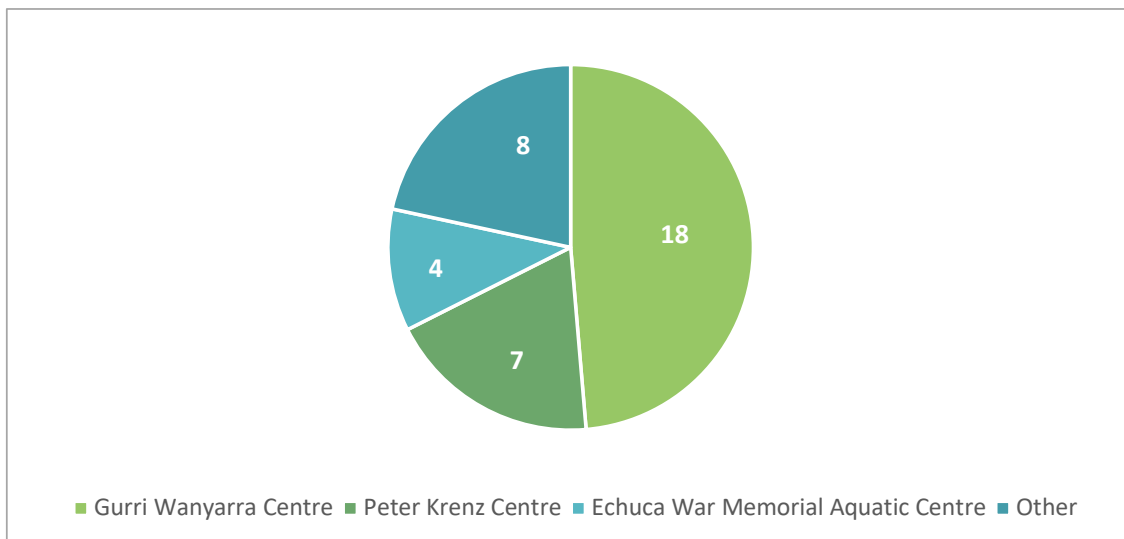


Figure 29: Visits to aquatic facilities outside Loddon Shire

Of the respondents who reported using an aquatics facility outside of Loddon Shire, the Gurri Wanyarra Centre, located in Bendigo (Kangaroo Flat), was the most popular with 18 respondents indicating they had visited the Centre, followed by the Peter Krenz Centre also located in Bendigo (Eaglehawk) and the Echuca War Memorial Aquatic Centre. Other pools used include the Dunolly Outdoor Pool and Kerang Outdoor Pool.

Main activities at visits to aquatic centre

The following activities were identified as the most popular among residents that make use of the pools.

Table 34: Activities undertaken at the pool

Activities	Count
Take child to pool	15
Recreation swimming/fun	14
Cool down from hot weather	12
Lap swim/fitness	11
Rehabilitation programs	8
Spectator	7
Group health and fitness classes	5

Main activities at the aquatic facilities include taking children to the pools (15 respondents), swimming for fun or recreation (14 respondents) and cooling down from hot weather (12 respondents).

Use of aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire

The following graph indicates the usage of the individual aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire. The criteria used was:

- Never Used
- Used Sometimes/Also Used
- Used Most.

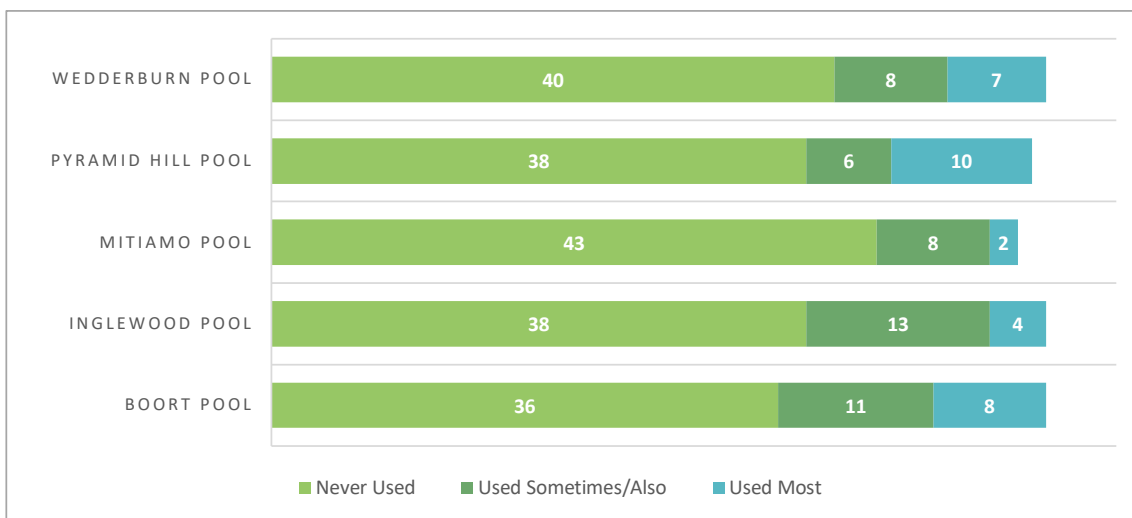


Figure 30: Usage of aquatics facilities in Loddon Shire

Pyramid Hill Pool was identified as the most used pool, followed by Boort Pool. Residents also used Inglewood Pool. Mitiamo Pool was the least used, followed by Wedderburn Pool

Rating of aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire

The respondents rated the aquatic facilities they used based on their level of satisfaction.

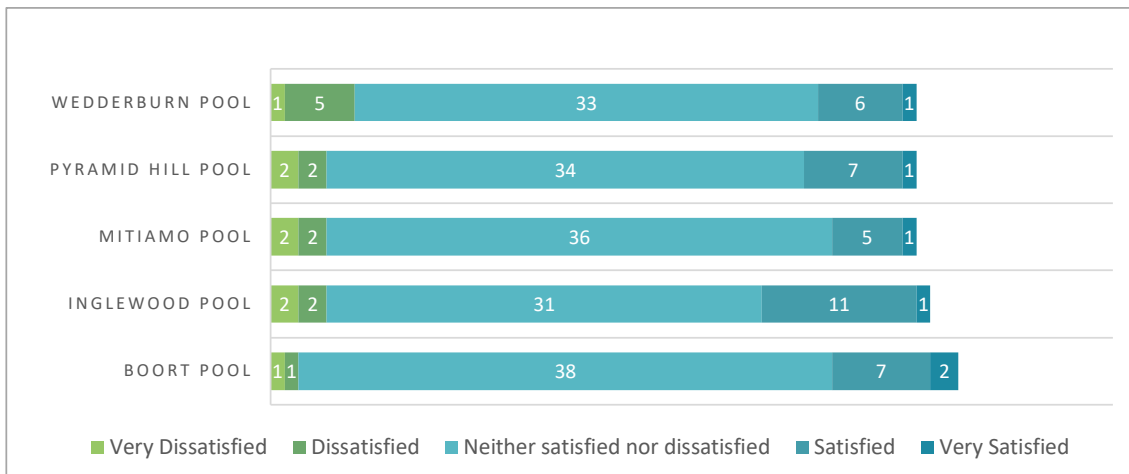


Figure 31: Rating of aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire

Inglewood Pool was rated the highest with 12 respondents indicating they were either “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the facility. Inglewood pool was followed by Boort pool with 9 votes of either “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied”. Wedderburn Pool had the most votes for either “Dissatisfied” or “Very Dissatisfied”.

Future visitation

Approximately 83.6% of the respondents indicated that they would make greater use of Loddon Shire aquatic centres in the future while 16.4% of the respondents indicated that would not make use or greater use in the future.

The following table indicates the key services or opportunities that would encourage greater use in the future.

Table 35: Improvement areas

Improvement areas	Count	Percentage
Health and fitness Centre	22	37.2%
Longer opening hours	20	33.8%
Warm water pool for therapy/rehabilitation	19	32.2%
More variety of activities/programs	14	23.7%
Health related programs	14	23.7
Larger/improved learn to swim pool	13	22%
Improved learn to swim programs	12	20%
Gym/weights facilities	9	15.2%
Cleaner more hygienic facilities	7	11.8%
Membership packages/discounts	6	10.1%
Other	22	37.2%

Improvement areas highlighted by respondents include enhancing the Health and Fitness Centre (37.2%), extending opening hours (33.8%), introducing a warm water pool for therapy/rehabilitation (32.2%), offering a greater variety of activities/programs (23.7%), and implementing health-related programs (23.7%).

Summary of feedback on aquatic facilities

- The main reasons for choosing aquatic facilities are proximity to home and the availability of outdoor pools, emphasising the importance of accessibility and outdoor recreational options for the community.
- The presence of friends and family using the facilities also plays a significant role in encouraging visitation.
- Activities such as taking children to the pool and recreational swimming are highly popular, indicating the family-oriented nature of aquatic facility use.
- A large number 83.6% of respondents plan to use the aquatic facilities more in the future, indicating a growing demand for aquatic programs and services.
- There is a clear demand for improving health and fitness centres, introducing warm water therapy pools, and enhancing learn-to-swim programs.
- Extending facility operating hours is as a key improvement area, highlighting the need for more flexible and accessible service timings.
- Diversifying activity and program offerings, including health-related programs, was identified as essential for catering to a broader range of community interests.
- The results underscore the importance of a community-centric approach in designing and maintaining aquatic facilities, emphasising accessibility, family-friendly activities, and social connections.
- Ensuring consistent facility quality across all locations is vital to meeting the diverse needs and expectations of the community.
- Anticipating and planning for increased facility use and addressing improvement areas proactively can help Loddon Shire meet the evolving demands of its residents effectively.

7.2.3 Sports and Active Recreation in Loddon Shire

This section focuses on the survey questions relating to sport and recreation activities and facilities in Loddon Shire, as well as suggestions for future improvements.

Participation in sports and recreation activities

Residents were asked about their participation frequency in organised and non-organised indoor and outdoor sports or recreational activities. They were asked to select between once a week, once a month, once every six months, once a year, less often than once a year and never.

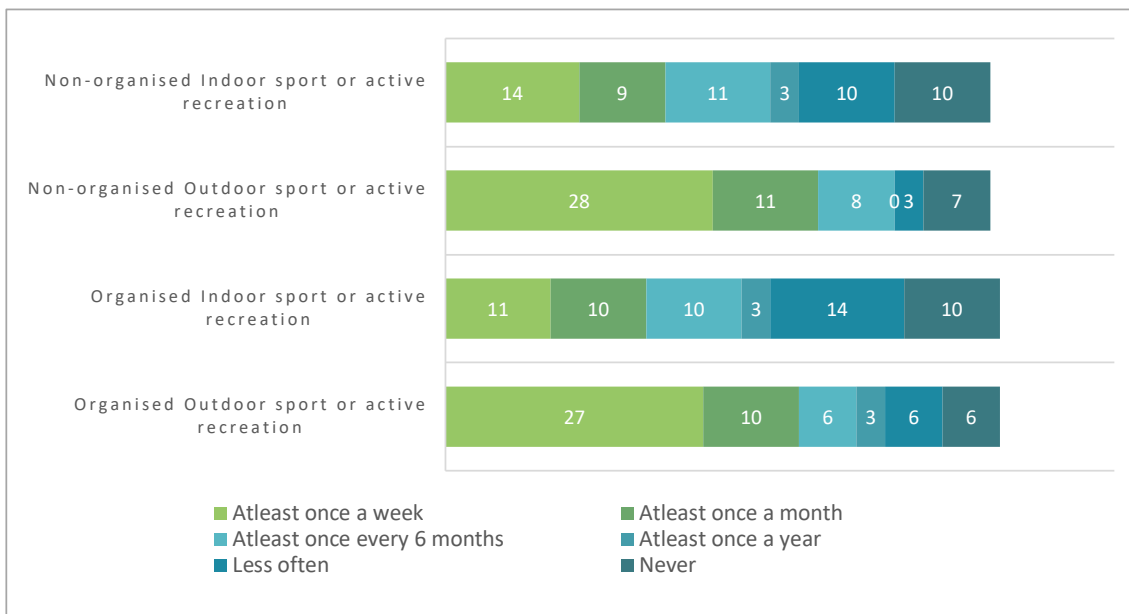


Figure 32: Participation frequency

The categories with the highest participation were seen in non-organised outdoor sport or active recreation, which includes sports such as walking and hiking (28 respondents) and organised outdoor sport or active recreation such as football and cricket (27 respondents).

Loddon Shire sports and active recreation membership

Approximately 71% of the respondents reported being a member of a sport club or association in Loddon Shire. Approximately 9% were not members of any club.

Of the respondents who reported being a member of a sport club, the following sports were the most popular:

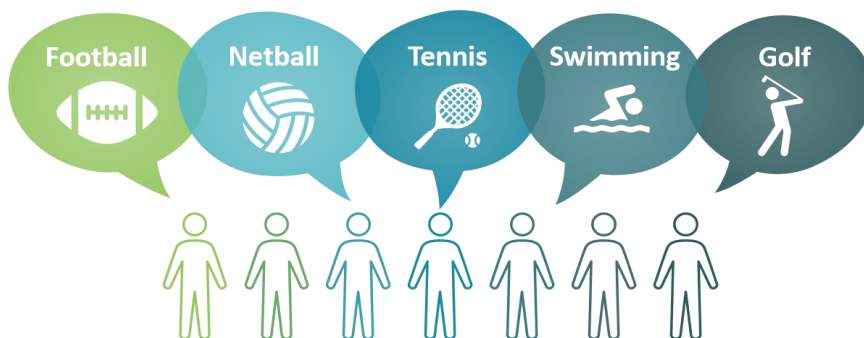


Figure 33: Most popular club-based participation

Satisfaction with current provision

Using a five-point rating system, survey respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the current sport and active recreation provision in Loddon Shire.

Table 36: Satisfaction with current provisions in Loddon Shire

Sport/Active recreation	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Outdoor sport fields	3	3	5	39	8
Sport courts	1	5	9	33	10
Sports greens	1	1	18	25	12
Golf courses	3	6	26	20	1
Riding sports facilities	11	24	20	2	0
Walking and riding tracks and trails	6	15	18	19	0
Fitness stations	8	13	17	18	2
Play spaces	9	17	17	14	1
Other active recreation facilities	9	20	26	2	0
Parks and gardens	9	11	19	17	2
Water sport facilities	3	11	13	26	4
Sport and active recreation activities for children	12	15	25	5	0
Sport and active recreation activities for young people	6	18	24	10	0
Sport and active recreation activities for adults	6	10	25	16	1
Sport and active recreation activities older adults	6	11	27	12	2
Other	6	6	18	2	0

Respondents who reported feeling “Dissatisfied” or “Very Dissatisfied” were asked to elaborate further. Common themes from the feedback include:

- Infrastructure and facilities:** Residents expressed concerns about the outdated and worn-out facilities in Loddon Shire. Specifically, the changing rooms at Boort Park need renovation to meet modern standards. Additionally, there is a strong demand for an indoor pool that would offer year-round access to aquatic activities. Many public areas lack shade, making them less appealing for community use. There are also calls for marked mountain bike trails and well-maintained skate parks.
- Sport and social recreation for young people:** The community has highlighted a significant gap in recreational spaces tailored to teenagers and young adults. There's a clear need for modular play areas, skateparks, and basketball courts. The absence of these facilities limits the recreational options available to young people, leading to calls for more diverse activities beyond traditional sports like netball and football. Additionally, residents have suggested climbing walls and outdoor performing or visual arts facilities to cater to a broader range of interests.
- Public engagement and awareness:** Residents pointed out the lack of regular fitness spaces available for local participation. The feedback also indicated that current sporting groups and activities are not adequately advertised, leading to low awareness among community members. This lack of promotion hinders community engagement and participation in local sports and recreational activities. There is also a call for more nature-focused spaces, such as wildlife sanctuaries and local food production areas.

- **Accessibility and inclusivity:** Accessibility is a common concern in Loddon Shire, with limited facilities catering to women in most sporting clubs. Additionally, there is a lack of facilities in the northern half of the Shire, making it challenging for residents in these areas to access recreational amenities. The community is calling for more inclusive facilities that cater to a broader range of interests beyond elite sports, ensuring that everyone can participate and benefit from recreational activities.
- **Maintenance and management:** Concerns about the maintenance and management of public spaces and facilities were raised by residents. Concerns were expressed about the poor quality of the maintenance and the heavy reliance on community volunteers to keep them operational. Residents are calling for Council-led initiatives to improve and maintain public facilities, ensuring they meet the needs and expectations of the community.
- **Recreation and leisure activities:** Residents highlighted the limited availability of recreational activities beyond traditional sports in Loddon Shire. There are calls for more diverse options, including walking and riding tracks, fitness stations, and canoe launches.

Importance of provision of sport and active recreation

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following sport and active recreation provisions, selecting between non important, somewhat important and very important.

Table 37: Importance of sport and recreation provision

Sport/Active recreation	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Outdoor sport fields	6	15	34
Sport courts	7	16	32
Sports greens	9	22	24
Golf courses	14	21	20
Riding sports facilities	7	14	34
Walking and riding tracks and trails	1	10	44
Fitness stations	9	23	22
Play spaces	4	12	39
Other active recreation facilities	18	20	17
Parks and gardens	1	10	44
Water sport facilities	0	16	38
Sport and active recreation activities for children	5	20	33
Sport and active recreation activities for young people	2	20	33
Sport and active recreation activities for adults	2	18	35
Sport and active recreation activities older adults	4	15	36
Other	4	9	10

The survey results indicate that walking and riding tracks and trails (44%), parks and gardens (44%), and play spaces (39%) were top three activities, followed by golf courses (20%) and other active recreation facilities (17%).

Improvements to the current sport and active recreation provision suggested by respondents

Further improvements mentioned by the residents include:



Pool Facilities

Community seek access to an indoor heated swimming pool to provide year-round access for community members.



Parks and Outdoor Spaces

Residents are calling for improvements in local parks and trails and well-maintained spaces with green grass, shade, and recreational activities that are accessible without cost to participants.



Arts, Culture and Education

Residents express interest in incorporating arts and culture, including First Nations history and culture, into recreational activities.



Accessibility and Amenities

There's a need for more seating areas to accommodate older generations who walk for health reasons. Additionally, amenities such as open toilet facilities near playgrounds are lacking and need improvement.



Sustainability and Local Production

Residents are interested in building systems to produce local food, support fisheries, and establish wildlife sanctuaries to enhance community resilience and sustainability.

Figure 34: Suggested improvements to the current sport and active recreation provision

To what extent do the following things prevent you (or other members of your household) from participation in sport or active recreation in Loddon Shire?

Table 38: Reasons not to participate in sport or active recreation

Reasons	No impact	To some extent	To great extent
Lack of facilities within easy access of where I/we live	16	26	16
Lack of facilities within easy access of where I/we live	35	17	6
Venue joining or activity fees are too expensive	36	16	6
Club I/we would like to join has too many members	53	4	1
I don't feel safe participating in my area	52	4	2
Cost of travel to venues	30	19	9
Poor disability access to facilities I/we would like to use	41	9	8
No existing club in my/our preferred sport and active recreation activity	22	19	16
Sport, active recreation and social recreation facility is poor quality	28	21	9
Sport and active recreation and social recreation facility is not fit for purpose	31	19	8
Existing sport and active recreation and social recreation facilities are too crowded	52	5	1
I don't know what sport or active recreation and social recreation facilities or services are available	32	22	3
I don't feel welcome at the sport and active recreation and social recreation facility I/we would like to use	43	14	1
Sport and active recreation and social recreation facilities/activities are not available at hours that are suitable for me/us	28	23	7
Other	14	3	4

The main reasons not to use sport or active recreation provision in Loddon Shire include a lack of easily accessible facilities (16 respondents), the absence of clubs or organisations catering to specific sports or recreational activities (16 respondents), poor quality of facilities (great 9 respondents), and facilities lacking modern updates (8 respondents). These reasons indicate that accessibility, availability and quality are important in influencing individuals' decisions to engage in sports and recreational activities.

7.2.4 Future Spending Priorities

Understanding the community's expectations for Council spending is crucial for aligning resources with community needs and preferences. Loddon Shire residents were asked to share their views on the Council's future funding on sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

Council spending

Participants were presented with options to choose whether they believed that the Council spending on sport and recreation should be increased, kept the same, decreased, or if they were uncertain.

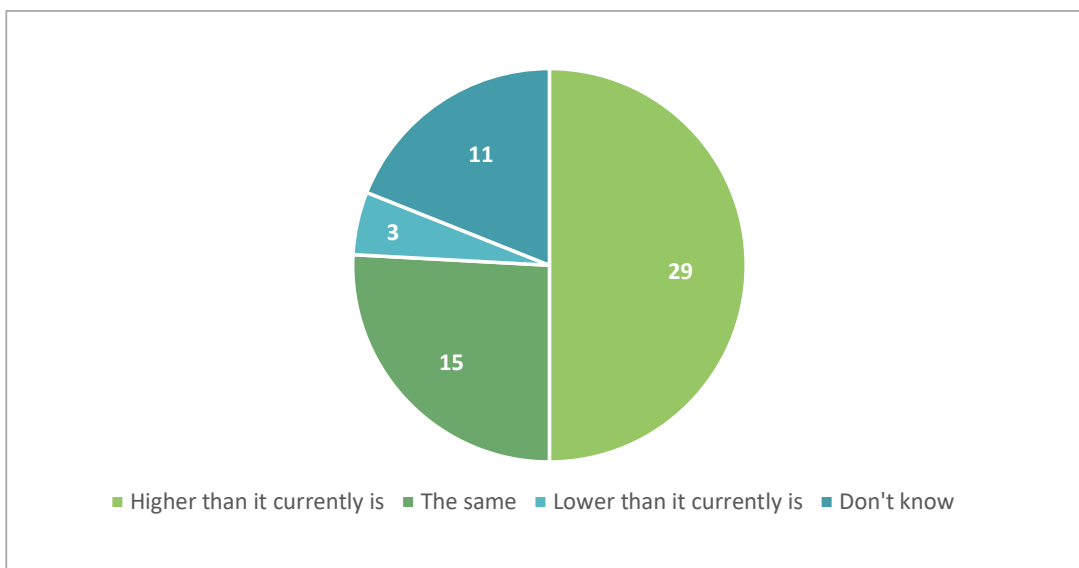


Figure 35: Future spending by Loddon Shire Council

Of the survey respondents:

- Twenty-nine residents or 49.1% of the respondents indicated that the Council spending should be higher than it currently is.
- Fifteen residents or 25.4% of the respondents indicated that the Council spending should remain the same.
- Eleven residents or 18.6% of the respondents indicated that the Council spending should decrease.
- Three residents or 5% of the respondents were uncertain.
- This suggests strong community support in Loddon Shire for increased Council spending on sports and active recreation, with nearly half of the respondents advocating for higher funding.

Community spending

When asked about community spending for better provision of sport in Loddon Shire, approximately 54.2% of the respondents agreed with the statement that **“they would accept fewer sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services of high quality”**. However, 45.8% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they **“would accept paying higher rates to maintain the current level of sport and active recreation”**, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

Improvements to sport and recreation in Loddon Shire

Participants were allocated a theoretical \$100 to allocate towards the listed improvements in increments of \$20, \$15, \$10, and \$5. The allocations resulted in the following amounts being spent on each improvement.



Figure 36: Spending exercise

The activity resulted in the following priorities for funding:

- Improving and maintaining play spaces
- Improving and maintaining active recreation facilities
- improving and maintaining aquatic facilities
- Improving and maintaining community sport facilities.

The feedback suggests that residents prioritise investment in existing sport and recreation provisions, such as play spaces and aquatic facilities, over the development of new facilities. This indicated a preference to value the upkeep, maintenance, and improvement of existing facilities to ensure they meet the needs and preferences of the community.

7.2.5 Written Submissions

Community organisations were invited to submit written submissions indicating current and future needs and issues. The following provides a summary of the submission received from the Pyramid Hill Golf Course Committee.

Pyramid Hill Golf Course

- The Pyramid Hill Golf Club's submission emphasizes general satisfaction with the Shire's facilities but raises concerns about ongoing streetscape works affecting the community's wellbeing and the Council's reputation.
- The club stresses the interconnectedness of community elements and advocate for improved connections between the golf course and town to enhance community attraction and membership.
- The club values a range of sports and active recreation facilities, including outdoor fields, sports courts, aquatic facilities, walking trails, and play spaces, considering them essential for community vitality. Active participation in various activities, from golf to swimming, reflects the community's passion and involvement.
- The submission emphasises the need to maintain existing facilities, improve connectivity, and complete projects on time.
- Concerns were raised about the survey's question regarding service reductions or rate increases, with the club advocating for maintaining current services without compromising on quality.

Direct feedback submissions

Wedderburn pool needs more shade and new pool hooks in showers, new shower heads, better drainage in showers, and warmer pool temperature.

7.2.6 Community Drop in Sessions

Community Drop-In Sessions were held in Loddon on the following dates:

Wednesday 6 March

- Boort IGA 9.00am - 10.30am
- Pyramid Hill Supermarket 11.15am - 12.15om
- East Loddon P-12 - 1.00pm
- Bridgewater Bowls Club 5.00pm - 6.00pm.

Thursday 7 March

- Tarnagulla Soldiers Park 9.30am - 11.00am
- Wedderburn 24 Karat Cafe 12.00pm -1.30pm.

In total approximately 170 people attended the sessions. The profile of the attendants was as follows:

- 25% seniors
- 25% adults
- 50% children and young people.

The community drop-in sessions provided an opportunity for the residents to engage with the consultants and present their concerns and ideas for the future of the sport and active recreation in Loddon.

The summary of the feedback received during the community drop-in sessions indicate the following.

- Residents value the existing sports facilities and clubs, seeing them as essential community assets. Supporting these clubs, maintaining sports facilities, and organising competitions are crucial for both children and adults, presenting an opportunity to encourage greater usage of these facilities.
- Improving access and maintaining footpaths and trails is vital for seniors. Providing amenities like water stations, shade, and seating can improve their outdoor experience and encourage more physical activity.
- Children and young people can benefit from diverse play experiences, including water play, nature play in play spaces, and active recreation opportunities like pump tracks and junior bike skills tracks.
- The community highly values the local pools as safe places for learning to swim and cooling down, especially in rural areas with waterways, farming channels, and dams.
- Offering nature-based recreation activities such as mountain biking, bouldering, bushwalking, canoeing, and fishing can attract both residents and visitors to enjoy the natural bushland and waterways.
- Key periods for pool usage are before school for lap swimming and after school for family visits. Effective communication about pool opening times and organising community events can promote greater pool usage.
- Adults appreciate gyms, fitness stations, and fitness sessions as ways to maintain fitness and health.
- There is support for hosting more community events in open spaces, particularly those that encourage physical activity and active participation.
- Ongoing maintenance, improvements, and diversification of recreational facilities is important. Specific concerns include footpath improvements, trail maintenance, and facility upgrades to meet current needs and safety standards.
- Interest in active recreation facilities like bike skills tracks, nature-based and water play experiences. Residents suggested multipurpose recreational spaces, amenities, and community-focused events.

Storyboard results

As part of the Drop-In Sessions, a storyboard was presented with potential ideas for the future of sport and active recreation in Loddon. Residents were asked to vote for their top three priorities.

The following details the responses by the different age cohorts:

Adults and Seniors

LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY

What facilities and services do you want to see?

Choose Your Top 3

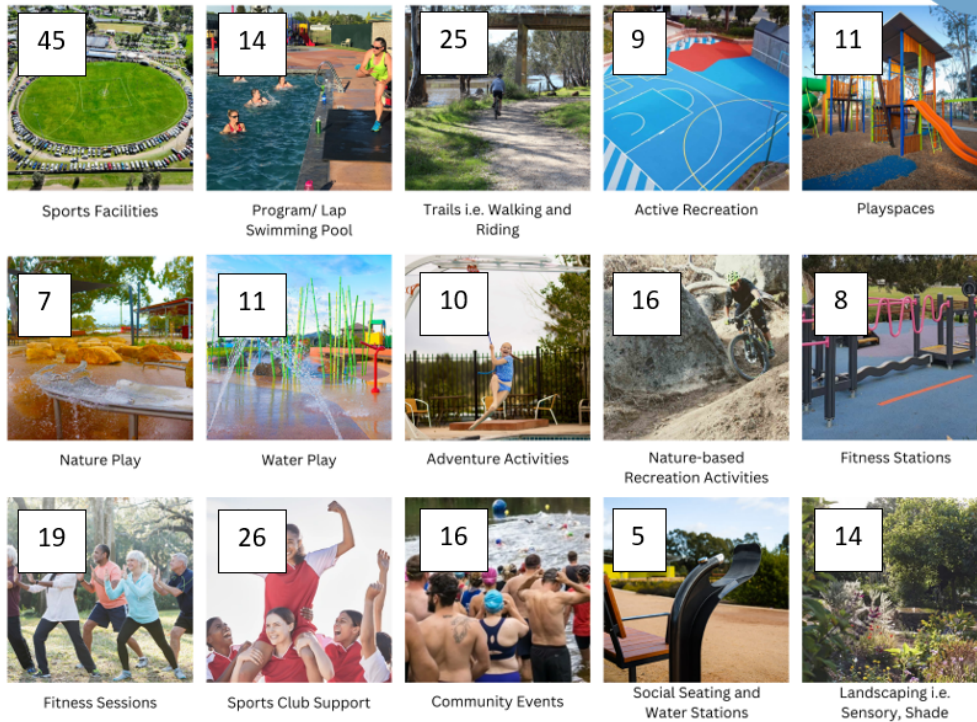


Figure 37: Storyboard results for Adults

The results indicate a high preference for outdoor sport facilities in the area followed by support for sports clubs and trails for walking and riding. Outdoor fitness stations, nature-based activities and community activities were popular as well. This indicates a high preference for accessible recreation activities in nature.

Children and Young People

LODDON RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND AQUATIC STRATEGY

What facilities and services do you want to see?

Choose Your Top 3

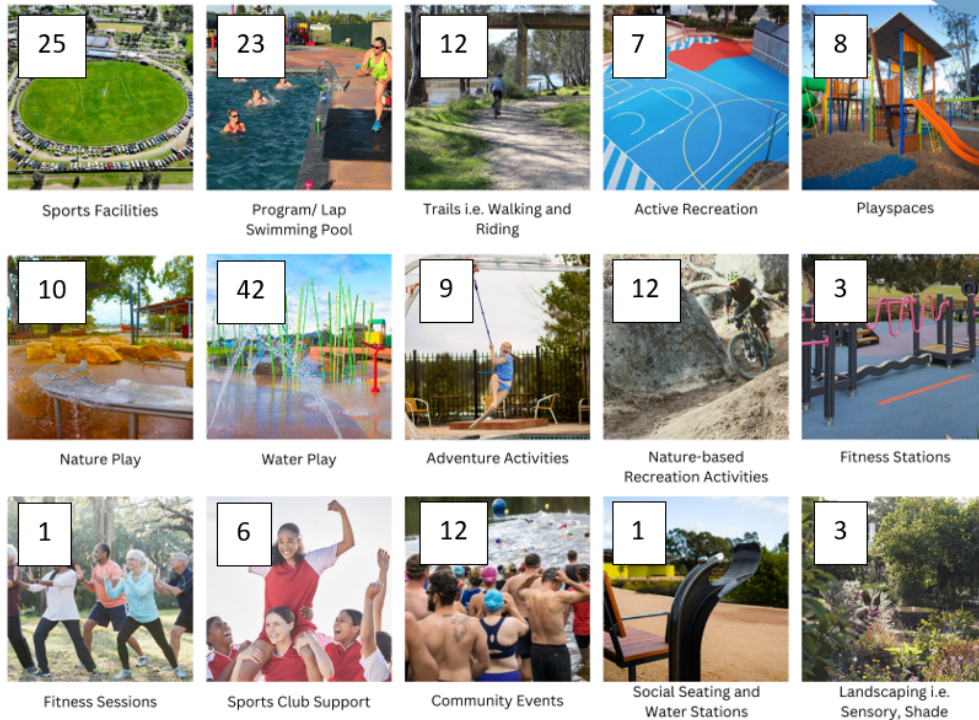


Figure 38: Storyboard results for children

Water play was the most popular activity among children followed by sport facilities and swimming pools. Nature play, trails for walking and riding, nature-based recreation activities and community events were voted highly as well.

Local community feedback

Residents provided the following feedback specific to different areas in Loddon Shire.

Boort (Attendants: 20 adults)

- Residents indicated support for active recreation such as Junior bike skills tracks and modular pump tracks.
- Water play was a popular suggestion which diversifies aquatic offerings for the community.
- Recreation hub project in Boort.
- Early years play - nature and adventure.
- Footpaths need improvements.
- Visitors appreciate the nature, the place, people and café.



Figure 39: Park in Boort

Pyramid Hill (Attendants: 1 child, 10 adults)

Open spaces:

- Play space identified as a high priority.
- Nature, adventure, and sensory play crucial for enhancing early years' recreation experiences.
- Community interest in introducing Parkrun events.
- Maintenance of trails is essential for promoting outdoor activities.
- Significant pool attendance observed with 75 kids on a hot weekend day.
- Echuca East Play space recognised for well-executed water play features.
- Community events like bike races contribute to local engagement.
- Safe path to Pyramid Hill Summit Trail is a priority.
- Pyramid Hill boasts healthy sports participation in football, netball, and golf.
- Signage and wayfinding improvements needed for Pyramid Hill Summit Trail.
- Shade provision required along footpaths and trails, especially in Main Street.
- Support for group gathering seating in communal areas.
- Bindi-eyes causing punctures; removal needed beyond spraying to address the issue.
- Diversification of sport opportunities desired; interest in joining a darts group.
- Need for a diverse range of active recreation opportunities within the town.



Figure 40: Pyramid Hill

Aquatics:

- Open swimming pool hours suggested during mornings (6-8am) and after school (3-5pm).
- Maintain pool to support VIC swim and swim lessons for three schools.
- Extended pool operating hours suggested to accommodate community needs.

East Loddon (Attendants: 50 children, 15 adults)**Calivil**

- Continue servicing the pools.
- Need admin support for reserve committees and clubs.

Serpentine

- Improve access and activities on river and river frontage.
- Suggestions for Council to buy the paddock behind reserve and expand oval and area for multi-purpose gym and housing to attract families.

Mitiamo

- Pool concerns - unclear on when it is open/communication with public needs to improve.

Dingee

- Need for active recreation and play facilities.
- Oval maintenance lacking since cricket club disbanded due to low numbers.
- Tennis and Bowls share facility; both sports are active with junior and senior competitions.
- Reserve committee responsible for maintenance; seeking assistance for improvements.
- Community-based activities predominantly held after school hours.
- Trail requires maintenance to encourage increased usage.

Bridgewater (Attendants: 3 children, 35 adults)

- Lack of wayfinding to reserve.
- Unsafe crossing areas.
- Desire for an active recreation site for riding/skating.
- Improved access needed, current paths force pedestrians onto roads.
- Sports field requires drainage improvements.
- Courts nearing end-of-life; last renovated 22 years ago with visible cracking.
- Urgent need for maintenance and court renewal.
- Requirement for 4 playable courts which are feasible to implement.
- 20% energy reduction expected with LED light installation, but daytime use needs to be promoted.
- Interest in open water swimming lessons.
- Proposal for a rail trail from Bridgewater to Inglewood.
- Need for a designated riding circuit.
- Off-road trail for riding desired.
- Concerns over play space location; lacks toilet facilities.
- Support for repurposing disused green spaces.
- Advocacy for more fitness stations.
- Embrace Inglewood's model: invest in a standout site to create a recreational destination.
- Community interest in tractor pulling events.
- Struggles observed in summer sports participation.



Figure 41: Bridgewater on Loddon

Tarnagulla (Attendants: 20 children, 5 adults)

- The area near caravan park would make a good bike pump track.
- Yoga sessions would be beneficial for the community.

Laanecoorie

- Need play spaces in Laanecoorie as there are none at the moment.

Wedderburn (Attendants, 20 Adults)

- Need more diversity in play and active recreation and a destination play space.
- Skinners Flat waterhole needs improvement, particularly the public toilets. Great family place to use.
- Pool needs refurbishment of change room.
- Local play space swings need shade. The seating is located far from the equipment making it unsafe to supervise children.
- Fitness sessions at gym have good membership numbers.



Figure 42: War memorial at Soldiers Memorial Park, Wedderburn

Key themes from community drop-in sessions

The following provides a summary of the key themes from the community drop-in sessions:

- Residents highly value existing sports facilities and clubs as essential community assets. Active support is important for maintaining and improving these facilities to encourage increased usage.
- Improving access, footpaths, and trails is crucial, especially for seniors. Amenities like water stations, shade, and seating enhance outdoor experiences and encourage physical activity.
- Children and young people benefit from diverse play experiences, including water play and nature activities. There is high interest in activities like mountain biking, bouldering, bushwalking, and fishing to promote enjoyment of natural bushland and waterways.
- Local pools are valued as safe places for learning to swim and cooling down. Residents suggested effective communication about pool timings and community events to boost usage.
- Adults appreciate gyms, fitness stations, and fitness sessions for maintaining health and fitness.
- There is active support for hosting more community events in open spaces to encourage physical activity and participation.
- Ongoing maintenance, improvements, and diversification of recreational facilities is important. Specific concerns include footpath improvements, trail maintenance, and facility upgrades to meet current needs and safety standards.
- Interest in active recreation facilities like bike skills tracks, nature-based and water play experiences. Residents suggested multipurpose recreational spaces, amenities, and community-focused events.

7.3 Clubs and Associations Survey

A survey was distributed among local clubs and associations to gain understanding of their membership, participation, and their insight in the sport in Loddon. The survey received responses from 20 clubs and five associations. The following clubs and associations responded to the survey:

1. Kingower Cricket Club
2. Bridgewater Football Netball Club
3. Derby Tennis Club
4. Boort Lawn Tennis Club
5. Bridgewater Bowling Club
6. Inglewood Golf Club Inc
7. Bridgewater Cricket Club
8. Boort Football Club
9. Inglewood Cricket Club
10. Pyramid Hill Football Netball Club
11. Boort Lakeside Croquet Club
12. Inglewood Sports Centre
13. Inglewood Football Netball Club
14. Bridgewater Cricket Club
15. Active Farmers
16. Tarnagulla Recreation Parks Committee
17. Calivil Bowling Club
18. Pyramid Hill Bowling Club
19. Inglewood Riding Club Inc
20. Serpentine Bowling Club.

Clubs were asked to vote on the impact that some factors had on their membership and operations. They were given the choice to vote either “No Impact”, “Some Impact” and “Great Impact”. The graph on the following page shows the result on this vote.

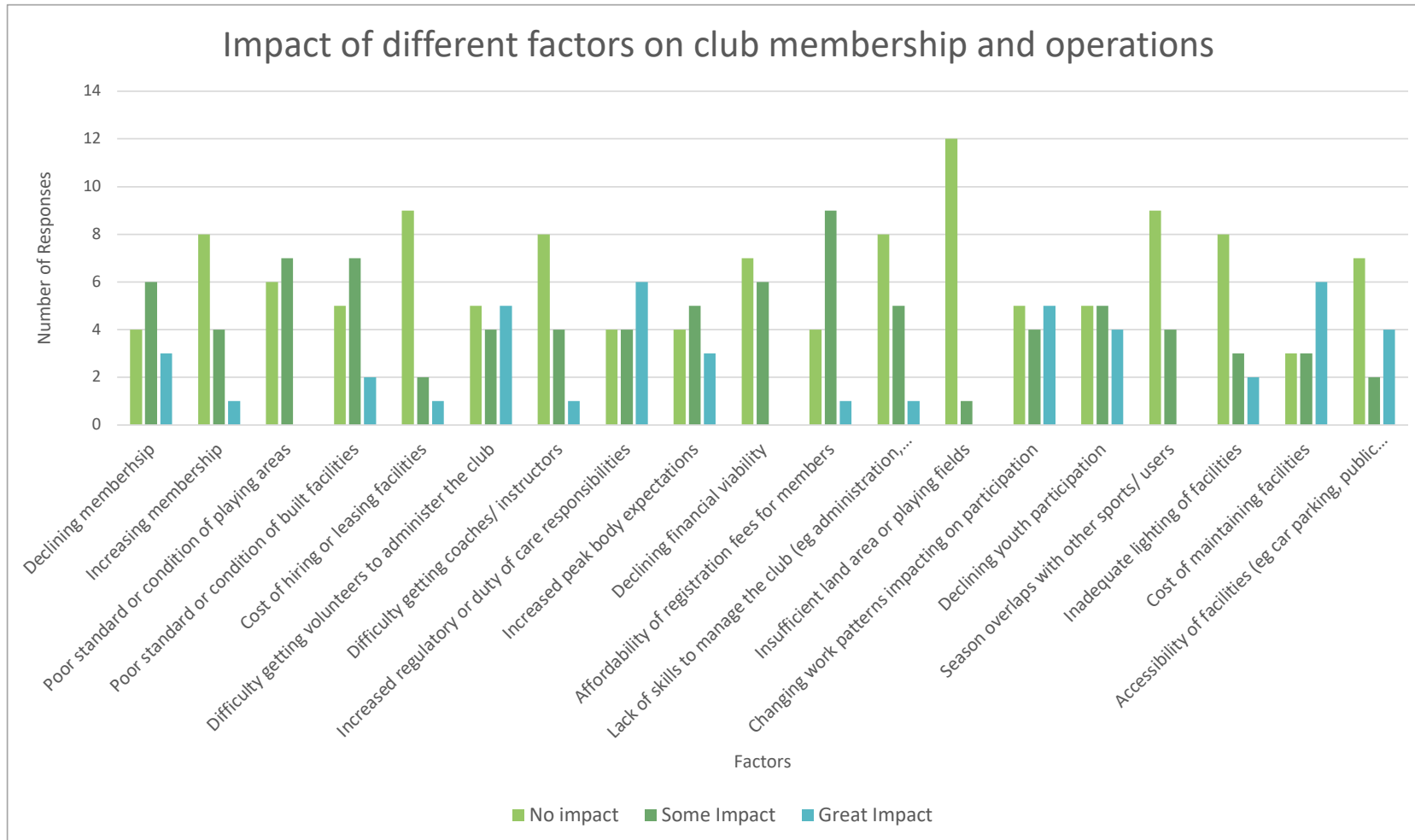


Figure 43: Impact of different factors on club membership and operations in Loddon Shire

An analysis of the graph and the survey responses, indicate the following points:

Membership concerns:

- Several clubs, such as Kingower Cricket Club, Boort Lawn Tennis Club, and Bridgewater Cricket Club, reported a great impact or some impact of declining membership.

Infrastructure and facilities:

- Some clubs, including Kingower Cricket Club, Boort Lawn Tennis Club, and Bridgewater Bowling Club, indicated poor standard or condition of playing areas as a concern.
- Poor standard or condition of built facilities is mentioned by Derby Tennis Club, Bridgewater Bowling Club, and Serpentine Bowling Club.
- Cost of maintaining facilities is a significant concern for clubs like Bridgewater Bowling Club, Inglewood sports centre, and Serpentine Bowling Club.
- Accessibility of facilities (e.g., car parking, public transport, bicycle) is highlighted by several clubs, such as Inglewood sports centre and Serpentine Bowling Club.

Financial and operational challenges:

- Difficulty in getting volunteers to administer the club was raised as an issue by Derby Tennis Club and Inglewood sports centre.
- Declining financial viability is a concern for Bridgewater Cricket Club, Active Farmers, and others.
- Cost of hiring or leasing facilities is also a concern for Derby Tennis Club and Serpentine Bowling Club.
- Affordability of registration fees for members is an important factor indicated by Boort Lawn Tennis Club and Active Farmers.

Human resources and expertise:

- Difficulty getting coaches/instructors is mentioned by Derby Tennis Club and Pyramid Hill Football Netball Club.
- Lack of skills to manage the club (e.g., administration, maintenance) are concerns noted by Derby Tennis Club, Bridgewater Cricket Club, and Inglewood sports centre.

Regulatory and participation issues:

- Increased regulatory or duty of care responsibilities is highlighted by Kingower Cricket Club and Inglewood sports centre.
- Boort Lawn Tennis Club and Serpentine Bowling Club raised concerns about declining youth participation.
- Changing work patterns impacting participation is a common observation.

Other concerns

- Kingower Cricket Club and Inglewood sports centre indicated increased peak body expectations.
- Season overlaps with other sports/users: Highlighted by Bridgewater Cricket Club and Inglewood Football Netball Club.
- Inadequate lighting of facilities was a concern raised by several clubs.

7.4 Key Findings for Stakeholder Engagement

The following provides a summary of the key issues and opportunities identified through the community engagement process:

Outdoor sporting facilities are highly valued, and the Reserve Committees and sporting clubs need support to maintained facilities and benefit to community

- **Outdoor sporting facilities are highly valued:** Residents highly value existing sports facilities and clubs as essential community assets. Active support is important for maintaining and improving these facilities to encourage increased usage.
- **Sports club challenges:** Clubs across Loddon Shire, including Kingower Cricket Club, Boort Lawn Tennis Club, and Bridgewater Cricket Club, face challenges with declining memberships, facility maintenance and in some regards deteriorating infrastructure. Supporting sport and recreation clubs in local communities was a key finding of the consultation process. It is also recognised by Council services that the partnership between Council, Reserve Committees and sporting clubs is critical to maintaining these recreation places for community.
- Financial constraints, operational challenges, difficulties in securing volunteers, and concerns over facility accessibility, management expertise, and regulatory burdens are significant issues affecting the sustainability and growth of sports and recreation clubs in the area. Additionally, there is a noted impact of changing work patterns and seasonal overlaps on participation.

The community enjoy the diverse recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities in Loddon and wish to use them more

- **Diverse facilities:** There is a strong demand for more diverse recreational spaces to cater for a broad range of interests.
- **Parks and play spaces are highly valued:** Residents highly value the township park and play space provided in each township.
- **Health and fitness stations and local programs encourage adults to be active:** Adults appreciate gyms, fitness stations, and fitness sessions for maintaining health and fitness.
- **Prioritising access to central open spaces in townships:** outdoor sport facilities and park with play space and active recreation opportunities is important with the community emphasising the proximity to home to access family-oriented sport and recreation activities encourages physical activity.
- **The community seeks an expanded aquatic program and service:** Local pools are valued as safe places for learning to swim and cooling down. Residents suggested effective communication about pool timings and community events to boost usage.

The community seeks extended operating hours and diversifying aquatic programs, events and activities to meet the needs of residents, underscoring a community-centric approach to aquatic facility design and maintenance. An indoor pool was also requested.

- Previous engagement as part of the Swimming Pool Improvement Plan 2022 identified:
 - Installing water play splash parks and play equipment, diving boards and hosting more inflatable days as ways that would encourage greater participation. Innovative adventure and play opportunities should be explored with community when considering future aquatic facilities improvements.
 - Hosting community events and introducing water aerobics, strength training, morning lap swims, etc. A range of programs and events that engage a cross-section of the community, including young and old and families should be explored with considering the future aquatic services.

Maintain recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities to encourage regular use

- **Facility upgrades and maintenance:** Ongoing maintenance, improvements, and diversification of recreational facilities is important. Specific concerns include footpath improvements, trail maintenance, and facility upgrades to meet current needs and safety standards. There is a need to enhance facility quality and maintenance.

Residents also emphasise the need for facility upgrades, including renovated changing rooms, shaded areas, and recreational amenities like mountain bike trails and skate parks, to improve the appeal and functionality of Loddon Shire's public spaces. These spaces need to be maintained to encourage regular use.

Accessible recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities will encourage participation

- **Accessibility to facilities and services:** Enhancing accessibility for seniors, diversifying play options for children and youth, promoting safe and inclusive swimming experiences, and providing a variety of recreational opportunities for adults and families are essential considerations. Improving access, footpaths, and trails is crucial, especially for seniors. Amenities like water stations, shade, and seating enhance outdoor experiences and encourage physical activity.

Additionally, the community seek more community events and support multipurpose recreational spaces. These suggestions were seen as vital for promoting physical activity and community participation.

- **Activate the recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities we have:** A range of ideas for increasing use of public open spaces have been suggested including places that are tailored for young people, increasing public engagement through better promotion of existing activities, improved accessibility across the Shire, walking and cycling paths, seating and shade, fitness and play equipment and physical activity programs.

There is active support for hosting more community events in open spaces to encourage physical activity and participation. There is growing interest in active recreation facilities like bike skills tracks, nature-based and water play experiences.

Residents suggested multipurpose recreational spaces, amenities, and community-focused events are key principles for the future recreation service.

- **Promote nature-based recreation activities:** The drop-in sessions found children and young people benefit from diverse play experiences, including water play and nature activities. There is high interest by adults in activities like mountain biking, bouldering, bushwalking, and fishing to promote enjoyment of natural bushland and waterways.
- **Key barriers:** Key barriers to engaging in sport and active recreation in Loddon Shire include limited accessibility, lack of specialised clubs or organisations, poor facility quality, and outdated amenities, underscoring the importance of addressing these issues to encourage participation.

Community want Council to prioritise high quality recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services

- **Community accepts fewer facilities if facilities are of high quality:** While a significant portion of respondents are willing to pay higher rates to maintain current sport and recreation facilities, a slightly larger group would accept fewer but higher-quality facilities, indicating a preference for prioritising maintenance and enhancement of existing infrastructure over new developments.

The “how would you spend \$100 engagement activity” resulted in the following priorities for funding:

- Improving and maintaining play spaces
- Improving and maintaining active recreation facilities
- improving and maintaining aquatic facilities
- Improving and maintaining community sport facilities.

Facilities and equipment that promote adventure and play would encourage greater use of pools. Previous engagement as part of the Swimming Pool Improvement Plan 2022 identified installing water play splash parks and play equipment, diving boards and hosting more inflatable days as ways that would encourage greater participation. Innovative adventure and play opportunities should be explored with community when considering future aquatic facilities improvements.

8. Other Impacts on Open Space and Sport and Recreation Facilities

What other issues will impact open spaces, sport and recreation facilities?

This section summarises other issues impacting open spaces, sport and recreation facilities in Loddon.

8.1 Climate Change Impacts

Climate-Ready Victoria (State Government Agency) has prepared a report reviewing the impact of climate change on the Loddon Mallee region. The report found that the Loddon Mallee has been getting warmer and drier and in the future the region can expect:

- Temperatures to continue to increase year-round. In the Loddon Shire, the rate of increase is 1.2%-1.4% since the 1960's.
- Fewer frosts.
- More hot days and warm spells. The region was impacted by the Millenium Drought (1996 to 2009).
- More frequent and more intense downpours. The Millenium Drought was ended with two of the wettest years on record in 2010-11, including the January 2011 flood. Most recently, Loddon Shire was impacted by the October 2022 flood.
- Less rainfall in autumn, winter and spring. In the Loddon Shire, rainfall has fallen by 0 to 100mm since the 1950's.
- Harsher fire weather and longer fire seasons.
- Biodiversity is at risk. Hotter temperatures will reduce the habitat for unique plants and animals.
- The more vulnerable members of our community are especially at risk of climate change impacts. These groups include the elderly, children, rural communities, and those unwell and disadvantaged.

These climate change impacts will result in an increase in flooding, landslides and erosion, damage to infrastructure and ecosystems and an increase in the spread of pests and weeds. Our recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services may reduce facility revenues from program and event cancellations and increased maintenance and insurance costs. People's health may also be impacted including, heat exhaustion and asthma related to reduced air quality.

The recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services will need to adapt to these climate change pressures and will present challenges to how we use, design and manage spaces and places in the future. Promoting sustainable and climate-ready solutions and practices will mean the community can continue to engage in sport and recreation for health, social, cultural benefits and other benefits such as economic and environmental.

The design of spaces and places will need to adapt by featuring innovative environmentally sustainable design and water sensitive urban design solutions. Examples include energy efficient technologies like LED lighting, water efficient technologies like non-potable water infrastructure, increasing tree canopy and recycling and waste management practices. Managing participant access to spaces and places and play during extreme weather events will be required to maintain a safe environment to participate.

8.2 Environmental Impacts

In 2017, the World Health Organisation (WHO) released a “brief for action” on urban green spaces. The brief is based on evidence compiled on urban green space and is defined as all urban land covered by vegetation of any kinds and on private and public grounds. These include our open spaces, sport and recreation facilities and nature conservation reserves. The brief also refers to blue spaces, water bodies and corridors.

WHO calls on policy makers and practitioners to invest in urban green spaces to provide healthy and sustainable living environments in urban areas for the health of cities and people and in the face of increasing pressures of urbanisation. These include increasing pressure from expanding populations, limited resources and growing impacts of climate change including pollution and loss of biodiversity.

WHO wants to maximise the benefits of urban green spaces through adequate planning, design and evaluation. The brief for action includes a best practice approach to urban green space planning and supports the development of a sport and recreation and open space plans.

WHO explains that urban green spaces are a feature of healthy settlements, and the evidence shows that “green spaces benefit cities and urban quality of life”. They deliver:

- Positive health, social and environmental outcomes.
- Upgrade the social and environmental quality of disadvantaged and deprived areas.
- Make a city more liveable and enjoyable.
- Contribute to the positive image of a city’s branding or identity.

8.3 A Child’s Right to Play

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child announced on 1 February 2013 in Geneva the formal adoption of the General Comment that outlines the importance of Article 31 within the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

Article 31:

21. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
22. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

The stated objectives of the General Comment are:

- To enhance understanding of the importance of Article 31 for children’s wellbeing and development, and for the realisation of other rights in the Convention.
- To provide interpretation to States parties regarding the provisions, and consequent obligations, associated with Article 31.
- To provide guidance on the legislative, judicial, administrative, social and educational measures necessary to ensure its implementation for all children without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity.

Having the freedom and equal opportunity to play, recreation, rest, leisure and involvement in cultural and artistic life are all important elements to a happy, healthy and active childhood. They are all fundamental rights of children, and the UN calls on policy makers and practitioners across the world to turn these rights into action.

The Strategy is an opportunity to develop sport and recreation facilities and spaces that are 'child friendly' and encourage equal opportunity for children to play sport and recreation and enjoy an active childhood.

8.4 Fair Access to Play

There is a sustainable gap in both the participation of women and girls in sport and recreation and an identified gender imbalance in leadership positions across all levels of the Victorian sporting and recreation industry:

- Only 9% of women and girls' participation in sport across all ages compared to 17% of men and boys (AusPlay, 2021).
- Only 21% of girls aged 0-14 years participate in organised sport and active recreation outside of school hours three times a week (AusPlay, 2021).
- There has been a decline of 22,000 women and girls' participation after COVID-19 where men and boys' participation rose by over 20,500 participants in 2021 compared to 2019 (VicHealth Sports Participation in Victoria 2015-2021).
- 29% of executive positions and 33% of board positions were held by women in State Sporting Associations (Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation 2015).
- Some 28% of women have considered leaving their club due to inequitable treatment (State of Play Survey 2022-2023, Change Our Game).
- Women are 2.5 times more likely to report feeling unwelcome at their sporting club compared to men.
- Of people who played community sport, women were less likely than men to agree that club facilities were shared equally.
- Many Victorian women and girls don't have access to the best courts or grounds, have facilities of lesser standard, or are relegated to less convenient competition and training times.

Local Governments have an obligation to gender equality, not only under State Government legislation but also under Commonwealth legislation. The State and Commonwealth Government legislation includes:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic).
- Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic).
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cwth).

The Commission for Gender Equity in the Public Sector was established after the *Gender Equity Bill 2019 (Vic)* passed in February 2020. The Commission supports the Public Sector Gender Equity Commissioner in overseeing the implementation of the Gender Equity Act 2020 and promoting gender equity in the public sector workforce and the broader Victorian community.

Local Government Authorities are required to complete Gender Impact Assessments and submit these to the Commission for Gender Equity. The Commission reports on progress made towards delivering on the *Gender Equity Act 2020*.

The Victorian Government initiated an Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation which resulted in key monumental changes in the sector. The changes included establishing a Victorian Office of Women in Sport, followed by the Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines (2017) and funding program and then the Change Our Game Initiative. These resources were developed to support LGAs to engage better and provide for women and girls in sports.

Following the Inquiry and Change Our Game funding program the Victorian Government in 2022 released the Fair Access Policy Roadmap. The Fair Access Policy ‘RoadMap’ includes the following six principles.

1. Community sports infrastructure and environments are genuinely welcoming, safe, and inclusive.
2. Women and girls can fully participate in all aspects of community sport and active recreation, including, as a player, coach, administrator, official, volunteer and spectator.
3. Women and girls will have equitable access to and use of community sport infrastructure.
4. Women and girls should be equitably represented in leadership and governance roles.
5. Encourage and support all user groups who access and use community sport infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender-equitable access and use practices.
6. Prioritise access, use and support all user groups who demonstrate and ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated community sport infrastructure.



The following graphic shows the indicative relationship between Loddon Shire’s Fair Access Policy with the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy and State Government’s gender equity legislation and policy and Local Government strategies.

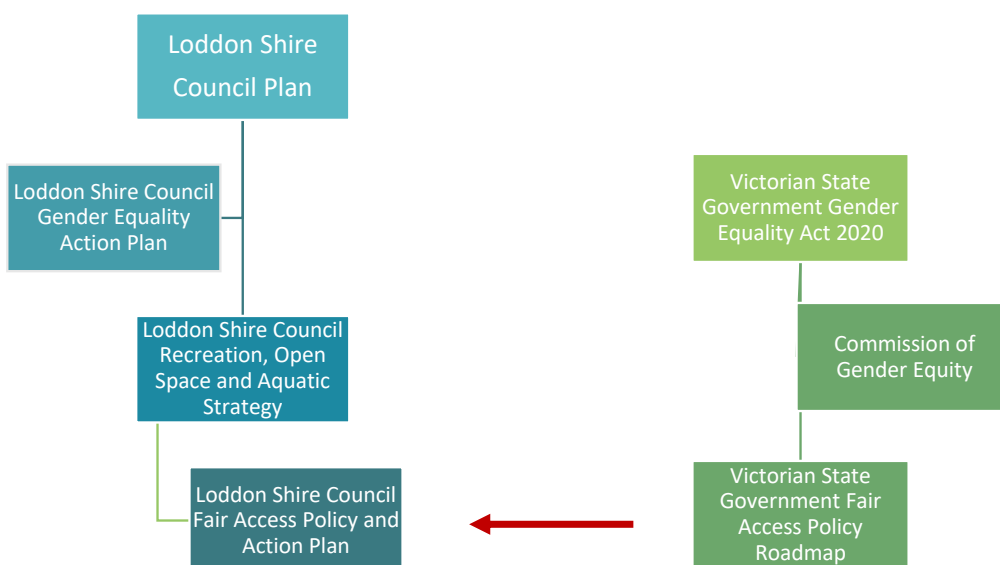


Figure 44: Relationship between Loddon Shire’s Fair Access Policy with Council and State Government Policies and Strategies

8.5 Funding Major Sports Infrastructure Challenge

With ongoing Government economic constraints and limited capital and operational budgets, many new sports facilities may have to be joint venture arrangements between private and public sectors and sports clubs.

The reduction in commitment to curriculum-based school sports in State Government schools will have impacts on the local availability of school sports facilities while also discouraging public sector investment in new facilities at these sites.

Due to restricted rate and other revenue bases, local councils may have to encourage greater private investment in leisure facilities and services. This may be achieved by a mix of rate concessions, payback loans, management rights in return for investment, provision of land and planning concessions.

Facility provision is changing from single purpose to multi-purpose. However, there is also an emphasis on ensuring facilities are designed to meet the specific needs of the key user groups i.e., correct runoff and facility standards.

A great deal of infrastructure expenditure is now being directed to the development of larger public and private complexes providing aquatic, health, fitness and indoor sports facilities because of the higher utilisation which can be achieved. There is less emphasis on the development of traditional single purpose outdoor sports facilities.

The planning process for new facilities has improved significantly with the conduct of effective feasibility studies being the norm. These studies have generally included management/marketing financial plans with demand projections based on sophisticated survey data.

There has been considerable improvement in the management of leisure facilities, with increased expectations of managers to produce better financial outcomes and generate higher attendance. Public sector facility managers now need higher skill levels, face broader roles, need access to better training and professional networks and improved financial reporting systems.

As competition increases there will be an increased emphasis on programming and target marketing based on adopting consumer driven strategies and performance evaluation techniques. This indicates a greater resourcing of local area planning, knowing who “are your customers” and how to attract them.

8.6 Key Findings of Other Issues

Loddon Shire Council needs to adapt facilities and services to respond to climate change

Loddon Shire is becoming a hotter and drier place which will result in climate change pressures such as an increase in flooding, erosion, damage to infrastructure and ecosystems, increasing facility maintenance and insurance costs. People’s health may also be impacted including heat exhaustion and asthma related to reduced air quality.

Promoting sustainable and climate-ready solutions and practices in Loddon Shire’s recreation, open spaces, aquatic facilities and services will mean the community can continue to engage in physical activity and connect to nature for health, social, cultural benefits and other benefits such as economic and environmental.

Local Government must provide equitable access to recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services

Having the freedom and equal opportunity for play, recreation, rest, leisure and involvement in cultural and artistic life are all important elements to a happy, healthy and active childhood. They are a fundamental UN human rights of child. A key principle to the future design of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities are that they are 'child friendly' and encourage equal opportunity for children to play.

Local Government is legally obliged to provide equitable access to recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services, under State and Federal Government legislation:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic).
- Gender Equity Act 2020 (Vic).
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cwth).

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap guides councils in the development of fair access policies. This Strategy will need to consider the approaches and measures to delivering the six principles outlined in the roadmap.

The cost of Council's facilities and services are increasing within significant increases in revenue

Local councils are operating in a tight fiscal environment, with restricted rate and other revenue bases. Innovative approaches to funding open spaces, sport and recreation facilities and services will be required including encouraging greater private investment. Optimising the use of facility provision by changing from single purpose to multi-use will be a key design and operational principle together with operating a sustainable business model that consider a mix of community and commercial spaces.

9. Strategic Directions

Sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services are integral to achieving the visions of Loddon Shire Council and are recognised as key ingredients to achieving community health and wellbeing in Loddon and are an important part of the social fabric and character of our agricultural/farming communities. They provide opportunities to be active and are highly valued by the Loddon communities, delivering social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits.

The **Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy** responds to the *Loddon Council Plan 2021-2025* directions to ‘Plan for Future Facilities and Infrastructure that Meet Community Needs’ and ‘Maintain Sports and Recreation and Open Public Spaces to enable and Promote Access and Participation’.

The Strategy supersedes the Recreation Strategy 2014 and is an overarching strategy that consolidates strategic priorities identified in the:

- Activating Open Space Strategy 2019-2014
- Swimming Pool Improvements Plan 2018-2022
- Recreation Reserve Master Plans.

The Strategy aligns with Sport and Recreation Victoria’s *Active Victoria (Strategic Framework)* and the *Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan*.

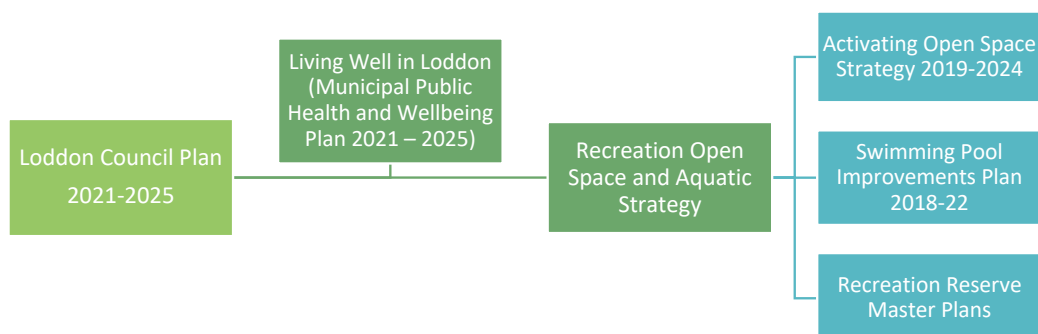


Figure 45: Strategy Alignment

9.1 Key Issues and Opportunities

What have we learnt?

Loddon Shire has a diverse network of sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services. They are wonderful places to be active and present an opportunity to improve community health and wellbeing.

Loddon Shire has a diverse range of open spaces, including sport and active recreation reserves, parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, tracks and trails, and natural places, including bushland reserves and waterways (rivers and lakes). These places are important in supporting rural farming communities.

There are over 113 parcels of public open spaces within the municipality, including nine major and 11 minor recreation reserves and five aquatic facilities. These are provided on Council and Crown Land and managed by Council, contractors and Reserve Committees.

There is a good distribution and supply of quality sport and recreation reserves, open spaces and aquatic facilities across the townships:

- The major towns of Boort, Bridgewater, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn have a central sport and recreation reserve, a playground, a swimming pool, a golf course, a public hall and walking/cycling tracks.
- The medium-sized townships of Mitiamo, Calivil, Dingee, Newbridge, Serpentine and Tarnagulla don't have as many public open spaces. Still, most have a central sport and recreation reserve, public hall and playground.
- Small towns generally have a public hall and park or village green.
- The sport and recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities are supported by a network of local walking tracks and regional trails that connect key destinations. A popular local trail is Nolens Park in Boort which hosts the local Park Run.
- Loddon Shire has spectacular bushland reserves and river corridors that offer opportunities for nature-based recreation. Key nature conservation reserves include Kooyoora State Park, Leaghur State Park, Pyramid Hill Summit Walk, Mount Hope Nature Conservation Reserve, Boort Lakes and Wetlands and Loddon River.
- The Loddon Shire community also access regional sport and aquatic facilities within Bendigo and Kerang including the Red Energy Centre, Latrobe University Bendigo Athletics Centre, Bendigo Regional Tennis Centre, Bendigo Badminton Centre, Bendigo Regional Hockey Centre, Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre and Kerang Outdoor Pool.

The facilities are in good condition and attractive to use. Activation and equitable access to sport and active recreation, open spaces aquatic facilities, programs and services is a key focus of the project.

Loddon Shire is facing a health crisis, and we need creative ways to reverse this trend.

There are high rates of dental health problems, smoking, and pre-obesity/obesity in the Loddon Shire's rural communities. The impact of two flooding events and the COVID-19 pandemic has also seen a decline in participation and an impact on social connectedness as residents endured isolation from family, friends and community.

The Strategy's priority is to deliver strategies to **"activate people"** with the aim to reversing the alarming health statistic that sees three-quarters of adults in the Loddon Shire being overweight or obese.

Let's together explore ways to encourage how we can activate our community because it is important to improving community health and wellbeing in our rural communities.

We need to adapt and design sports and active recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services to meet the needs of our changing community.

Loddon Shire has an older population than the rest of regional Victoria, with a median age of 52 years. There are also higher rates of disability. The facilities and programs must be accessible and consider social engagement, fitness, and therapeutic activities.

There are relatively younger populations in Serpentine, Eddington, and Pyramid Hill. These communities will continue to seek sports competitions and active recreation activities.

Loddon Shire has people with diverse and rich cultural backgrounds. Townships like Boort and Pyramid Hill have a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people born overseas. Inclusive and culturally sensitive participation opportunities will be important to encourage participation from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Many people are on low median incomes, and some of the Loddon Shire communities are considered disadvantaged. Affordable participation opportunities will be important to encourage all of Loddon Shire to lead active lifestyles.

Other key findings include:

- Sports clubs have been struggling to attract participants in Loddon Shire. A further two clubs (bowls clubs) have disbanded in the last 12 months. Junior teams are struggling with participation and volunteerism is in decline.
- In general, competition structures still operate a traditional format of play. New modified formats could be encouraged more in Loddon Shire, but local sports clubs and associations need support from peak sporting bodies to facilitate this.
- The recent Active Living Census survey shows the importance of active recreation in Loddon Shire with over 80% of residents utilising open spaces weekly with walking, play, and swimming being amongst the most popular types of active recreation in Loddon. Unstructured sports that can be played at flexible times and support a person's lifestyle, health and wellbeing are now being preferred.
- The modelling shows no demand for additional sports facilities in Loddon Shire and that a key focus of this Strategy is on activating sport and active recreation facilities rather than needing to improve the capacity of existing facilities or build new facilities.

Loddon Shire Council has invested in improving sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities. However, the asset renewal funding gap is widening. A strategic and sustainable approach is now needed.

Loddon Shire Council has improved the sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces, aquatic facilities over the last 10 years. This includes upgraded sports fields, courts, lighting and pavilions. The Council has also invested in developing walking and cycling trails and streetscape improvements within township areas.

These improvements were identified through a series of master plans and have helped deliver on the *Loddon Council Plan 2021-2025* directions to 'Plan for Future Facilities and Infrastructure That Meet Community Needs' and 'Maintain Sports and Recreation and Open Public Spaces to enable and Promote Access and Participation'.

The increasing costs of infrastructure and services is escalating, and the asset renewal funding gap is widening. The Asset Plan 2022 projects a funding shortfall to meet the current asset replacement and maintenance requirements in the next 10 years. Asset values are currently unknown for sport, recreational and aquatic facilities, community facilities, parks, open spaces and streetscapes.

Loddon Shire Council has the lowest rate base and the community is one of the most disadvantaged in Victoria. The Council is reliant on external grants to not only improve infrastructure but also to operate recreation, open space and aquatic facilities. External funders require a strategic approach to be undertaken by the Council if they are to invest in the future.

The Council will need to consider the long-term financial capacity to renew assets. This Strategy considers what a sustainable sport and active recreation, open space and aquatic service can be provided.

Loddon Shire pools operate low patronage and now cost the Council \$47 per visit.

The aquatic service review identifies that the aquatic centres are attracting approximately 15,000 visits per annum. Council is subsidising the use of the aquatic facilities by approximately \$47 per visit with an annual subsidy cost of \$700,000. This is very high and well above the industry benchmark.

When compared to other outdoor pools in the region, Boort has the highest visitation. Pyramid Hill, Wedderburn and Inglewood (just) are operating at a low patronage. This is consistent with small township pools in the area. Mitiamo is very low.

Loddon Shire seasonal (November to March) pool attendances have continued to decline and when considered against the increasing costs, the Council will need to consider the benefits against the cost of providing an aquatic service in the future.

Aquatic facility management and operations are subject to increasing costs across the industry. The increasing cost of qualified staffing, chemical supply and utilities are major contributing factors for rural facilities. Loddon Shire Council has also recently considered a proposed increased management fee by the current operator, whilst undesirable, these rates represent current market rates for pool management and operations. Staff (lifeguards) and chemicals (water treatment) are the major factors in managing operational risks and if underfunded, the risk to the Council and community increase.

The Council recognises that the Loddon Shire community value having access to swimming pool facilities and despite declining attendances there is strong support for them. Unfortunately, the high cost of swimming pools is placing considerable pressure on Council's capacity to fund them amongst other competing community and infrastructure needs. A strategic approach to addressing this issue is critical.

Mitiamo and Pyramid Hill pools have significant overlapping catchments and Echuca and Bendigo indoor pools service Loddon Shire.

Within the Shire, Boort is the main tourism centre and Wedderburn the main service centre of Loddon with the largest population catchments. Inglewood pool and facilities are in the best condition and is central to communities in the south including Bridgewater, Newbridge and Serpentine. This area is identified for future growth.

Most residents can access a pool within an approximately 20 to 30-minute drive. Two outdoor pool facilities are located within the secondary catchment areas for Wedderburn (Charlton Swimming Pool and St Arnaud Swimming Pool) and Mitiamo (Lockington Swimming Pool).

Shire pools are not the only pools servicing Loddon residents. Bendigo, Dunolly, Kerang and Echuca pools also service Loddon communities. As the facilities in Loddon Shire are all outdoor seasonal pools, it can be assumed that if residents wish to participate in aquatic programs i.e. learn to swim lessons or swim year-round, they will drive to Bendigo or Echuca indoor aquatic facilities.

\$1.3 million is needed over the next 10 years to maintain the current aquatic service.

The Structural Engineer (JWS Engineers) undertook a detailed Technical Assessment of the aquatic facilities and identified the asset management (renewal) requirements of the facilities over the next 10 years. The total cost to maintain the current benefit, with no additional services, is approximately \$1.3 million over 10 the year period.

The Pools do not meet current industry standards and are now over 50 years old. This funding only maintains the assets and does not provide any additional benefit to the community; or address dignified accessibility and depth concerns with pools.

The identified asset management costs do not include the regular Council maintenance program items (e.g., pool painting and expansion joint reinstatement). These items are still required to be completed, and therefore, consideration must be made as to how these will be funded and included in future budget planning.

What did we hear?

Outdoor sporting facilities are highly valued, and the Reserve Committees and sporting clubs need support to maintain facilities and benefit the community.

Outdoor sporting facilities are highly valued: Residents highly value existing sports facilities and clubs as essential community assets. Active support is important for maintaining and improving these facilities to encourage increased usage.

Sports club challenges: Clubs across Loddon Shire face challenges with declining memberships, facility maintenance and in some regards deteriorating infrastructure. Supporting sport and recreation clubs in local communities was a key finding of the consultation process. It is also recognised by Council services that the partnership between Council, Reserve Committees and sporting clubs is critical to maintaining these recreation places for community.

Financial constraints, operational challenges, difficulties in securing volunteers, and concerns over facility accessibility, management expertise, and regulatory burdens are significant issues affecting the sustainability and growth of sports and recreation clubs in the area. Additionally, there is a noted impact of changing work patterns and seasonal overlaps on participation.

The community enjoys the diverse recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities in Loddon and wish to use them more.

Diverse facilities: There is a strong demand for more diverse recreational spaces to cater for a broad range of interests.

The high value placed on parks and gardens and riding tracks and walking trails emphasises the importance of investing in green spaces and active recreation infrastructure to promote community health and wellbeing. Respondents particularly identified a high value for the township park and play space provided in each township.

Health and fitness stations and local programs encourage adults to be active: Adults appreciate gyms, fitness stations, and fitness sessions for maintaining health and fitness.

Prioritising access to central open spaces in townships: outdoor sport facilities and park with play space and active recreation opportunities is important with the community emphasising the proximity to home to access family-oriented sport and recreation activities encourages physical activity.

Community seeks an expanded aquatic program and service: Local pools are valued as safe places for learning to swim and cooling down. The community suggested effective communication about pool timings and seek extended operating hours and diversifying aquatic programs, events and activities to meet the needs of residents and boost usage. Ideas include:

- Diversifying water play experiences: Installing water play splash parks and play equipment, diving boards and hosting more inflatable days as ways that would encourage greater participation. Innovative adventure and play opportunities should be explored with community when considering future aquatic facilities improvements.
- More programming and events: Hosting community events and introducing water aerobics, strength training, morning lap swims, etc. A range of programs and events that engage a cross-section of the community, including young and old and families should be explored with considering the future aquatic services.

Maintain recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities to encourage regular use.

Facility upgrades and maintenance: Ongoing maintenance, improvements, and diversification of recreational facilities is important. Specific concerns include footpath improvements, trail maintenance, and facility upgrades to meet current needs and safety standards. There is a need to enhance facility quality and maintenance.

Residents also emphasise the need for facility upgrades, including renovated changing rooms, shaded areas, and recreational amenities like mountain bike trails and skate parks, to improve the appeal and functionality of Loddon Shire's public spaces. These spaces need to be maintained to encourage regular use.

High value placed on the maintenance and improvement of play spaces: This finding highlights the community's recognition of the importance of maintaining existing play spaces to ensure their continued usability for the residents.

Consistent theme of adequately maintaining and activating the current assets over building new ones: This finding indicates a preference for maximising the utility of existing facilities before investing in new infrastructure through maintenance and improvement of current assets in Loddon Shire.

Accessible recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities will encourage participation.

Accessibility to facilities and services: Enhancing accessibility for seniors, diversifying play options for children and youth, promoting safe and inclusive swimming experiences, and providing a variety of recreational opportunities for adults and families are essential considerations. Improving access, footpaths, and trails is crucial, especially for seniors. Amenities like water stations, shade, and seating enhance outdoor experiences and encourage physical activity.

Additionally, the community seek more community events and support multipurpose recreational spaces. These suggestions were seen as vital for promoting physical activity and community participation.

Activate the recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities we have: A range of ideas for increasing use of public open spaces have been suggested, including places that are tailored for young people, increasing public engagement through better promotion of existing activities, improved accessibility across the Shire, walking and cycling paths, seating and shade, fitness and play equipment and physical activity programs. There is active support for hosting more community events in open spaces to encourage physical activity and participation. There is growing interest in active recreation facilities like bike skills tracks, nature-based and water play experiences.

Residents suggested multi-purpose recreational spaces, amenities, and community-focused events are key principles for the future recreation service.

Promote nature-based recreation activities: The drop-in sessions found children and young people benefit from diverse play experiences, including water play and nature activities. There is high interest by adults in activities like mountain biking, bouldering, bushwalking, and fishing to promote enjoyment of natural bushland and waterways.

Key barriers: Key barriers to engaging in sport and active recreation in Loddon Shire include limited accessibility, lack of specialised clubs or organisations, poor facility quality, and outdated amenities, underscoring the importance of addressing these issues to encourage participation.

The community wants Council to prioritise high quality recreation, open space and aquatic facilities and services.

Community accepts fewer facilities if facilities are of high quality: While a significant portion of respondents are willing to pay higher rates to maintain current sport and recreation facilities, a slightly larger group would accept fewer but higher-quality facilities, indicating a preference for prioritising maintenance and enhancement of existing infrastructure over new developments.

The “how would you spend \$100 engagement activity” resulted in the following priorities for funding:

- Improving and maintaining play spaces
- Improving and maintaining active recreation facilities
- improving and maintaining aquatic facilities
- Improving and maintaining community sport facilities.

The burdening "cost vs benefit" of five aquatic locations: There needs to be a careful evaluation of investment in aquatic facilities to ensure they align with community needs and provide significant value relative to their cost.

The community desire to see Council spending increase in sport and active recreation suggests a need for prioritising budget allocations towards provision of sport and active recreation in Loddon Shire to promote physical activity, social engagement, and community cohesion.

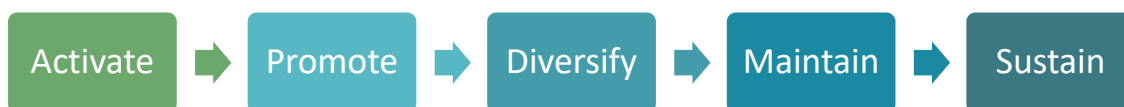
9.2 Vision

Loddon’s diverse, accessible and sustainable recreation, open space and aquatic facilities will activate and connect communities.

9.3 Strategic Directions

The following strategic objectives and actions are designed to achieve this vision.

Objectives



Activate recreation, open space and aquatic facilities

How?

- Partner with Reserve Committees and facilitate greater programming of sports reserves for community activities i.e. fitness classes, walking groups, etc.
- Deliver innovative approaches and encourage a diversity of activities, programming and events at aquatic facilities to increase visitation.
- Partner with community in hosting nature-based recreation events.
- Explore opportunities for nature-based recreation and tourism activities with Land Managers.

- Design community spaces in the main streets of townships that are welcoming and interesting to move through, that connect communities, encourage active lifestyles, are walkable, reflect local art and celebrate culture and heritage.

Promote recreation, open space and aquatic facilities

How?

- Promote recreation as key ingredient of country lifestyle.
- Partner with Bendigo Tourism and develop the Loddon Valley webpage with content promoting family and lifestyle sport and active recreation and a connection to nature.

Diversify recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities so they encourage greater participation

How?

- Take a strategic approach to the improvement of recreation assets and apply the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework.
- When assets are due for renewal, identify opportunities to diversify recreation opportunities.
- Prioritise improvements that address fair play, universal access and multipurpose objectives.
- Develop a recreation project rolling program to undertake initial designs to enhance the ability to attract external funding to support diversification of existing recreation assets.

Maintain quality recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities

How?

- Apply a consistent standard to design and maintenance of recreation, open space and aquatic facilities that responds to the planning framework (levels of service).
- Develop an Asset Management Plan for recreation assets and provide annual funding allocation to implement Plan. This will include the recent aquatic facility asset management plan.
- Regularly monitor and review the Asset Management Plan.
- As part of Council's annual budget process provide funding for maintenance of parks, play spaces, active recreation and tracks and trails.
- Seek external funding opportunities to support any planned upgrade or renewal of recreation, open spaces and aquatic assets.
- As part of Council's annual budget process provide funding for asset management (renewal) of aquatic facilities as detailed in the JWS Engineers Technical Assessment to maintain the assets.
- Conduct close analysis and feasibility studies of individual pool locations. Upon catastrophic plan and/or pool failure, Council investigates, with the community, future aquatic options.

Deliver a sustainable service

How?

- Support partnership with Reserve Committees in managing and maintaining sports reserves.
- Support the development of sustainable clubs and organisations by partnering with peak bodies responsible for skilling and supporting volunteers; and promoting the Sports Community website that provides the resources, training and knowledge to volunteers and clubs on how to make their role easier.
- Investigate options to consolidate if recreation facilities are duplicated. Partner with peak sporting bodies to conduct strategic reviews.

- Recognise and protect high-value natural environments and landscapes in the planning scheme and when planning open spaces.
- Integrate environmentally sustainable design and water-sensitive urban design features in capital works projects and encourage tenants to develop sustainable facility management practices.
- Investigate management models and partnering opportunities for aquatic facilities e.g., Community partnership models and regional management models with partnering councils. This includes what the possible transition of management models could look like.

9.4 Site Specific Recommendations

Site specific recommendations have been prioritised in an implementation plan. The Loddon Recreation Planning Framework (Appendix 1) will guide the delivery of recommendations in this section. Projects will be subject to available funding to support implementation, will be prioritised with other projects in Council's capital works program and may rely on the availability of external funding.

- Short – 0-3 years
- Medium – 4-7 years
- Aspirational
- Ongoing.

The implementation plan will be reviewed every two years. This review process will consider the outcomes of planning and funding processes and ensure that any emerging community and industry trends/demands, as well as external funding opportunities and Council funding capacity, are assessed and priority projects remain relevant throughout its 10-year timeline.

The Council will continue to work with sports clubs on the development of proposals that can be considered at this review point.

Table 39: Implementation Plan

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/Support
Sport and Recreation Reserve				
Arnold Cricket Ground	Arnold	• Maintain	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Bears Lagoon Tennis Centre	Bears Lagoon	• Maintain	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Boort Bowls Club	Boort	• Maintain	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Boort Croquet Club	Boort	• Maintain	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		• Implement actions identified for this site in the Boort Foreshore Recreation Plan	Short	Committee of Management/Council
Boort Tennis Club	Boort	• Maintain	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		• Implement actions identified for this site in the Boort Foreshore Recreation Plan	Short	Committee of Management/Council
Boort Park	Boort	• Maintain	Ongoing	Committee of Management

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/ Support
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review design of current pavilion and consider netball and umpire change rooms provision 	Short	Committee of Management/Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation of timekeeper's box 	Short	Committee of Management/Council
Bridgewater Bowls Club	Bridgewater on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review playing surface and lighting options and consider future use of second green 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/Council
Bridgewater Recreation Reserve	Bridgewater on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider improved toilet facilities for patron use 	Medium	Committee of Management/Council
Calivil Recreation Reserve	Calivil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Clubs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate alternative use for old golf course - consider a walking track 	Short	Committee of Management
Dingee Recreation Reserve	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review location of local level play space location (see Parks and Playgrounds section) 	Short	Council
Inglewood Bowls Club	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review playing surface and lighting options and consider shared site opportunities 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/Council
Inglewood Community Sports Centre	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and implement Master Plan 	Medium	Committee of Management/Council
Inglewood Golf Course	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Kingower Cricket Club	Kingower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Korong Vale Recreation Reserve	Korong Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider future of reserve 	Short	Committee of Management/Council
Mitiamo Recreation Reserve	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review reserve change rooms against current standards and develop a site management plan (including feasibility study) 	Short	Committee of Management/Council
Mitiamo Golf Course	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Newbridge Recreation Reserve	Newbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Mitchell Park	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/ Support
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review design of current pavilion and consider netball and umpire change rooms provision 	Medium	Committee of Management/Council
Pyramid Hill Bowls Club	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review playing surface and lighting options 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/Club/Council
Pyramid Hill Golf Club	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Pyramid Hill Quarter Horse Club	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Pyramid Hill Tennis Centre	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Serpentine Recreation Reserve	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Clubs
Serpentine Bowls and Tennis Centre	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Clubs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider opportunities to enhance shared facility use 	Short	Committee of Management/Clubs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review bowls playing surface and lighting options 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/Council
Market Square Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider shared site opportunities 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/Club
Donaldson Park Recreation Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Clubs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider oval playing surface options to increase shared space opportunities - e.g. cricket wicket 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Bowls playing surface and lighting options 	Aspirational	Committee of Management/Club/Council
Skinners Flat Reserve	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolve Dam Wall/Spillway Issues 	Short	Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Master Plan (after dam resolution complete) 	Medium	Council
Wedderburn Golf Club	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management/Club
Woodstock Recreation Reserve	Woodstock on Loddon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Committee of Management
Parks and Playgrounds				
Jubilee Park	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review playground using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Medium	
Little Lake Boort Recreation Precinct/Nolens Park/Rotary Park	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Implement actions identified for this site in the Boort Foreshore Recreation Plan 	Medium	Council

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/ Support
		(separate to Tennis and Croquet actions)		
Sunnyside Court Playground	Boort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove equipment and sell block 	Short	Council
Sloans Park	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider future of site using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Short	Council
Bridgewater Foreshore	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Progress Park	Dingee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review provision of local level playground using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Ongoing	Council
J Sloan Park	Inglewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review skate park design to incorporate current pump/skate/bike track trends to enhance activation 	Aspirational	Council
Village Green	Kingower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Borella Park	Korong Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider improvements to seating and shade 	Ongoing	Council
RJ Phelan Park	Mitiamo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review provision of local level playground using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework 	Medium	Council
Progress Park	Newbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Kelly Park/ Lions Park East	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Review provision of township playgrounds using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework and develop a playground management plan. 	Ongoing	Council
Pyramid Hill Reserve - The Hill	Pyramid Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Medium	Council
TJ Rudkins Reserve	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Tarnagulla Soldiers Memorial Park	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Tarnagulla Park	Tarnagulla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Consider removal of cricket nets and bike track 	Ongoing	Council
Cooper Park	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Medium	Council
Wedderburn Soldiers Memorial Park	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Nardoo Linear Path/equipment	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Teds Garden	Wedderburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Aquatic Facility				
Outdoor Pools	Boort/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and monitor 	Ongoing	Council/

Site	Location	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility/Support
	Inglewood/ Mitiamo/ Pyramid Hill/ Wedderburn			Leisure Services Contractor
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate space to enhance patronage 	Ongoing	Leisure Services Contractor/Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct feasibility study, including exploring alternative operating models 	Short	Council
Bridgewater Swimming Hole	Bridgewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Trails				
Loddon Trail Network	Various - refer Inventory in Table 20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit condition and compliance with standards 	Short	Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review provision of trails using the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework and develop a trails management plan. 	Medium	Council
Canoe Trails				
Serpentine Canoe Trail	Serpentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Laanecoorie Canoe Trail	Laanecoorie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Council
Durham Ox Canoe Trail	Durham Ox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain 	Ongoing	Council

9.5 Recreation Service

The Strategy has identified a shift for Loddon Shire's Recreation Services from one that has partnered with community and State and Federal Government to deliver infrastructure improvements to one that focuses on activating the existing recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities.

Proposed Community Wellbeing Directorate actions:

- Partner with the Reserves Committee of Management to facilitate local programs and events for active sports reserves.
- Partner with State and Local Sporting Associations to facilitate modified playing formats that encourage more people to participate in sport and host club development programs.
- Establish a club support role within existing resources that seeks feedback on club needs and links resources to respond to governance and management issues and initiatives. This includes supporting clubs in delivering fair access to facilities and programming.
- Represent the user groups in the planning and design of infrastructure projects. Prepare funding applications in partnership with the community.
- Participate in the development of asset management plans for recreation, open space and aquatic facilities. This will require organising asset audits and management of asset maintenance schedules.

- Planning for the renewal of recreation, open space, and aquatic facilities, apply the planning framework, consider duplicated services, and engage the community in planning processes.
- Promote the recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities in Loddon Shire, through developing content and developing the Loddon Valley tourism webpage.
- Facilitate nature-based recreation programs and events in Loddon Shire nature parks and waterways. Partner with land managers, outdoor recreation groups and event promoters.
- Identify, and share with Council, clubs and committees, an understanding of recreation trends and opportunities to enhance or expand the recreation options to increase activation and participation.
- Identify, and work proactively with Clubs, opportunities for future shared usage of facilities.

10. Warranties and Disclaimers

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence', and these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

Otium Planning Group's advice does not extend to, or imply professional expertise in the disciplines of economics, quantity surveying, engineering or architecture. External advice in one or more of these disciplines may have been sought, where necessary to address the requirements of the project objectives. There will be differences between projected and actual results because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected, and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite, or guarantee the projections' achievability as it is impossible to substantiate assumptions based on future events.

This report does not constitute advice, investment advice, or opinion and must not be relied on for funding or investment decisions. Independent advice should be obtained in relation to investment decisions.

Accordingly, neither Otium Planning Group, nor any member or employee of Otium Planning Group, undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than the client in respect of this report, for any errors or omissions herein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.

Appendix 1: Loddon Recreation Planning Framework

To pursue an appropriate and sustainable distribution of recreation facilities and open spaces throughout the municipality, the Loddon Recreation Planning Framework has been developed. This is based on the current situation, aligns with the township classification in the Social Infrastructure Strategy, and can be reviewed should circumstances change in future.

This table also provides a guide for future provision, in terms of what could or should realistically be provided in towns of various sizes to encourage active participation. The information in this table has been specifically developed for Loddon Shire, taking into consideration:

- Provision and benchmarking of facilities in similar-sized towns in rural Victoria.
- The types of activities that currently occur (or may feasibly occur in the future given feedback from local residents and examining nation-wide participation trends).
- Population distribution.
- Existing facility provision within the catchment (including neighbouring towns and municipalities).

The assessment of recreation and open space infrastructure provision levels will be subject to the following principles:

- Some townships may already exceed the infrastructure level identified for a town of its size. In this situation, Council will continue to provide the existing level of service, until such time as the asset is due for renewal where Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
- Where infrastructure exceeds the level identified for a township, and the infrastructure will not be replaced in future, Council will cease insuring the asset.
- Some townships may not currently have the level of infrastructure as detailed in the table. The levels noted apply to townships where existing infrastructure exists. A feasibility study, demonstrating demand, need and sustainability will be required to initiate new infrastructure development. These projects will be subject to available funding and will be prioritised against other projects.
- Association or competition sport conducted in a township may create an override of the minimum provision levels. For example, two netball courts may be required in a community participating in a football/netball league competition. Council commits to retaining the existing level of service to recreation facilities whilst they continue to participate in competition sports.
- Community groups or other organisations, such as schools, may choose to construct and maintain additional facilities at their own cost. Where communities wish to develop infrastructure outside the level suggested in this guide, and where there is an expectation that Council will take on responsibility for the infrastructure, it is a requirement that the initiatives are subjected to a fully informed feasibility study (which demonstrates demand, need and sustainability) and whole of life costs are clearly understood. Council approval must be provided for construction or renewal of assets on a Council owned or managed site.
- In cases where clubs are considering amalgamation, going into recess, or dissolution, Council will assist user groups in planning for the future use of their facilities. If amalgamation occurs, Council will support the parties in consolidating their facilities within a 4-year timeframe. The management and maintenance of dual locations is generally discouraged and will not be supported beyond the initial four years.

The following table classifies recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities by their primary functions and provides a classification system to apply service levels to guide the provision of recreation assets across the municipality.

Table 40: Loddon Recreation Planning Framework

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
<p>Sports field and change/social facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irrigated sports field provided. A fit for purpose change/social facility will be provided with the expectation of multi-use functionality, and guided by relevant requirements including building regulations, DDA compliance and other guidelines such as AFL Cricket Victoria, preferred facility guidelines. Where secondary ovals are used for individual sports, consideration should be given to planning for future consolidation to one precinct to reduce facility duplication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports field provided – irrigated where competition sport is active and has playing surface standards. Where competitive sport is played, a fit for purpose change/social facility will be provided with the expectation of multi-use functionality, and guided by relevant requirements including building regulations, DDA compliance and other guidelines such as AFL, Cricket Victoria, preferred facility guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing sports fields. Change/social facilities retained until such time as the infrastructure is due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
<p>Hard courts and change facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two courts provided. Preference to be line marked for multipurpose use, with minimum of netball and tennis. Fit for purpose change facilities provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One court may be provided, with preference to be marked for multipurpose use, with minimum of netball and tennis. Where competition netball is played, two courts will be provided, with access to fit for purpose change facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing hard courts and any associated infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
<p>Lawn Tennis Courts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing lawn court numbers and associated infrastructure where competition and membership numbers support use. A “Tennis Victoria HIT Assessment” will be undertaken to inform any proposed growth or reduction in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where competition tennis is played, up to six courts may be available for local competition, social use and practice. No additional grass courts will be provided. Existing hard courts may 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing tennis court and any associated infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
	<p>court or light numbers at Loddon tennis venues prior to any change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore alternative court surface options where required. • A combination of grass and hard courts may be provided. 	<p>be marked for multi-purpose use at the discretion of Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting will not be supplied. 	
<p>Bowling Green</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. • Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One bowling green. • Retain sites with two greens and associated infrastructure whilst competition requirement. • May have a synthetic surface, subject to business case and funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally not provided. • Where competition bowls is played, one bowling green and associated infrastructure. May have a synthetic surface, subject to business case and funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not provided.
<p>Croquet Green</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. • Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain existing Croquet green and associated infrastructure whilst competition sport is active. • New Croquet greens are subject to feasibility study, identification of shared surface opportunities, and funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not provided.
<p>Golf Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. • Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One golf course and associated infrastructure whilst competition sport is active. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally not provided. • Retain existing while competition sport active. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not provided.
<p>Equine sport facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may be over-ridden by association or competition sport demands. • Service level standards subject to review should competition sport cease at venue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An equine sport facility and associated infrastructure may be provided. • Retain existing facilities whilst events are active. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally not provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally not provided.

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New facilities are subject to a feasibility study and available funding. 		
Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One main park with one or two BBQs, shade, picnic facilities and accessible public toilets within reasonable distance. Likely to be minimum of 0.5 hectare – where space permits. • Secondary park, smaller in size. A public toilet may not be available. • For townships with 750+ population a tertiary park may be provided. Smaller in size. May have one BBQ, shade and picnic facilities. Public toilet may not be available. • Waste Services may be provided to these spaces at the discretion of Council. • Any of these sites may be associated with a recreation precinct or a linear area (such as a foreshore development). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One local level park provided to a basic level. • Seating and shade provided. • May have access to public toilets. • May have a BBQ. • If public toilets and/or a BBQ are provided at a recreation precinct in the township, they will not be duplicated in the park (and vice versa). • Waste Services may be provided to these spaces at the discretion of Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly one small park area provided to a basic level. • May have some seating and shade. • Toilets and BBQs and waste services are generally not provided. • Retain any existing infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.
Playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One main playground, located at the main park area (as above) including play equipment relative to the space, the community size and profile. Current playground standards and design trends will be considered. • May include a nature or themed play space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local level playground will be provided within an existing park or recreation precinct. • A limited offering of equipment will be provided. At least one all abilities item to be included. • Current playground standards and design trends will be considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain existing playgrounds and any associated infrastructure until such time as due for renewal. Review to be undertaken to determine if Council, at its discretion, may choose not to replace the infrastructure.

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground will offer equipment suitable for a variety of children’s ages and abilities. • Secondary (local level) playground provided. May be at a secondary park or recreation precinct, or another location specific to the needs of the community. A limited offering of equipment will be provided. At least one all abilities item to be included. • For townships with 750+ population a tertiary (local level) playground may be provided. May be at a secondary/tertiary park or recreation precinct, or another location specific to the needs of the community. • A limited offering of equipment will be provided. At least one all abilities item to be included. 		
Footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council aspires to having constructed footpaths on at least one side of each sealed street in large townships. • Subject to funding and prioritisation. • Where practicable, seating to be provided on main pedestrian routes or key locations at regular intervals (500m apart). • Priority to be given to footpaths linking shopping precincts and community facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpaths, on one side of the road only, may be considered for key identified pedestrian routes, or to improve pedestrian safety. • Subject to funding and prioritisation. • Seating may be provided on main pedestrian routes (500m apart). • Priority to be given to footpaths linking recreation, shopping & community precincts. • Footpath surface to be determined on a case-by-case basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not provided.

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration given to paths that link existing footpaths. • Select footpath routes to be enhanced with activation resources (such as decals), subject to funding. • Footpath surface to be determined on a case-by-case basis. 		
Walking/cycling trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or two off road recreational trail that provides opportunities for walking and/or cycling, preferably near a creek, river, bushland or recreation precinct. • Likely to be 5km in length, but in some circumstances may be longer to complete a select route or link to another trail or facility. • Trail to feature appropriate signage. • Seating or other facilities could be made available at the trail head or in select locations en-route (to be determined based on trail-specific needs). • Trails that can reasonably meet current standards to be retained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One off road recreational trail or space that provides opportunities for walking and/or cycling. • May be near a creek, river or bushland and could be within a local recreation precinct. • Likely to be up to 2km in length, but in some circumstances may be longer to complete a select route or link to another space or facility. • Seating and other facilities may be provided at trail heads, but unlikely to be en-route. • Trails that can reasonably meet current standards to be retained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly one-off road recreational trail that provides opportunities for walking and/or cycling where the location has been identified as a priority site to attract visitors to the area. • Likely to be near a significant natural attraction. • Length determined on a case-by-case basis. • Seating and other facilities may be provided at trail heads or in select locations en-route (to be determined based on trail-specific needs). • Trails that can reasonably meet current standards to be retained.
Swimming pools/sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 25m – 50m outdoor pool with a toddler pool provided. • Where there is no existing outdoor pool an alternative swimming/water play site will be available. • Consideration should be given to improving all abilities access to existing pools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township will have access to a 25m – 50m outdoor pool and toddler pool within approximately 30-minute drive. (noting this may be in neighbouring municipality). • Existing pool sites will be subject to a review to determine most appropriate operating model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township will have access to a 25m – 50m outdoor pool and toddler pool within approximately 30-minute drive (noting this may be in neighbouring municipality).

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing pool sites will be subject to a review to determine most appropriate operating model. Upon catastrophic plant and/or pool failure, Council investigates, with the community, future aquatic option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upon catastrophic plant and/or pool failure, Council investigates, with the community, future aquatic options. 	
Pump tracks/bike skills area Space that is suitable for bikes, scooters, skateboards & rollerblades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pump track/bike skills area provided in a suitable location, preferably in an existing recreation precinct. New pump track/bike skills are subject to feasibility study and available funding. Size and surface type of pump track/bike skills will be relative to the type of track use, size of community and community profile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally not provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not provided.
Lakes/creeks/rivers Council owned or managed infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing fishing or recreation platforms to be retained. Existing boat ramps and canoe launchers to be retained. Development of additional fishing or recreation platforms, boat ramps or canoe launchers subject to feasibility study and funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing fishing or recreation platforms to be retained. Existing boat ramps and canoe launchers to be retained. Development of additional fishing or recreation platforms, boat ramps or canoe launchers subject to feasibility study and funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing fishing or recreation platforms to be retained. Existing boat ramps and canoe launchers to be retained. Development of additional fishing or recreation platforms, boat ramps or canoe launchers will only be considered where the location has been identified as a priority site to attract visitors to the area. Subject to feasibility study and funding.
Outdoor fitness equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One outdoor fitness station with the type and number of items relative to the size of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be provided with a small outdoor fitness station containing a maximum of four equipment items. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not provided.

Primary Functions	Large Towns	Small Towns	Localities
	community and the community profile. • New or extended stations will be subject to feasibility study and available funding. • Outdoor fitness station to be located in an existing recreation precinct or playground.	• Subject to a feasibility study and available funding. • Outdoor fitness station to be located in an existing recreation precinct or playground.	
Active recreation facilities Physical activities that are non-organised/formal activities.	• A number of activations for informal recreation may be developed subject to community profile, prioritisation and funding. • Active recreation opportunities should be co-located with an existing recreation, open space or community precinct.	• A number of activations for informal recreation may be developed, subject to community profile, prioritisation and funding. • Active recreation opportunities should be co-located with an existing recreation, open space or community precinct.	• Not provided.

Table 41: Social Infrastructure Strategy township classification:

Category/Classification	Towns
Large Towns	Boort Bridgewater Inglewood Pyramid Hill Wedderburn
Small Towns	Calivil Dingee Eddington Korong Vale Laanecoorie Mitiamo Newbridge Serpentine Tarnagulla
Localities	All townships/communities under 100 people

Appendix 2: Case Studies

Donaldson Park Pavilion

Wedderburn's Donaldson Park includes a new multi-sport and community-focused pavilion, construction of a carpark, solar installation with batteries, pavement works and landscaping. Stage 2 works are being designed to be delivered at a later stage and will include a new play space for all abilities, landscaping and internal paths. The project is being delivered by Loddon Shire in partnership with the Reserve Committee and user groups, the Inglewood and Districts Community Enterprise Limited and State and Federal Government.

Donaldson Park is a key sport, recreation and community space for Wedderburn, and is home to the town's football, netball, hockey and harness racing clubs.



Figure 46: Donaldson Park Pavilion, Wedderburn

Loddon Valley Football and Netball League Finals

The Loddon Valley Football and Netball League (LVNFL) finals are significant regional events that provide social and economic benefits to Loddon townships, businesses and communities.

The LVNFL finals series include six finals hosting three football games and seven netball games. Each final is shared across Loddon townships.

In 2023, the finals series attendance was estimated to be within 8,500 to 10,000 players, officials and spectators and was hosted at Bridgewater, Newbridge, Serpentine, Pyramid Hill, Calivil and Inglewood.



Figure 47: Football match at Inglewood Community Sports Centre

Australian Masters Water Skiing Championships 2024

The Australian Masters Ski Comp was held from 26 to 28 January 2024. There is little local community involvement, but it is a prestigious event to host.

Established in November 1960, the Bridgewater Water Ski Club is situated on the Loddon River in the heart of the charming town of Bridgewater.

The Australian Masters Skiing Championships was run over three days in January on the Loddon River at the Bridgewater Water Ski Club. The event featured the country's best water skiing, slalom, trick and jump competitors. There were events for age groups from under 10 to over 65, as well as our top national open men and women skiers.



Figure 48: Waterskiing at Bridgewater

Boort Parkrun and Little Boort Foreshore Upgrade

Parkrun is hosted in Boort at Nolen’s Park. The free, fun, and friendly weekly 5km community running event attracts over 50 runners. The Parkrun is run along the upgraded Little Boort Foreshore Trail.



Figure 49: Parkrun at Nolens Park, Boort

Active Farmers

Active Farmers host weekly fitness classes at the Bridgewater Recreation Reserve and host an annual Run for Resilience event. The Run for Resilience is a half marathon course run along the Inglewood to Bridgewater Trail. The event attracts 400 participants aged between 5 and 93 years.



Figure 50: Run for Resilience Event at Bridgewater Recreation Reserve

Bridgewater Swimming Hole and Foreshore Project

Bridgewater Swimming Hole on the Loddon River is a popular destination for families to swim in the summer months, especially during the Christmas/New Year and Easter holiday periods when there is a high influx of visitors camping in Loddon caravan parks and bushland areas.

The swimming hole is now connected to the township and caravan park by the new Bridgewater Foreshore Trail.



Figure 51: Bridgewater Swimming Hole

Inglewood Change Room and Park Upgrade

The major upgrade of the building at the outdoor pool at Inglewood Recreation Reserve now provides shared change rooms where they are used as pool change rooms in the summer and netball change rooms in the summer. The upgrade also included improvements to the park with landscaping and a new play space and fitness station.



Figure 52: Inglewood Recreation Reserve

Recreation Reserve Lighting Upgrades at Serpentine, Mitiamo and Calivil

The Recreation Reserve floodlighting upgrade project includes lighting towers and LED lighting and associated works for playing areas. These projects have significantly improved the safety of football and netball training at the reserve.



Figure 53: Serpentine Recreation Reserve

Newbridge Recreation Reserve Re-Establishment Project

Delivery of the Newbridge Sporting Pavilion, new netball and tennis courts and other ancillary recreation and camping reserve restoration works was one of the largest flood recovery projects delivered by Loddon Shire in partnership with the Reserve Committee and user groups, local businesses and State Government.

The facilities accommodate multiple sporting and recreation activities and clubs, community events and visitors camping on the Loddon River at the reserve. In the future if Council were to develop a combined netball and tennis facility the opportunity to consider multi-purpose courts using an approved playing surface by Netball Victoria and Tennis Victoria could be investigated.



Figure 54: Newbridge Recreation Reserve

Loddon Shire Council
Recreation Open Space & Aquatic (ROSA)
Public Display Feedback Summary

Date & Feedback Source	Name	Feedback Summary	Council Contact and Response
10/9/2024 Phone	████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requested copy of the ROSA Summary Report • Concerns regarding pool closures 	Aquatic Support Officer, Bianca Hendry emailed █████ to supplied customer a copy of the strategy documents. Customer was satisfied that ROSA does not specify pool closure, merely addresses the overall costs involved, management options and age and condition of infrastructure.
12/9/2024 Online during public display period	████████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels Tarnagulla ward is being ignored • Comments refer to connection of sewerage and increased residential growth indicating Newbridge must be brought into line as a large town to ensure long-term growth in the Tarnagulla ward region. 	ROSA does not address sewerage connection to townships. Newbridge’s population does not meet the large town criteria in the ROSA documents service level benchmarking table in Appendix 1.
12/9/2024 Online during public display period	████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need local pools for children to have the ability to learn to swim for safety & also older members of the community to maintain a healthier lifestyle. • Pools need to be made indoors, so they can be used all year round 	This customer could not be contacted despite multiple attempts. Learn to swim programs are provided as an option by Belgravia for a fee. There is no intention for pools to become indoor facilities in Loddon Shire Council. Cost prohibitive.
12/9/2024 Online during public display period	████████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROSA has some significant flaws, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premise that nothing will change in the next 10 years • Short sighted and does not seem to acknowledge small towns need to attract residents to survive and recreation facilities are a part of that mix • Fails to acknowledge towns are small with ageing population due to employment is scarce. • With people able to work from home, likely to use local recreational facilities • Transport drivers and tourists need good rest facilities and a place to exercise if needed • Newbridge needs a good park • A good walking trailing along the river to Laanecoorie and Bridgewater would be a wonderful asset 	Attended a Face to Face meeting. There was a general misconception that the ROSA Strategy “short changes” smaller communities, particularly those in the Tarnagulla Ward. Many of the community in attendance was unaware of the differences between the Social Infrastructure Strategy and Loddon’s ROSA Strategy. This confusion has led to some of the misdirected feedback. This was addressed by the Manager for Community Partnerships, Orrin Hogan, at a face to face ROSA feedback session held at Newbridge on September 16, 2024. The Strategy in fact allows for the idea that population growth will positively affect the level of service and number of recreational assets found in a locality to better service demand. Equally, the ROSA Strategy allows for population reduction which must also result in the reduction of recreational assets. Cost efficiencies must be found in order to run a sustainable municipality.

			<p>The community have informed the document through the initial consultation process by stating that they would accept fewer recreational assets provided the assets retained are maintained and of a high quality. The ROSA strategy will deliver this outcome.</p> <p>The draft ROSA provides details of the existing strengths, issues and opportunities that Loddon Shire Council experiences when it comes to the recreation, open space and aquatic facilities within the region. It also identifies concerns around varying asset conditions and a widening asset renewal funding gap particularly in the aquatics space.</p> <p>The ROSA has identified a shift for Council’s recreation services focus from one that has partnered with community and state and federal government to deliver infrastructure improvements, to one that predominantly focuses on activating the recreation, open spaces and aquatic facilities we have.</p>
15/9/2024 Online during public display period	██████████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeframe for responses is unreasonable, for groups to organize themselves to meet • Newbridge is not considered a major town, but does have 3 major employers. For employees to consider living in the Ward, need to have infrastructure (town water & sewage), sport & leisure facilities and recreational spaces for families to spend time together. • Important each Ward has an outdoor fitness station, an adequate playground with upgraded play equipment, catering for children with special needs. • Inglewood, Wedderburn and Pyramid Hill pools should be maintained and upgraded when costs are available • For the Shire to grow, all towns need to be looked upon as a destination • More Community consultation should be sought with open discussions 	<p>Attended a Face to Face meeting. See above meeting summary.</p>
15/9/2024 Online during public display period	██████████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believes this strategy is not in line with Council’s strategic plan • ROSA dictates smaller communities do not matter and are not eligible for outdoor spaces and facilities • Strategy defines Newbridge Rec Reserve as the town’s designated park/playground/facility, despite it being DEECA owned 	<p>Attended a Face to Face meeting. See above meeting summary.</p> <p>ROSA is not impacted by varying public recreational asset ownership or management. ROSA recognises DEECA and Council owned recreational assets equally.</p>

<p>15/9/2024</p> <p>Online during public display period</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation time allowed was too short, feedback limited to individuals who have time to put pen to paper • Document penalizes small communities in favour of larger towns • Fitness station mentioned in the ROSA should be located at Progress Park, Newbridge, not the Newbridge Rec Reserve • Substantial shaded playground should be located on Soldiers' Park, Tarnagulla, along with a fitness station, although under the ROSA strategy this won't happen as Tranagulla isn't deemed a major township • The premise of the ROSA document is based on lack of Council funding to service all communities with infrastructure. • Newbridge could grow if Council pushed harder for reticulated water and sewerage. • Infrastructure is what this community needs. • Is the Loddon Shire supporting too many halls which could be sold off to provide a communal area? • Support the continued location of the Shire's swimming pools, however, prefer to go to Kangaroo Flat which is warmer and can be closer than Inglewood. • Adoption of the ROSA document legitimizes reduced spending in the Tarnagulla Ward 	<p>Attended a Face to Face meeting. See above meeting summary.</p>
<p>15/9/2024</p> <p>Online during public display period</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROSA strategy does not take into consideration Tarnagulla Ward does not have a "major town" • Newbridge would thrive if there were adequate services (such as water & sewage), walking trails, parks and beautification of the Loddon river • Tourists often look for activities to partake, such as walking trails, swimming, exercise equipment & fishing 	<p>Attended a Face to Face meeting. See above meeting summary.</p>
<p>15/9/2024</p> <p>Online during public display period</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan seems to be based on the premise that nothing will change in our towns in the next 10 years • Short sighted and does not seem to acknowledge that small towns need to attract residents to survive and recreational facilities are part of that mix • Transport drivers and tourists need good rest facilities and a place to exercise if needed • Newbridge needs a good park. Progress Park is much improved, but quite small • Good walking trail along the river to Laanecorrie and Bridgewater would be a wonderful asset and link the towns 	<p>Attended a Face to Face meeting. See above meeting summary.</p> <p>On reviewing this feedback Council officers have recommended one adjustment be made to each of the documents to reflect community feedback: That the strategy contain a clear and documented biennial review process that relates to each town/localities categorisation against the service level benchmarking table in Appendix 1.</p> <p>This adjustment to the benchmarking table was communicated at the face to face ROSA feedback session held at Newbridge on September 16, 2024.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarnagulla Ward should have a plan for growth • Newbridge Rec Reserve should not be considered within the strategy as the land is owned by DEECA 	
15/9/2024 Online during public display period	██████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a document signed by 28 Newbridge & surrounds residents calling for a more flexible approach, allowing residents more choice in the siting of facilities • Greater allowance be made for growth and change in the Tarnagulla Ward • Funding will be lower for this ward as there are no large towns listed 	Attended a Face to Face meeting. See above meeting summary.
15/9/2024 Online during public display period	██████████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair, maintenance and possible replacement of the infrastructure attached to recreation and open space depends on the size of the community in which it is housed • Large towns receive greater Council support than smaller towns, while localities get very little • Opportunity for small towns to obtain more infrastructure is limited, which does not encourage growth • Flexible approach to recreation and open space usage in the Tarnagulla Ward and particularly the Newbridge area is required to allow for growth and change 	Attended a Face to Face meeting. See above meeting summary.
24/9/2024 Online during public display period	██████████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 6.5.2 of the ROSA does not include any Tarnagulla townships. • Page 94 refers to treatment plants that exist in other towns, why can one not exist in Newbridge • Page 32 refers to “improved the sport and active recreation facilities, open spaces and aquatic facilities and services over the last 10 years” when in actual fact the maintenance of these facilities under your 10-year plan does not accommodate the Tarnagulla ward • Page 42 “participation projections 2021-2041”. The Tarnagulla ward caters for golf, tennis, netball, football and cricket. To date the only upgrades are to those at Newbridge. 	<p>Email sent stating submissions are closed. This feedback was received after submissions were closed. Carly was advised via email.</p> <p>The ROSA’s reference to “treatment plants” is in relation to Aquatic Facilities, not township water treatment or sewerage connection.</p> <p>It should be noted that Tarnagulla is a 5 minute drive from premium recreational facilities in Newbridge.</p>

Proponent Feedback in detail as posted to Council

From: Laura Naughton <laura.naughton@loddon.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 16 September 2024 8:35 AM
To: Orrin Hogan <orrin.hogan@loddon.vic.gov.au>; Claire Harrison <CHarrison@loddon.vic.gov.au>
Subject: ROSA Feedback

[REDACTED]

The time frame for responses is unreasonable, for groups to organize themselves to meet didn't allow much time. Appears from the Draft that the Wards with bigger towns in the Shire will benefit more from this proposal, as a resident of the Tarnagulla Ward, our biggest town is much smaller compared to others, however in Newbridge which is not considered a major town, there are 3 major employers being ASQ, Hazeldenes and now Bio Grow, so for these employees to consider living in our Ward, we need to have infrastructure (town water & sewerage), sport & liesure facilities and recreational spaces for families to spend time together. In Newbridge itself there has been a number of new homes built over the past 6 years along with others in the planning stage, most of these homes have young children in them. I understand that with Council's budget it is going to be difficult going forward to ensure all towns are adequately facilitated with outdoor recreation spaces, however I feel it is important that each ward has an outdoor fitness station, and an adequate playground with upgraded play equipment, catering for children with special needs. In Tarnagulla, in the Soldiers Memorial Park I would consider that to be an ideal location for an outdoor fitness station as it could be located in the shade of some of the existing trees, thus saving costs of having to erect a shade shelter to protect users during the hot summer sun. This also then would lend itself to further additions of play equipment in the park. With the age and maintenance costs for the pools in the Shire, Inglewood, Wedderburn and Pyramid Hill pools should be maintained and upgraded when costs are available, commencing with the pool most in need of repair. For our Shire to grow, we need all towns to be looked upon as a destination not just the bigger 'major' towns, more community consultation should be sought and open discussions had where people have an opportunity to voice their visions.

[REDACTED]

While I understand the need for financial restraint and clear planning towards how council allocates funds, I believe this strategy is not in line with councils strategic plan. Loddon Shire Council labels its self "a community of communities" however ROSA dictates our smaller communities do not matter and are not eligible for outdoor spaces and facilities. The growing township of Newbridge will be greatly effected by this strategy as the report has determined the Newbridge Recreation Reserve to be our designated park/playground/facility. This does not take into consideration the reserve is owned by DEECA and all maintenance/upkeep/improvements are financed through camping fees and community volunteers.

[REDACTED]

Newbridge Recreation Reserve Committee of Management Inc ABN 83 119 144 674 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] To the ROSA committee and Loddon Shire Councilors, Internet connectivity may be an issue trying to link online. We, the Newbridge Recreation Reserve Committee of Management Inc Executive, are offering our comments related to the ROSA 'Recreation, Open Spaces & Aquatic Strategy' document put on public notice a fortnight ago. The consultation time allowed for the ROSA report is too short for affected committees to consult with community and respond, thus the voice has been limited to a few individuals who have time to put pen to paper. Is this report being rushed because the tenure of councilors is drawing to an end? The majority of our Newbridge Recreation Reserve Committee are residents of Newbridge and District. It is apparent to us that this document penalizes small communities in favour of larger towns. The Southern Loddon is peppered with farming communities, with residents in townships along main roads. We may not have the population but we do attract tourists to the Loddon Shire. One Southern Loddon Gateway is the Wimmera Hwy which brings many tourists* into our Shire. *We can provide post codes from July 2023 to September 2024 to verify this. The Newbridge Recreation Reserve did receive support after the recent flood through the Loddon Shire's insurance for which the community is thankful along with support from Paul Scullie, Manager Community Support. However, contents and land restoration was left to the community; The Newbridge Recreation Reserve Committee of Management (NRRCoM) and Sporting Club Committees were left to source funding to replace that which was lost and destroyed. Furthermore, the maintenance grant from Loddon Shire, while appreciated, does not cover the public toilet, public liability insurance, and grounds maintenance costs required to keep the reserve maintained and safe for visitors. Volunteers put in many hours to maintain the grounds and facilities. The Fitness Station mentioned in the ROSA document should be located on Progress Park, yet Council Officers reject this and want it put on the Newbridge Rec Reserve possibly in the picnic area near the playground. That is not what the community want. Residents from Laanecoorie, Eddington, Tarnagulla, Arnold and Llanelly already

travel to Newbridge to use the BBQ on Progress Park and BBQ and playground in the Newbridge Rec Reserve. Tarnagulla has more children, and a more substantial shaded playground should be located on Soldiers' Park, Tarnagulla. A Fitness Station would also fit there too. Under the ROSA Strategy this won't happen because Tarnagulla isn't deemed a major township. The premise of the ROSA document, is based on lack of council funding to service all communities with infrastructure. Newbridge could grow if council pushed harder for reticulated water and sewerage. Our vacant blocks would soon have houses and provide more rates. We are a growing community. Our local businesses are employers. Bio Gro is employing more people as it steps up production. Hazeldene and ASQ also employ people who could become residents if building blocks had sewerage and reticulated water. Infrastructure is what this community needs. What does the open spaces do for Laanecoorie, Newbridge and Tarnagulla which all attract tourists to the Loddon Shire? A bit of maintenance. We can appreciate Arnold and Llanelly along with other small farming communities in the Tarnagulla Ward not being included because of their even smaller population than Newbridge and Tarnagulla which are their hubs. Is the Loddon Shire supporting too many halls which could be sold off to provide a communal area, like that which Kingower has, where community can gather on a given night. We support the continued location of the Shire's swimming pools. Some of us prefer to go to Kangaroo Flat which is warmer and can be closer than Inglewood. We think the adoption of this ROSA document legitimizes reduced spending in the Tarnagulla Ward. [REDACTED] on behalf of the NRRCoM Inc [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Comments to the ROSA Strategy were made by members attending a working bee held Sunday 15th September 2024 at the Newbridge Recreation Reserve from 9am to 2 pm. Post Codes from some of the visitors. 3352 3930 3350 3340 3831 3910 3551 3036 Traveller Aus 4077 3377 3664 3912 3419 3555 3810 3350 3121 3032 3219 5371 3015 367? 3041 3121 3550 3551 5700 3056 3556 3555 3219 3046 3350 3478 3043 3756 3444 3551 3357 3023 3046 3644 3340 3550 SA 7070 3160 3465 3556 3224 3350 3043 3995 3350 5253 3977 3515 3555 3377 3431 5162 3364 7450 3465 3041 3551 3363 3468 3550 3020 3464 3550 3264 3355 3556 3432 3630 3440 3222 3754 3442 3551 3462 3467 3462 3338 3925 3550 2758 597 3250 3550 3204 3340 3630 3555 3300 3024 3551 3550 3460 3280 3355 3550 3356 5291 3131 3342 3352 3658 3630 3199 3618 2640 3198 3340 3777 3442 3338 3551 3377 3711 5252 2579 3555 3020 3618 3556 3551 3350 3675 7469 3024 4006 3351 3551 3137 3197 3356 3551 3550 3300 3350 3226 3351 3367 2584 3030 2644 3332 3305 3995 3550 3555 3350 3620 3551 3672 3556 3977 3350 3465 3585 2622 3570 3461 3555 4655 3305 3805 3380 3551 3806 3595 3435 3722 3400 3777 3032 3977 3350 3500 6168 5275 3555 3280 3551 3636 3223 3400 3551 3136 3444 5065 3809 3345 3931 3555 3556 3280 3555 3918 3223 3138 3223 3465 3332 2480 3400 3550 3442 3931 3824 7018 3194 5049 3630 3352 3223 3138 3400 3321 3723 4511 3764 3555 4650 3429 3350 3551 3761 4850 3342 3714 3555 3781 3563 3460 3555 6173 3555 2756 3199 3359 3223 3464 3437 3764 3364 3556 3337 3782 3934 3977 3512 3196 3128 3550 7307 3551 3223 3465 3393 3370 3337 3555 3363 3926 3250 5290 3352 3228 3464 4507 3012 3356 3555 3077 5154 3782 3028 3364 3465 3691 3555 3381 3555 3337 3356 3370 3350 3076 4207 3042 3465 6062 6230 3350 3551 3401 3551 3465 3138 3755 3555 3400 3351 3451 3152 3138 3555 3556 3450 3363 3465 3180 3224 3516 3758 3136 3043 3431 3551 3991 3461 3641 3429 3465 3555 3300 3030 3429 3228 3223 3550 3551 3556 3465 3350 5118 3196 3551 3260 3437 3551 3057 3556 4702 3222 3859 3370 2732 3427 3363 5125 3400 3556 3756 2040 3228 3556 3280 3551 3556 3340 3977 3551 3350 3525 3073 3355 3756 3496 3350 3430 3551 3352 3356 3691 3338 337? 3032 3217 3620 3360 2640 3875 3580 3305 3363 3224 3350 3337 3356 3556 3163 3431 3340 5114 3363 3350 3350 3595 3478 3550 3192 3555 3988 3551 2648 3437 3434 2536 3305 3551 3290 3371 3201 3518 3934 3438 2340 3147 3517 Tassie 3163 3135 4352 3199 3922 3971 3350 5049 3340 3556 3551 2320 3551 3722 3551 7467 3556 3351 3442 3777 3964 5107 3268 3556 3555 7306 3350 3351 3337 3555 7304 3442 3465 3223 3350 3551 3550 3352 3351 3550 3351 3350 3355 3451 7302 3467 3116 3223 3939 3556 3450 3978 3551 3820 3435 3556 4340 3555 3764 3431 3351 3228 3555 2646 3337 3380 3032 5233 3555 3550 3747 3444 3820 3064 3338 3350 3550 3690 3222 3551 3515 3475 3551 5044 3809 3111 3482 3340 3820 3356 3358 3341 3156 3442 3556 4210 3880 3555 3156 3977 2431 3810 3434 3137 3461 2752 3820 3249 3676 3032 3350 4213 3224 5407 3551 3551 3434 3169 3337 3550 3550 3380 3805 2656 3429 3931 3030 3556 3340 25243659 3749 3435 3351 3472 3551 3465 3995 3550 3555 3880 2571 3550 5098 3450 3550 3555 3224 3351 3199 3517 3175 3125 3446 3056 3216 3825 3079 3825 3215 3377 3551 3350 3551 3201 3555 3764 3350 3328 3842 3280 3550 3550 3756 3737 3551 3984 3342 3124 3355 3363 3196 3250 3350 3550 5290 3638 3434 3551 3620 3064 N.Z. 3352 3216 3755 3775 3350 3555 3400 3551 3150 3551 3561 3043 830 3352 3034 3550 3352 3041 5118 3350 5019 3371 3429 3555 3620 3178 3340 3446 3215 3677 3085 5231 5158 3390 3470 3137 3555 3550 3049 3556 3030 3555 3198 3444 3564 3555 3240 3068 3465 3515 3223 3580 3350 3370 3041 3844 3805 3051 3431 3364 3806 3350 3461 3363 3550 3467 3796 3818 2440 5280 3350 3240 3084 3350 3555 3576 3337 3550 3585 4802 3029

[REDACTED] I wish to express my concerns regarding the draft ROSA. This strategy does not take into consideration that Tarnagulla Ward consists of a fifth of our shires population however does not have a "major town" which would significantly restrict our funding opportunities for outdoor spaces and facilities. The township of Newbridge would thrive if we had adequate services (such as water and sewerage) along with walking trails, parks and beautification of the Loddon river. The strategy does not also consider our tourist towns who have a large volume of visitors throughout the year. Newbridge is one such town. It is not unreasonable for the town to have over a 1000 people camping at our recreation reserve during peak periods. These tourists are often looking for activities to partake such as walking trails, swimming, exercise equipment and fishing. How do council plan to make allowances for a transient population to our towns?

[REDACTED]

On behalf of the Newbridge, Arnold and Llanely Community Planning Group, we wish to express our concerns regarding the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy. 1) The plan seems to be based on the premise that nothing will change in our towns in the next 10 years. 2) It is short sighted and does not seem to acknowledge that small towns need to attract residents to survive and recreational facilities are part of that mix. 3) Small towns are beginning to attract new residents (Newbridge is a good example) and people are also more able to work from home and thus likely to use local recreational facilities. 4) Several of the small towns are on the Wimmera and Calder highways which are major transport links and tourist routes. Transport drivers and tourists need good rest facilities and a place to exercise if needed. 5) Newbridge needs a good park. Progress park is much improved, but quite small. 6) A good walking trail along the river to Laanecoorie and Bridgewater would be a wonderful asset and link our towns together. 7) Of course, we want our larger towns in other wards to grow and develop as this will benefit all of us but I don't agree with all development being in the four other wards. Tarnagulla Ward are a fifth of the population and we pay rates. Our ward should have a plan for growth. 8) The Newbridge Recreation Reserve should not be considered within the strategy as the land is owned by DECA and run by a committee of volunteers. The committee manage camp fees which pays for any repairs, maintenance and upkeep of the reserve.

[REDACTED]

I have a document signed by 28 Newbridge and surrounds residents who are calling for more flexible approach, allowing residents more choice in the siting of facilities. They also request that greater allowance be made for growth and change in the Tarnagulla Ward. Note that the funding will be lower for this ward as there are no large towns listed here. I cannot load this document into this site. I have tried to register via this web page, but my postal address is not acceptable to the program. I do know where I live.

[REDACTED]

The Loddon Shire has recently released their "Recreation, open space and aquatic strategy". 1. The repair, maintenance and possible replacement of the infrastructure attached to recreation and open space depends on the size of the community in which it is housed. 2. Large towns (Wedderburn, Boort, Pyramid Hill, Inglewood and Bridgewater) receive greater Council support than smaller towns (Calivil, Dingee, Eddington, Korong Vale, Laanecoorie, Mitiamo, Newbridge, Serpentine and Tarnagulla) while localities (communities under 100 people) get very little. 3. The opportunity for small towns to obtain more infrastructure is limited, which does not encourage growth. 4. This Council policy is in response to increasing costs with a limited rates income. 5. A growth in population will provide greater rateable income. 6. Encouraging population increase in the Shire benefits the Shire and local businesses. Local business Bio Gro centred near Newbridge is currently employing local residents and is seeking to double their numbers in the immediate future. The longer term employment prospects look excellent. 7. This policy document restricts choices made by the smaller towns and localities as to the location of any further facilities should they be obtained. The policy stipulates where additional infrastructure will be placed, how much maintenance will be done and the fate when replacement may be due. 8. As residents of Newbridge and surrounds, we request that Council consider a more flexible approach to recreation and open space usage in the Tarnagulla Ward and particularly the Newbridge area to allow for growth and change. The following residents have signed agreement with this document, but unfortunately the scanned document with details cannot be uploaded to this site. Addresses and signatures are on the original document. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

10.8 ANNUAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM 2025-2026

File Number: FOL/19/432630

Author: David Southcombe, Manager Assets and Infrastructure

Authoriser: Steven Phillips, Director Operations

Attachments: 1. **Attachment 1 - Program Summary**

2. **Attachment 2 - Detailed Program - Confidential**

This attachment is designated as confidential in accordance with Section 3(1)(g(ii)) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It contains private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

The attachment contains information on project estimates which may affect contractor prices

3. **Attachment 3 - Detailed Program without estimates**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopt the proposed expenditure amounts as listed in Attachment 1 for the following works categories:
 - Local Road Gravel Resheet
 - Local Road Shoulder Resheet
 - Local Road Construction – Asset Preservation
 - Local Road Construction – Amenity
 - Local Road Construction – Safety
 - Township Street Improvements
 - Urban & Township Drainage
 - Local Bridges & Culverts
 - Road Reseals
 - Parks and Gardens
 - Buildings
2. Note the projects included in the various works categories as detailed in Attachment 2 - Detailed Program and Attachment 3 - Detailed Program without estimates.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The Annual Infrastructure Program 2025-2026 was discussed at the March 2025 Council Forum.

BACKGROUND

Council allocates significant funding for capital infrastructure projects on an annual basis. Council staff continually scope new infrastructure projects and maintain a rolling program of these projects. The rolling program is a database that forms the basis of the Annual Infrastructure Program. Each project is assessed using a scoring matrix relevant to the type of infrastructure as part of the scoping process. This score assists in the development of the Annual Infrastructure Program by providing a level of prioritisation for each of the projects.

In preparing the program, several factors need to be given consideration, including the prioritisation score, availability of funds and capacity for delivery. Council has adopted several strategic documents that must also be taken into consideration when preparing the Annual Infrastructure Program. Primarily these are the:

- Council Plan
- Financial Plan
- Asset Plan
- Register of Public Roads.

The 2025-2026 Annual Infrastructure Program has been developed in accordance with the following expenditure requirements of:

- Council funds totalling \$2.75 million.
- Federal Government Roads to Recovery (R2R) funding of \$3.82 million
- Caravan Park Reserve funding of \$0.1 million

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Attachment 1 summarises the proposed program of works planned for delivery in 2025-2026. A detailed program can be found in Attachment 2. Attachment 3 is a list of projects without estimates to provide further public detail without compromising council's commercial position in any procurement activities.

Council Funds

The draft budget and proposed expenditure includes Council expenditure of \$2,748,784 allocated to infrastructure projects.

Roads to Recovery

Council's Draft Budget had a proposed Roads to Recovery expenditure amount of \$2,507,112. Since the development of this budget, Council has been advised that the Roads to Recovery funding amount will be \$21,012,056 for the next five year funding period between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2029. The yearly breakdown of this funding is as follows:

- 2024-25 - \$3,104,056
- 2025-26 - \$3,820,374
- 2026-27 - \$4,536,694
- 2027-28 - \$4,775,467
- 2028-29 - \$4,775,467

The proposed expenditure in the draft Annual Infrastructure Program for 2025-26 is \$3,820,374 per the updated allocation.

Caravan Park Reserve

The draft budget does not include an allocation from the Caravan Park Reserve. This is increased to \$100,000 for the proposed program which is associated with making a transfer from the reserve to fund the Bridgewater Caravan Park Amenities refurbishment project in the Buildings program.

Taken together, this is an increase of \$1,413,262 compared to the expenditure allocated in the Draft Budget for the 2024-25 financial year.

Adoption of the annual infrastructure program will allow the Council to undertake the following:

- Local Road Gravel Resheet
Funding of \$1,263,415 has been proposed to resheet and/or treat approximately 20.29 km of the gravel road network.
- Local Road Shoulder Resheet

Funding of \$227,920 has been proposed to resheet approximately 11.2 km (length is inclusive of both sides) of the gravel shoulders.

- Local Road Reconstruction (LRC) – Asset Preservation

Funding of \$2,128,063 has been allocated for reconstruction projects on Wedderburn Junction Rd, Dunolly Inglewood Rd, Gladfield Rd, and Laanecoorie Newbridge Rd. In total 6.52km of roads will be reconstructed.

- Township Street Improvement (TSI)

Funding of \$375,402 has been proposed for five projects. This includes the renewal of footpaths in Pyramid Hill, Boort and Wedderburn, as well as an allocation to undertake ancillary works associated with the Safer Local Roads and Streets Program.

- Urban & Township Drainage

Funding of \$587,500 has been proposed for three projects. These projects are the upgrade of the Tantalla and Wilson St intersection and drainage in Wedderburn, an additional allocation for the Boort Flood Levee project, and an allocation which can be used as matched funding to allow Council officers to apply for grants for the Serpentine Flood Levy project.

- Local Bridges and Culverts

Funding of \$380,000 has been proposed for two projects including the replacement of a wooden bridge on Dunolly Orville Rd and an allocation to allow the Works team to undertake culvert replacements.

- Reseals

Funding of \$972,858 has been proposed for the 2025/26 reseal program. The final list of road segments is currently in development based on road condition data and inspection reports currently in progress.

- Parks & Gardens

Funding of \$100,000 has been allowed for Parks and Gardens projects. The Townscape team is currently finalising projects for this program which will be provided prior to the start of the 2025/26 financial year.

- Buildings

Funding of \$634,000 is allocated for five building projects. This includes an allocation to repair the roof at the Wedderburn Hall, an allocation to internally paint 4 x preschools, an allocation to restump part of the East Loddon Community Centre, an allocation to allow the demolition of the Pyramid Hill Maternal Child Health building, and an allocation to fund the refurbishment of the amenities block at the Bridgewater Caravan Park. The \$100,000 for the project to refurbishment of the amenities block at the Bridgewater Caravan Park will be funded from the Caravan Park Reserve.

COST/BENEFITS

The Annual Infrastructure Program is a significant part of Council's annual expenditure. The current proposed program totals \$6,669,158. The benefit of the proposed expenditure is that it will allow Council to maintain safe public infrastructure and decrease annual liability over all asset classes. Better roads, better public facilities and improved bridges are the key outcomes of the proposed Program, which aligns with the strategic objective of "A sustainable built and natural environment" as stipulated in Council Plan 2021–2025.

While this expenditure is significant, Council should note that Council's Asset Plan 2022 indicates a \$22 million asset renewal gap. The increased Roads to Recovery funding will reduce this gap and the impact will be assessed as part of renewing the Asset Plan latter this year.

RISK ANALYSIS

One of the risks identified with the proposed program is cost overrun. The estimated cost of each project has been evaluated based on current unit rates with an adjustment for anticipated price inflation, industry practice, and contingencies. The likelihood of the risk is possible and this

consequence is minor as per Council's risk matrix. The risk is thus deemed to be medium. This risk is offset by the large amount of grant funding that Council has received through a number of funding streams.

The other risk identified is the delay in delivering projects. The likelihood of this risk is possible and the consequence is minor as per Council's risk matrix. The risk is thus deemed to be medium. This risk is mitigated by allocating additional projects across Council's Works Department or Project Team for delivery depending on the progress of each group. For example, one of the local road construction projects, which are typically delivered by the Works Department, could be tendered out to a local contractor by the Project Team. This program list excludes projects identified from Community Planning or new external funding sources. Additions to the program could increase the risk rating of delivery.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The program has been developed in consultation with Council staff, in particular the Assets & Infrastructure Department, the Works Department, the Community Support Department, and the Finance Department. Other stakeholders and community members make contributions to the rolling program throughout the year via works requests and onsite meetings and visits conducted by staff.

Loddon Shire Council Annual Infrastructure Program 2025 - 2026
Budget Summary

Works Category	Draft Budget 2025-2026		Proposed Expenditure 2025-2026
Local Road Gravel Resheet			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 586,791	\$ 274,692	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)		\$ 988,723	
Subtotal	\$ 586,791	\$ 1,263,415	
Local Road Shoulder Resheet			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 218,282	\$ 227,920	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)		\$ -	
Subtotal	\$ 218,282	\$ 227,920	
Local Road Construction - Asset Preservation			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 502,515	\$ 449,270	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)	\$ 1,136,341	\$ 1,678,793	
Subtotal	\$ 1,638,856	\$ 2,128,063	
Local Road Construction - Amenity			
Council Funded (72)	\$ -	\$ -	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)	\$ 75,000	\$ -	
Subtotal	\$ 75,000	\$ -	
Local Road Construction - Safety			
Council Funded (72)	\$ -	\$ -	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)	\$ 75,000	\$ -	
Subtotal	\$ 75,000	\$ -	
Township Street Improvements			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 433,024	\$ 375,402	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)	\$ 99,193	\$ -	
Subtotal	\$ 532,217	\$ 375,402	
Urban & Township Drainage			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 350,000	\$ 587,500	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)		\$ -	
Subtotal	\$ 350,000	\$ 587,500	
Local Bridges & Culverts			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 158,172	\$ 200,000	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)	\$ 158,172	\$ 180,000	
Subtotal	\$ 316,344	\$ 380,000	
Road Reseals			
Council Funded (72)		\$ -	
Roads to Recovery Program (73)	\$ 963,406	\$ 972,858	
Subtotal	\$ 963,406	\$ 972,858	
Parks and Gardens (Townscape Services)			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	
Subtotal	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	
Buildings			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 400,000	\$ 634,000	
Subtotal	\$ 400,000	\$ 634,000	
TOTAL	\$ 5,255,896	\$ 6,669,158	
FUNDING			
Council Funded (72)	\$ 2,748,784	\$ 2,748,784	
Roads to Recovery Standard (73)	\$ 2,507,112	\$ 3,820,374	
Caravan Park Reserve (72)		\$ 100,000	
	<i>Total Renewal</i>	\$ 5,777,144	
	<i>Total Upgrade</i>	\$ 462,500	
	<i>Total New</i>	\$ 429,514	

LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL - ROLLING PROGRAM				
Program: Local Road Gravel Re-sheets				
Project No.	Project Name	Project Type [R=Renewal, U=Upgrade and N=New]	Location	PROJECT DETAILS
LRS1293	Berrimal Nine Mile Rd, NINE MILE	R	Ch 5.00-6.60km (00 Berrimal Wedderburn Rd)	Resheet 1.60km x 5.0m x 100mm
LRS1297	Chambers Rd, RAYWOOD	R	Ch:0.00-2.65km (00 Loddon Valley Hwy)	Resheet 2.65km x 4.6m x 100mm
LRS1298	Bush La, CAMPBELLS FOREST	R	Ch:0.00-2.24km (00 Loddon Valley Hwy)	Resheet 2.24km x 4.6m x 100mm
LRS1332	Hill Rd, PYRAMID HILL	R	Ch:0.2-0.8km (00 Hill Rd)	Resheet 0.6km x 4.8m x 100mm
LRS1341	Coonoer Gowar Rd, GOWAR EAST	R	Ch 5.3 - 8.8km (00 Old St Arnaud Rd)	Resheet 3.0km x 5.0m x 100mm
LRS1346	Sylvaterre Rd, PYRAMID HILL	R	Ch 3.94 - 8.54km (00 Leitchville Pyramid Rd)	Resheet 5.5km x 4.8m x 100mm
LRS1348	Mincha North Rd, MINCHA	R	Ch 0.02 - 3.4km (00 Pyramid Mincha Rd)	Resheet 3.4km x 4.6m x 100mm
LRS1354	Barraport West Rd	R	Ch 1.7-3.0km (00 Boort Quambatook Rd)	Resheet 1.3km x 6.0m x 100mm

LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL - ROLLING PROGRAM				
Program: Local Road Gravel Shoulder Re-sheets				
Project No.	Project Name	Project Type [R=Renewal, U=Upgrade and N=New]	Location	Project Details
LRSS0381	Silo Woolshed Rd, BOORT	R	Ch 0.0-0.6km (00 Barclay St)	Shoulder resheet 0.6km x 1.8m x 100mm x 2 sides
LRSS0382	Old Boort Rd, SERPENTINE	R	Ch 1.20- 6.2km0 Loddon Valley Hwy	Shoulder resheet 5km x 1.8m x 100mm x 2 sides

LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL - ROLLING PROGRAM					
Program: Local Roads Construction - Asset Preservation					
Project No.	Project Name	Project Type [R=Renewal, U=Upgrade and N=New]	Location	PROJECT DETAILS	Construction Category
LRC0545	Wedderburn Junction Rd, WEDDERBRUN	R	Ch 0.07 - 1.88 (00 = Calder Highway)	Reconstruction of road and seal	Rehab & Seal
LRC0546	Dunolly Inglewood Rd	R	Ch 8.92 - 10.42 (00 = Calder Highway)	Reconstruction of road and seal	Rehab & Seal
LRC0547	Gladfield Rd	R	Ch 5.01 - 7.13 (00 = Boort Pyramid Rd)	Reconstruction of road and seal	Rehab & Seal
LRC0548	Laanecoorie Newbridge Rd	R	Ch 6.9 - 8.06 (00 = Tarnagulla Laanecoorie Rd)	Reconstruction of road and seal	Rehab & Seal
LRC0549	Extension of Donaldson Rd	N	NA	New formed road for property access	New Road

Loddon Shire Council						
Program: Township Street Improvement						
Project No.	Project Name	Project Type [R=Renewal, U=Upgrade and N=New]	Location	TOWN	PROJECT DETAILS	Footpath / Kerb & Channel
TSI0603	Allen St, KORONG VALE Footpath Renewal	R	between pub and no 40	Korong Vale	Renewal of existing footpath	Footpath
TSI0604	Godfrey St, BOORT Footpath Renewal	R	in front of supermarket	Boort	Renewal (relay bricks) of existing footpath	Footpath
TSI0604	Godfrey St, BOORT New Footpath	N	between James Boyle Hall and gap in footpath network on Godfrey St	Boort	Install new footpath	Footpath
TSI0605	High St WEDDERBURN Footpath Renewal	R	At intersection with St Arnaud Rd	Wedderburn	Renewal of existing footpath	Footpath
TSI0606	Allocation to complete unfunded works associated with the Safer Local Roads and Streets program	N	Various	Various	Additional funding for ancillary works	

LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL - ROLLING PROGRAM					
Program: Township Drainage					
Project No.	Project Name	Project Type	Location	Township	PROJECT DETAILS
TSD0192	Tantalla and Wilson St Intersection Drainage	U	Intersection of Tantalla and Wilson St	Wedderburn	Improve drainage through intersection
TSD0205	Boort Flood Levee Project additional funding	N	Boort	Boort	Additional funding to complete the Boort flood levee project
TSD0206	Serpentine Flood Levee Project	N	Serpentine	Serpentine	Funding to serve as Council funding for grant applications

LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL - ROLLING PROGRAM				
Program: Local Bridges & Culverts				
Project No.	Project Name	Project Type [R=Renewal, U=Upgrade, and N=New]	Location	PROJECT DETAILS
LBCC0452	Dunolly Orville Rd, MURPHYS CREEK Bridge replacement with floodway	R	Between Wimmera Hwy and Lieske Rd, Ch 10.72km (00 Wedderburn Dunolly Rd) SN242	Replace wooden/steel bridge with floodway with culvert
LBCC0679	Small Culverts Allocation	R	Various	Allocation to replace small culverts

Loddon Shire Council

[Program: Buildings](#)

Project number	Project Name	Town	Project Details 1	Category	Status
BLD138	Wedderburn Hall roof repair & damp proofing x1 wall	Wedderburn	Roof repair and damp proofing one wall	R	Programmed
BLD139	Preschool painting	Various	Repaint internal walls four child care centres	R	Programmed
BLD140	East Loddon Community Centre restumping	Dingee	Restump kitchen area	R	Programmed
BLD141	Pyramid Hill Maternal Child Health building demolition	Pyramid Hill	Demolish the existing building and rehabilitate site	R	Programmed
BLD142	Bridgewater Caravan Park Amenities Block refurbishment	Bridgewater	Refurbish amenities block at Bridgewater Caravan Park	R	Programmed

10.9 EMERGENCY SERVICES AND VOLUNTEERS FUND LEVY**File Number:****Author:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** 1. FSPL vs Estimated ESVF - March 2025**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council

1. Notes the significant negative financial impacts that will occur in the Loddon Shire community, most notably the farming and business sectors, should the State Government introduce the current proposed Emergency Services Volunteer Fund Levy.
2. Notes that, as Councils are currently expected to implement this levy through the Council Rates Notice process and that it is highly likely that Council will be criticised for the significant levy charge which is entirely passed on to the State Government.
3. Notes that, the implementation date for this additional State Government levy is 1 July 2025 and, to-date, there is no clarity about what Councils must do to manage and implement this process.
4. Notes that, while the levy was announced in December 2024 that the new Emergency Services Volunteer Levy will be implemented on 1 July 2025, the required legislation to enact it is currently in the Victorian Legislative Assembly (Lower House) and therefore, the opportunity to pursue changes exists.
5. Directs the CEO to write to the Victorian Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Emergency Services, Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Treasurer and local Victorian Parliamentary representatives to advise that Loddon Shire Council:
 - a. Objects to the proposed introduction of the Emergency Services Volunteer Fund Levy in its current form, due to the significant impacts it will have on the Shire's farming, commercial and industrial sectors.
 - b. Believes that any State Government levy should be administered in full by the State Revenue Office, and that Local Government should not be required to have any part in its collection.
 - c. Requests that, notwithstanding the above position, should the State Government choose to proceed with introducing this new levy and require Local Government Authorities to administer it, then:
 - i. A realistic timeline for its implementation be negotiated with the Local Government sector, and
 - ii. Initial and ongoing funding support for its administration be provided, in full, to Local Government Authorities.
6. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor to continue to strongly advocate on behalf of the Council and community on this issue.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Council have discussed this new levy during General Business of previous Council Briefings.

BACKGROUND

On 13 December 2024, the Premier, the Honourable Jacinta Allan MP, announced that the existing Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) will be replaced, as of 1 July 2025, with an Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) levy.

According to the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) website, the current FSPL has been in place since 2013 and was originally introduced because of the Bushfire Royal Commission. DTF states that:

The levy ensures that Victorian property owners make an annual contribution to the State's fire services. Revenue raised by the FSPL funds 87.5 per cent of Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and 77.5 per cent of the Country Fire Authority's (CFA) annual budget.

In accordance with the associated State Government legislation (the Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012), all Victorian Councils are required to collect the FSPL (a State Government property-based tax) and this is done through each Council's Rates Notice process.

This tax, which is required to be passed on in full to the State Government, is shown on Council Rates Notices as one of several line items that combine to make up the total rates bill due from a property owner. Consequently, it is a common incorrect perception that the FSPL is being collected by Council, for Council.

Further exacerbating this incorrect perception, is that Councils are obliged to use their own resources and processes to pursue any outstanding payments from property owners for the FSPL, and to charge interest on unpaid amounts.

The Premier's announcement in December expanded the proposed provisions of this tax through a revised scope that, again according to the DTF website, will now also include funding up to 95 per cent of the following budgets:

- Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES)
- Triple Zero Victoria
- State Control Centre
- Emergency Recovery Victoria
- Emergency Management Victoria
- Emergency Alert Program (automatic emergency warning SMSs)
- Emergency Management Operational Communication Program
- Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) and its support functions within the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

It appears from past State Government Budgets that most, if not all, of these entities are currently funded through other State taxes being collected in other ways. It is unclear though whether such other taxes have been reduced to reflect this change in collection mechanism.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The increase shown on a Council issued Rates Notice will substantially increase because of the State's new ESVF levy. Of great concern is the overall change in levy charged to the farming (primary production) community. Across Victoria the levy will rise from a state wide median liability of \$621 under the current Fire Services Levy to \$1,299 under the Emergency Services and

Volunteers Fund. A list of increases across all land categories can be found at the DTF website here: <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/emergency-services-and-volunteers-fund>

Analysis of the impact upon Loddon Shire Council property owners is included in the Costs/benefits section of this report.

In addition to the significant increases that most sectors of our community will experience from the introduction of the ESVF, the additional burden on Council administration in managing, and enforcing, this new process is anticipated to be substantial. This burden will be carried across many parts of the organisation and will start in our Customer Service Team, due to an inevitable increase in angry and frustrated ratepayers who believe that the increases have come from Council. It will also impact on the I.T. department, as they will be required to undertake an, as yet, unknown level of I.T. system changes to accommodate this new process. The Rates department is also likely to be required to administer more financial hardship requests and to undertake more debt recovery activities, as these considerable increases take effect.

Many, if not ultimately all, of these changes will lead to additional costs being incurred by Council, with the impact further borne by ratepayers in the form of reduced available funds to do Council's own work.

There does not appear to be a Regulatory Impact Statement completed by the State Government to clarify or quantify the work required to establish and implement this new levy. Irrespective, the ability to put in place the required changes and to be assured that they are working correctly in 79 Councils by 1 July 2025 is a concern.

There is a common view in Local Government that, the ESVF being a State tax, should be administered directly by the State Government (and hence removed from Council Rate Notices). The State Government has its own mechanism for collecting this tax in the form of the State Revenue Office. To date, there has been no rationale offered by the State Government as to why this should not occur.

While the Premier has issued a statement in December 2024 that the new Emergency Services Volunteer Levy will be implemented on 1 July 2025, the required legislation to enact it is currently in the Victorian Legislative Assembly (Lower House) and therefore, the opportunity to pursue changes exists.

It is proposed that a letter be sent to the Victorian Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Emergency Services, Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Treasurer, to highlight each of these concerns and to request that further work be done to properly understand the implications of this proposed new State levy on rural and regional communities, before a decision is made on its introduction.

COST/BENEFITS

There are significant cost implications which will largely be borne by farming properties. This levy will increase income to the Victorian government to fund services which have traditionally been funded from other taxation income. It is unclear if there will be a subsequent decrease in other taxation. Given recent media announcements and the Victorian government's response to the flood inquiry which allocates significant additional spending it is expected that this income has already been announced and allocated to new ongoing operational expenses of the Victorian government.

For the property owner there will be a significant increase in this change from Fire Services Levy to the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund with increased levy amounts. Extrapolating the 2024/25 assessment numbers three models have been generated. These are that the capital improved value of properties will grow by 0%, 3% and 5%. As a result the following levy will be collected by Council and provided in full to the Victorian government:

Land Category	Current FSL 2024/25	0% CIV Growth	3% CIV Growth	5% CIV Growth
Residential	\$656,647	\$770,570	\$776,685	\$780,762
Commercial	\$66,424	\$100,439	\$102,409	\$103,723

Industrial	\$98,580	\$135,444	\$138,166	\$139,981
Primary Production	\$1,590,166	\$3,826,711	\$3,928,629	\$3,996,574
Public Benefit	\$36,243	\$37,404	37,458	\$37,494
Vacant	\$6,872	-	-	-
Total	\$2,454,933	\$4,870,569 + 150%	\$4,983,348 + 163%	\$5,058,533 + 172%

A detailed breakdown is provided in the attachment to this report.

Loddon Shire currently collects a small administration fee to support collection of the Fire Services Levy. This fee is insufficient to meet the costs of administering the levy.

There will be capital IT costs associated with this change. Council is unable to define this cost due to the lack of information about the requirements of the levy to inform our service provider and have the system changes developed.

RISK ANALYSIS

While ultimately Council has no authority over the State Government's decision on the ESVF levy, it is suggested that the adoption of a position by Council, and the attempt to influence the legislators through the letters proposed, is a meaningful response and supports communication of the impact the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund is likely to have on property owners.

There is a risk that Council is unable to administer this change at 1 July due to the lack of information provided by the Victorian government and the system changes required.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Council was informed of the levy and has not been consulted by the Victorian Government in their design or application of the levy.

This report was developed from information collected from the Department of Treasury and Finance, Municipal Association of Victoria, Rural Councils Victoria and discussions with other local government CEOs.

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Rate Category	2024/25 ACTUALS								2025/26 Estimates								
	Rates assessments (24/25)	Valuation (24/25)	Rates (24/25)	FSPL Assessments (24/25)	FSPL Valuation (24/25)	FSPL - Fixed (24/25)	FSPL - Variable (24/25)	Total FSPL	Rates assessments 25/26	Rates (25/26) estimated (3.0% increase)	FSPL Assessments (25/26) ESTIMATED	FSPL Valuation (25/26) ESTIMATED 0.0% VALUATION INCREASE	ESVF - Fixed (25/26)	ESVF - Variable (25/26)	Total ESVF	\$ Increase between FSPL and ESVF	% Increase between FSPL and ESVF
Residential	4443	\$ 1,262,432,300	\$ 2,450,129	4198	\$ 1,178,266,700	\$ 554,136	\$ 102,511	\$ 656,647	4443	\$ 2,530,983	4198	\$ 1,178,266,700	\$ 566,730	\$ 203,840	\$ 770,570	\$ 113,923	17%
Commercial				126	\$ 49,371,000	\$ 33,642	\$ 32,782	\$ 66,424			126	\$ 49,371,000	\$ 34,776	\$ 65,663	\$ 100,439	\$ 34,015	51%
Industrial				162	\$ 68,219,600	\$ 43,254	\$ 55,326	\$ 98,580			162	\$ 68,219,600	\$ 44,712	\$ 90,732	\$ 135,444	\$ 36,864	37%
Primary Production	3595	\$ 4,130,531,200	\$ 7,056,228	1556	\$ 4,093,078,300	\$ 415,452	\$ 1,174,714	\$ 1,590,166	3595	\$ 7,289,083	1556	\$ 4,093,078,300	\$ 429,456	\$ 3,397,255	\$ 3,826,711	\$ 2,236,545	141%
Public Benefit				129	\$ 31,584,000	\$ 34,443	\$ 1,800	\$ 36,243			129	\$ 31,584,000	\$ 35,604	\$ 1,800	\$ 37,404	\$ 1,161	3%
Vacant*				23	\$ 2,520,000	\$ 6,141	\$ 731	\$ 6,872			23	\$ 2,520,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,872	-100%
Total	8038	\$ 5,392,963,500	\$ 9,506,357	6194	\$ 5,423,039,600	\$ 1,087,068	\$ 1,367,865	\$ 2,454,933		\$ 9,820,066	6194	\$ 5,423,039,600	\$ 1,111,278	\$ 3,759,291	\$ 4,870,569	\$ 2,415,636	150%
Municipal Charge	6021		\$ 1,463,103.00						6021	\$ 1,505,250							
			\$ 10,969,459.51							\$ 11,325,316.27							

3.0% Estimated Increase	FSPL Assessments (25/26) ESTIMATED	FSPL Valuation (25/26) ESTIMATED 3.0% VALUATION INCREASE	ESVF - Fixed (25/26)	ESVF - Variable (25/26)	Total ESVF	\$ Increase between FSPL and ESVF	% Increase between FSPL and ESVF
	4198	\$ 1,213,614,701	\$ 566,730	\$ 209,955	\$ 776,685	\$ 120,038	18%
	126	\$ 50,852,130	\$ 34,776	\$ 67,633	\$ 102,409	\$ 35,985	54%
	162	\$ 70,266,188	\$ 44,712	\$ 93,454	\$ 138,166	\$ 39,586	40%
	1556	\$ 4,215,870,649	\$ 429,456	\$ 3,499,173	\$ 3,928,629	\$ 2,338,463	147%
	129	\$ 32,531,520	\$ 35,604	\$ 1,854	\$ 37,458	\$ 1,215	3%
	23	\$ 2,595,600	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,872	-100%
	6194	\$ 5,585,730,788	\$ 1,111,278	\$ 3,872,070	\$ 4,983,348	\$ 2,528,415	163%

5.0% Estimated Increase	FSPL Assessments (25/26) ESTIMATED	FSPL Valuation (25/26) ESTIMATED 5.0% VALUATION INCREASE	ESVF - Fixed (25/26)	ESVF - Variable (25/26)	Total ESVF	\$ Increase between FSPL and ESVF	% Increase between FSPL and ESVF
	4198	\$ 1,237,180,035	\$ 566,730	\$ 214,032	\$ 780,762	\$ 124,115	19%
	126	\$ 51,839,550	\$ 34,776	\$ 68,947	\$ 103,723	\$ 37,298	56%
	162	\$ 71,630,580	\$ 44,712	\$ 95,269	\$ 139,981	\$ 41,401	42%
	1556	\$ 4,297,732,215	\$ 429,456	\$ 3,567,118	\$ 3,996,574	\$ 2,406,408	151%
	129	\$ 33,163,200	\$ 35,604	\$ 1,890	\$ 37,494	\$ 1,251	3%
	23	\$ 2,646,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,872	-100%
	6194	\$ 5,694,191,580	\$ 1,111,278	\$ 3,947,255	\$ 5,058,533	\$ 2,603,600	172%

11 INFORMATION REPORTS

Nil

12 COMPLIANCE REPORTS

Nil

13 URGENT BUSINESS

In accordance with Council's Governance Rules, Clause 56 provides that at a scheduled or special meeting of Council, business that is not included in the agenda notice must only be considered if no more than one Councillor is absent and the Council resolves that the matter is urgent.

Despite this requirement, a matter that is not included in the agenda notice must not be considered at a Council meeting if it will:

- (a) directly and significantly affect the exercise of a person's rights;
- (b) alter the Council Plan or the budget; or
- (c) commit the Council to expenditure exceeding \$20,000.

14 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Nil

NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting of Council will be held on 22 April 2025 at Wedderburn commencing at 3.00pm.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at

Confirmed this.....day of..... 2025