

**Central Goldfields
Shire Council**
Advocacy Strategy
March 2024



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Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Central Goldfields Shire Council acknowledges and extends appreciation for the Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Traditional Owners of the land that we are on.

We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung People.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Located in the heart of Victoria, nestled between the two fast-growing regional cities of Bendigo and Ballarat, Central Goldfields Shire is at the centre of the magnificent landscape of the Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid.



Offering opportunities and support for every resident, we are fast becoming a prosperous community of choice. It's an exciting time for our community as we build a Central Goldfields Shire that's full of optimism and opportunity.

We might be the second-lowest ranked Shire in Victoria for socio-economic advantage but we don't shy away from this. Instead, it drives us to lay the foundations for a stronger, more assured future.

To achieve the aspirations of the community and to address the persistently high levels of disadvantage in our community, we need to work in partnership with other levels of Government. In the development of our Community Vision and Council Plan, the community identified a range of areas where they needed support to advocate for better services in Central Goldfields.

Advocacy is about seeking the support and investment of all levels of Government and other organisations to deliver the services our community needs.

Improved connectivity is a key area for advocacy, with poor internet and mobile access and limited transport options impacting on our community's ability to access critical services such as health and education.

Access to affordable housing has declined over the last few years post COVID and with the increase of people and families moving to regional areas.

All of these issues also impact on the ability for local young people to access post-secondary education and training and for employers to attract and retain staff.

We also need more support for our families and children and our Go Goldfields' Every Child Every Chance initiative is critical in ensuring that families are supported to bring up healthy and thriving children.

Council is committed to advocating on behalf of the community to improve access to these services and this Advocacy Strategy outlines where our efforts will be focused over the remainder of our Council term.

Councillor Liesbeth Long
Mayor, Central Goldfields Shire

OUR PEOPLE AND PLACE

A community not defined by its challenges, but by its aspirations and determination

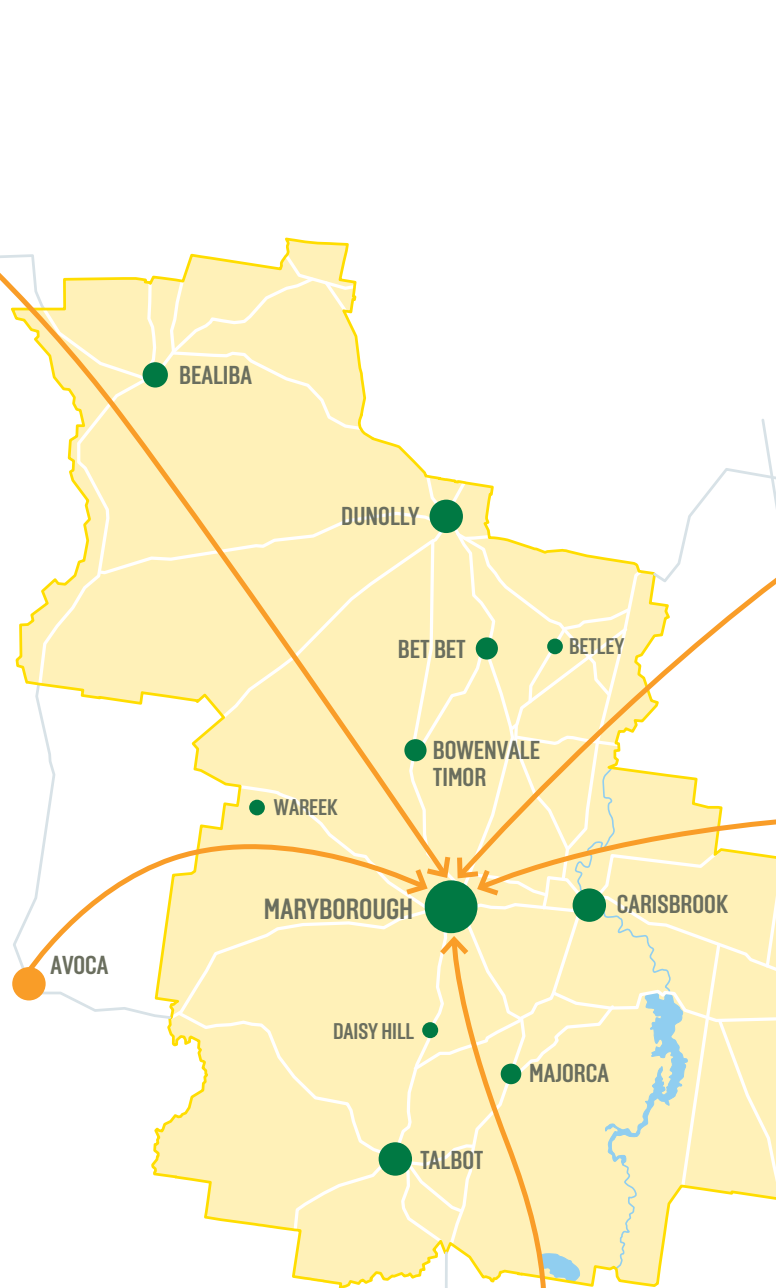
Central Goldfields Shire is located in the heart of Victoria, nestled between the two fast-growing regional cities of Bendigo and Ballarat. The Shire's rich history began with Traditional Owners and has been enriched by migration during Victoria's gold rush era.

All of the Shire's townships feature iconic heritage architecture and streetscapes – so much so that a UK World Heritage expert described the landscape of the Victorian Goldfields as the best-surviving example from the 19th century gold rush.

To gain World Heritage Listing would define our region as a significant tourism destination on a global scale and with tourism comes jobs, and with jobs comes the potential to grow our Shire.

While we are the second-lowest ranked local government area in Victoria for socio-economic advantage, this drives us to lay the foundations for a stronger, more assured future. We see the potential in our community and we're committed to working together to nurture and grow this.

In 2031, our community envision a people and place that's not just surviving but thriving –



"We are an inspiring, thriving and prosperous community of choice, we've taken bold steps towards growing our economy and our community is full of optimism and opportunities.

We are kind, connected and inclusive and we nurture creativity, leadership and innovation. We value and invest in our young people and our health and wellbeing is high.

We live sustainably, cherish and protect our environment and heritage and we have access to outstanding jobs, education, health, community services, infrastructure, and affordable housing."

Central Goldfields Shire Community Vision 2031, October 2021, Page 8.





40% over 60 years



20% under 20 years



52 years median age



49% not in labour force



2,651 total young people (under 20 years of age)



22% of families are single parent



\$904 median weekly household income



45% households are welfare dependent



Over 80% Australian born (67% Australia) (65% Victoria)



Over 15% do not achieve higher than Year 9



Over 25% of families experience family violence



4x more likely than average Victorian to live in a caravan or improvised dwelling



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Key issues

In 2021, 20% of Central Goldfields children are vulnerable on two or more domains (Emotional, cognitive, social, physical and communication) with no significant change for the period 2009 through 2021 (AECD)



13% of children in the Central Goldfields area have an intellectual disability, developmental delay or learning disability compared to 8.2% statewide (SEHQ)

In 2015, Central Goldfields was rated the worst place in Victoria (79 out of 79) to be a mother (Save the Children's – Mothers Report)



Almost one in four children in Maryborough live in a family where no parent is working

22% of Central Goldfields families are single parent families (state average is 15%)

45% of Central Goldfields households depend on government payments as a primary source of income

People in Central Goldfields are four times more likely to live in a caravan, cabin, or improvised home as their primary residence compared to the Victoria average (ABS)

Family Stressors (SEHQ)



Alcohol or drug related problem in family
History of abuse to parent
History of abuse to child
Child witness to violence
History of mental illness of parent

Central Goldfields

%

9.3
19.6
6.5
14.0
17.0

Victoria

%

3.6
5.4
1.9
3.5
9.0

Strategic priority

- Our children and families need continued investment in Go Goldfields to support the ongoing development of integrated community-led supports and service design

Stakeholders and key partners

- Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- Maryborough District Health Service (MDHS)
- Centre for Non-Violence
- Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- Department of Health (DH)
- Department of Education (DE)

About Go Goldfields

Go Goldfields is a place-based partnership between State Government, Council, service providers and the community supported by a backbone staff. Go Goldfields has been supported by State Government funding for over 10 years however, further funding has not been confirmed

gogoldfields
Central Victoria



JOBS AND INDUSTRY

Key issues

- Local businesses are finding it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff
- Local businesses are growing and investing in advanced machinery but need staff with technical skills and upgrading the skills of their current staff

Strategic priorities

- A contemporary and ambitious adult learning facility to drive high quality learning outcomes and promote different educational pathways (such as University, vocational courses and training) to grow employability skills
- Innovative approach to job placement and business support for training and retaining new employees

Stakeholders and key partners

- Latrobe University
- The Australian National University
- Fraunhofer Institute (Germany)
- Local businesses and major employers
- Victorian Skills Authority
- Youth Councils, schools and other tertiary education providers
- Federation University and Bendigo TAFE

A learning hub for Central Goldfields

Our next step is to develop a proposal to establish a Learning Hub in Maryborough supported by Country Universities Centre (CUC) with funding from the Federal Government's Regional Universities Study Hub (RUSH) program. We are preparing a funding application for RUSH for the June 2024 funding round





DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Key issues

- Numerous communication technology black spots across Central Goldfields Shire
- Central Goldfields Shire has a digital inclusion score of 65.6 which is 7.6 points below the Australian average and the fifth worst score in Victoria

Strategic priorities

- High quality digital connectivity for all areas of Central Goldfields Shire
- Reliable mobile phone coverage
- Fast and affordable internet coverage

Stakeholders and key partners

- Connecting Victoria
- Telstra
- NBN and other internet providers
- Mobile Blackspots Program (Federal Government)
- Greater Ballarat Alliance of Councils (GBAC)
- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership (LCRP)
- Regional Development Australia Committee

Some success with more advocacy needed

Some success

- ✓ Fibre to the home is to be rolled out in Dunolly
- ✓ A new mobile tower is to be built in Talbot
- ✓ A fixed wireless solution is being developed for Talbot



Ongoing advocacy

- Work with the fibre to the home contractor to ensure engagement with the Dunolly community deliver the best possible outcomes
- Work with Telstra and NBN to ensure that the new mobile tower and fixed wireless solutions deliver the best outcomes for Talbot
- Continue to engage with the Connecting Victoria program to ensure all upgrades identified for Central Goldfields are delivered by the State Government
- Work in partnership with the GBAC and LCRP on joint advocacy



TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

Key issues

- Limited train services between Maryborough and Ballarat
- Infrequent and poorly coordinated public transport across Central Goldfields Shire

Strategic priorities

- Increase the frequency of weekday services to become a commuter service between Maryborough and Ballarat
- Review other public transport connections to improve links to key services

Stakeholders and key partners

- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)
- V/Line
- Greater Ballarat Alliance of Councils (GBAC)

Some success with more advocacy needed

Some success

- ✓ Additional weekend services commenced December 2022



Ongoing advocacy

- Continued advocacy in partnership with GBAC to increase the number of weekday services between Maryborough and Ballarat
- Review results of Youth Council initiated survey on transport to identify other issues and gaps
- Continue to work with DTP on a review of our bus timetables to improve links to train services



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Key issues

- Land use planning constraints and underutilisation of the planning system is impacting housing development and provision of social and affordable housing
- Employers identifying housing as a key issue impacting attraction and retention of staff
- Cost of living pressures impacting housing affordability

Strategic priorities

- Support community housing providers and developers with proposals for social, affordable and key worker housing
- Complete strategic land use planning projects to enable development that will meet demand
- Complete business case for sewerage in Talbot to enable growth

Stakeholders and key partners

- Victorian Planning Authority
- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)
- Central Highlands Water
- Loddon Mallee Housing Group
- Community Housing providers
- Developers
- Employers

Bold steps underway

Strategic land use projects

- Land Use Planning Framework for Maryborough North and Carisbrook (expected completion 2024)
- Heritage Overlay Review Maryborough (expected completion 2025)
- Business Case for Talbot Futures (expected completion 2024)
- Urban Residential Land Opportunities Study for Maryborough and surrounds (expected completion 2025)

Affordable housing projects

- 20 unit development in Margaret Avenue approved – 50% social housing approved
- 19 unit planning permits approved – seeking partnership with Community Housing provider for Regional Worker Housing

Advocacy

- In partnership with Loddon Mallee Councils, implementation of the Loddon Mallee Housing Action Plan

OTHER WAYS WE ADVOCATE

Councillors and Council staff also represent the community through a range of forums, groups and memberships. Through our representation, we ensure that our communities needs are included in the development of regional plans and strategies and, government policy and priorities.

Regional forums and groups

- Greater Ballarat Alliance of Councils
- Loddon Campaspe Mayors and CEOs
- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (Loddon Campaspe)
- Bendigo Regional Tourism Board
- Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPS)
- Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance
- Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid Steering Committee
- Central Highlands Integrated Water Forum
- Coliban Water Integrated Water Forum
- Municipal Emergency Management
- Loddon Mallee Regional Development Australia Committee

Peak bodies and representation

- Rural Councils Victoria (RCV)
- Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA)
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Local Government Professionals (LGPro)
- LG Financial Professionals (FinPro)



