

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT 2024

WHAT WE HEARD: SHAPING OUR FUTURE, DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL PLAN 2025-2029

INTRODUCTION

During 2024 community members and stakeholders were invited to contribute to the development of the 2025 – 2029 Golden Plains Shire Council Plan (Council Plan) through a range of engagement activities. Details outlining our engagement methods can be found on page two of this report.

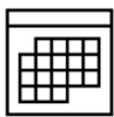
This report consolidates all the data captured through these engagements, which will now be considered in drafting the Council Plan. There will be further opportunities for the community to provide feedback when the draft plan is open for public consultation.

Concurrent to the Council Plan engagement activities, Council sought feedback on Golden Plains Shire Asset Plan and Financial Plan. The results of these engagements will be provided separately as the relevant plans are developed.

HOW WE ENGAGED

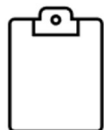
To ensure broad input, several engagement techniques were implemented across three engagements that are advising the Plan development: the 2040 Community Vision refresh, Shaping Our Future Together (SOFT), and the Youth Engagement survey. Additionally, feedback was gathered from Municipal Health and Wellbeing partners and Youth stakeholders. These engagements have communicated community priorities, which will underpin the future Council Plan and contribute to shaping our future.

A range of engagement tools were used to provide opportunities for stakeholders and community to have their say.



141

Days of engagement



522

Surveys completed



1060+

Participants community engagement events (500+), pop ups (350+), children’s events (186) and workshops (24)



2

Formal submission



27

Desk top review of community plans and plans related to Health and wellbeing

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative and quantitative data collection and methodology was utilised throughout the engagement. Qualitative data is, descriptive, highlighting lived experience as well as concrete examples. Quantitative data tells us how many, how much, or how often and is often expressed in numerical values. Qualitative data can help us to understand why, how, or what happened while quantitative data is numbers-based, countable, or measurable.





ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Have Your Say Online Portal	<p>An online <i>Have Your Say</i> project page was designed to encourage community feedback throughout the engagement process.</p> <p>Shaping Our Future Together Golden Plains Shire Council</p>
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Vision 2040 “Share your thoughts, make a difference” survey (March 2024) • Shaping Our Future Together survey (1 November- 28 November) • Youth Engagement Survey for young people and stakeholders (4 November – 4 December).
Community Think Tanks	<p>The community was invited to workshops facilitated by Golden Plains Shire staff. Two Community Think Tanks occurred in Smythesdale (22 November, 2024) and Bannockburn (28 November, 2024).</p> <p>An online Thinktank was also delivered on January 30, 2025, presenting the findings of the engagement to date.</p>
Target populations and locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 202 young people and stakeholders responded to surveys regarding their health and wellbeing priorities, and priorities for the Shire more broadly. • Advice has been received through 2 Think Tank sessions and, where timing allowed, input was sought from Council Advisory Committees. • Face to Face engagement occurred with Senior Citizen Groups across the municipality. • Direct email correspondence was sent to 395 people on the Councils Engagement Register (Engage). • In partnership with Council’s Children’s Services Team, we had 186 responses to targeted questions. • 135 Community Coordinators who are registered in Council’s Community Planning Program were also targeted and invited to contribute to the engagement.
Desktop reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the 23-township community plans identified overarching priorities relevant to the Council Plan. • Review of GPS engagements linked to health and wellbeing including Tracks and Trails Strategy; Food Network; Disability Access Plan; and Fair Access policy. • Review of national, state and localised data from multiple data sources relating to Health and Wellbeing was conducted and formed the development of a Golden Plains Shire Community Profile Report.
Community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultation with community and stakeholders was conducted at the annual Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Forum which identified priorities and will be incorporated into Council Plan. • Opportunities to have a say were available at a range of community events across the municipality including Cape Clear and Bannockburn Movie Nights Skate Park, Children’s week and Farmers Markets events.

The intent of this report is to guide the 29 January Councillor Think Tank workshop 2 and detailed reports for each engagement are available through the portal.

COMMUNICATIONS METHODS

The opportunity for community members to contribute to the engagement was promoted across multiple platforms. People were directed to the *Have Your Say* page for information about shaping our future and details on how they could participate.

					
Social media views / emails trees	Have your say webpage views	Community events, pop ups and workshops	posters with QR codes	Community groups contacted	Newspaper / newsletters

WHAT WE HEARD

In the Community Vision 2040 refresh community members were asked if the vision still reflected community sentiment. They were asked if any changes were required to this document. The result was affirmation of the following Vision statements.

- **Community** - Community safety, activities and events, connected communities, inclusiveness and friends.
- **Liveability** - Country feel, services and facilities, natural environment, space and housing.
- **Prosperity** - Supporting local businesses, education, services and infrastructure, schools and kindergartens and employment opportunities.
- **Sustainability** - Natural environment, waste and recycling, proud community and resources.

These community aspirations provide the Pillars for the GPS Council Plan 2025 – 2029 which along with the ‘we want’ statements present the grounding for Councillors to develop strategic objectives and to prioritise the focus for action over the next 4 years.

The Shaping Our Future Together survey asked the community to tell us the five service areas they believe Council should place higher priority on over the next four years. Table 1 below identifies these priorities.

Service area	Responses
INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES (sealed/unsealed roads, footpaths, civil works, public lighting, drainage)	44
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS (seniors, youth, health and wellbeing, farmers' market, public and civic events)	39
ADVOCACY (seek state and federal funding, advocate on diverse range of issues on behalf of community)	35
WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES (collection, processing, disposal of residential, commercial and public waste)	27
PARKS, RESERVES AND PUBLIC PLACES (rural/landscape design, public toilets, litter control, street cleaning, playgrounds, reserves and open spaces, civic and community buildings)	25
PUBLIC HEALTH (food safety standards in food premises, specialised infectious disease control, immunisation programs, pest control, environmental pollution investigation and control, waste management of domestic wastewater systems in unsewered areas, medical, infectious, and hazardous waste management)	18

Table 1; survey section 2: Our Council Plan 2025 – 2029

The Municipal Health and Wellbeing (MHWP) plan is a legislated requirement for all Victorian Local Governments. Councils can choose to develop a standalone plan or integrate their MHWP as part of their Council Plan. Most local governments integrate their Plans. The Victorian Governments Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023 – 2027 ([Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023–2027](#)) identifies ten (10) health and wellbeing priority areas and local governments are required to have regard to the state plan when developing the MPWHP.

The Shaping Our Future Together survey, Health and Wellbeing Partner and Youth Engagement surveys identified top health and wellbeing priority areas for Golden Plains Shire, from the 10 Victorian Government priorities. The table 2 below shows the results.

Health And Wellbeing Priority Areas	Responses
Improving wellbeing	238
Increasing active living	193
Preventing all forms of violence	156
Increasing healthy eating	125
Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use	93
Tackling climate change and its impacts on health	87
Reducing harm for alcohol and other drugs	51
Improving sexual and reproductive health	43
Reducing injury	38
Decreasing antimicrobial resistance across human and animal health	9

Table 2; SOFT survey section 3: Our Municipal Health and Wellbeing plan and Youth survey section 2 top 3 health and wellbeing priorities

The top 6 health and wellbeing priorities identified by the surveys align with the population health data reflected in the Golden Plains Shire Community Profile report and the South West Public Unit catchment plan.

Community Think Tanks

While there was a small number of participants in the two Community Thinktanks (Smythesdale and Bannockburn) they understood the Council planning processes and provided invaluable input about;

- The importance of Council promotion of and mechanisms to engage, and
- Clearly reporting outcomes linked to the Council Plan priorities, budgets, and geographic locations over the lifecycle of the plan.

The Thinktanks also identified some key challenges to Council and local communities;

- Economic and social impact of 'bedroom' townships where residents commute to regional centres for work, childcare, schooling, shopping, sport etc and
- Engagement fatigue was also identified as a challenge.

A Thinktank sessions was also held on 30 January 2025, online to discuss and present the findings from the community engagement. This session was both a drop-in session and participants could register through the Customer Experience Team. Despite being widely promoted, one registration was received, with no participants logging in online on the night.

Submission received from the Victorian Pride Lobby

Victorian Pride Lobby (VPL) submitted a recommendation that Council ensure the Council Plan 2025 – 2029 ensure that all aspects of Council work is inclusive and ensure that we are inclusive and value all people, including women, LGBTIQ+ people, young people, and culturally and linguistically diverse people. VPL also provided the same recommendation via a submission into the Community Vision 2040 Refresh engagement. This recommendation was endorsed by council and is now included in the refreshed Community Vision 2040.

Community Planning Program - Community Plans

Council officers have undertaken a desktop review of the Community Plans and created a summary of the top 6 priorities under each Community Vision Pillar from the current community plans for Bannockburn, Barunah Park, Batesford, Cape Clear/Illabarook/Rokewood Junction, Dereel, Garibaldi, Inverleigh, Linton, Mannibadar, Maude, She Oaks & Steiglitz, Meredith, Scarsdale, Shelford, Smythesdale, Teesdale.

While these are community plans rather than Council Plans, they provide a clear indication of community priorities and aspirations and as such, are a valuable source of information for the Council Plan.

COMMUNITY	LIVEABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local events and activities within their own communities • Opportunities to create social connection and community participation. • Recognising local heritage and history • Resources and equipment for community projects/groups • Information sharing (community noticeboards, newsletter and other) • Access to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase transport option and connectivity. • Access, Maintenance and Activation of Community Infrastructure • Road and pedestrian safety • Improvements to roads • Tracks and Trails for tourism and local enjoyment • Enhance public Facilities and Amenities for all users (visitors and locals)
SUSTAINABILITY	PROSPERITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revegetation and weed management across the shire. • Environmental education workshops • Community Gardens and community streetscapes • Food swaps and food sharing initiatives • Bushfire and Emergency Management • Public rubbish/illegal dumping and clean ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to services (medical, health and wellbeing) • Retails Shops, Cafes, and Restaurants • Tourism (attractions, signage, and promotion) • RV/Camp Sites (development and maintenance) • Connectivity – Internets, Mobile and TV connection • Access to local supermarkets/IGA's

NEXT STEPS

As the plan develops there will be further opportunities to hear and consider the community voice in particular an online think tank session in January and the draft plan will be on public exhibition for 28 days in March April.

Regarding the plan development the key actions and dates are

February 2025

- Councillor briefing draft Plan presented for endorsement.
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan exemption proposal submitted.

March 2025

- Application for exemption to develop a standalone Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan submitted to the Department of Health.

April / May 2025

- Exemption draft Plan received.
- Draft Plan public exhibition for 28 days.

June 2025

- Final plan submitted to Council for adoption.