

Great Western Future Plan

2025-35



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About This Plan:

Great Western is a small, picturesque township nestled in the heart of Victoria's Grampians wine region.

The township is located on the Western Highway (A8), 221kms from Melbourne, 17kms from Ararat, 14kms from Stawell and 39kms from Halls Gap in The Grampians.

Known for its rich winemaking heritage, including historic vineyards like Seppelt and Best's, the town offers a unique blend of rural charm, historic character, and scenic beauty. With tree-lined streets, heritage buildings, and a close-knit community, Great Western is both an attractive village and a gateway to world-class wine, food, and outdoor experiences. It's an increasingly popular stop for visitors travelling along the Western Highway and a growing home for families drawn to its welcoming atmosphere and lifestyle.

The Great Western Future Plan (GWFP) is a community plan that aims to improve social, economic and environmental outcomes for the Great Western community. The plan establishes a ten-year vision for the township and highlights advocacy priorities over the next 10 years, as well as community-led projects and initiatives. There are four strategic focus areas within the plan:

1. Tourism and economic development
2. Community health, wellbeing and lifestyle
3. Community assets, infrastructure and land use
4. Environmental sustainability

The GWFP showcases a progressive and unified community. It provides a reference for key stakeholders and funding bodies to understand what's important to the Great Western community. As such, it is the key document that underpins the community's advocacy endeavours.

Although the GWFP is not a council endorsed document, it will be used to inform key plans specific to Great Western. For example, the Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC) are proposing to develop:

1. The Great Western Tourism Action Plan – this 5-year plan will set out a vision and aspirations for the visitor economy of Great Western (Council Plan 2025-29).
2. The Great Western Land Use & Development Plan – this proposed land use masterplan will provide a roadmap to guide future planning over the next 20 to 30 years. The plan will outline opportunities for future growth and development of the township. At the time of writing, no timeline had been set for the development of this plan.

Great Western Future Committee (GWFC) is the custodian of the GWFP. As 'owners' of the plan, their role includes advocacy and project leadership, stakeholder engagement and community liaison.



Community Engagement:

The development of the GWFP coincided with the development of the Northern Grampians Shire Council Plan (2025-29). With the Shire's permission, the community engagement data from Great Western residents was used in the development of this plan. This included:

1. 29 responses to the Shire's online engagement survey from residents of Great Western
2. A community workshop held on the 18th of March 2025 at the Great Western Football & Netball Club pavilion attended by 25 local residents

In addition, a strategic planning workshop was facilitated with the GWFC on the 16th of June (18 attendees).

To ensure a 'whole-of-community' approach, interviews were conducted with leaders representing community organisations within the township:

1. Leigh Cadzow – President of the Great Western Racing Club & Recreation Reserve
2. Dale Hurley – President of the Great Western Football & Netball Club
3. John Wilsch – CFA representative and developer



History of Great Western:

Although Great Western is recognised today as a centre for quality wine production, the first European settlers who arrived in the 1840s were mainly sheep graziers. Gold was found at Hard Hill to the south of Great Western in 1856, which continued to be the site of alluvial mining until the 1870s. In 1858, the gold diggings were significantly opened up and rushed by over 9,000 prospectors. In June 1858 a correspondent from the Great Western diggings reported in the Mount Ararat Advertiser that they 'could now boast of a Police Camp, Post Office, Dissenting Chapel and a Reading Room'1. In 1862 a further gold rush to Great Western attracted a large number of Chinese prospectors and was worked for several years until deposits declined. There are some remnants of this early gold history in the region which together with some other heritage assets in the area, are listed with Heritage Victoria.

The first vineyards were established in 1863 by two Frenchmen Jean Pierre Trouette and Emile Blampied who met at the Daylesford gold diggings. However, much of the local vineyard and wine making history can be attributed to two English brothers, Joseph and Henry Best. In 1851 the brothers prospected on various goldfields, but returned to earlier cattle interests, setting up a saleyard and slaughterhouse at Great Western which supplied meat to the Ararat and Stawell goldfields. In 1865 Joseph Best planted his vineyard known as Great Western with vine cuttings taken from the St Peter's vineyard of Blampied and Trouette. Joseph devoted his time to developing his viticulture enterprise even employing local miners to excavate his property and build tunnels for the storage of wine that became known as Drives. Active in local affairs, he helped to found the Mechanics' Institute, supported the racing club and was president of the cricket club.

The winery was later purchased by Ballarat businessman Hans Irvine, who produced Australia's first sparkling Shiraz wine. Benno Seppelt took ownership of the winery in 1918 and put Great Western on the map with magnificent sparkling and exceptional table wines, particularly Shiraz. Today with winery is part of the Treasury Wine Estate group.

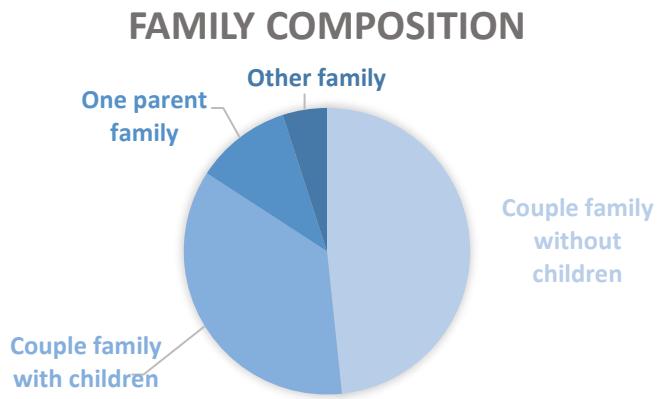
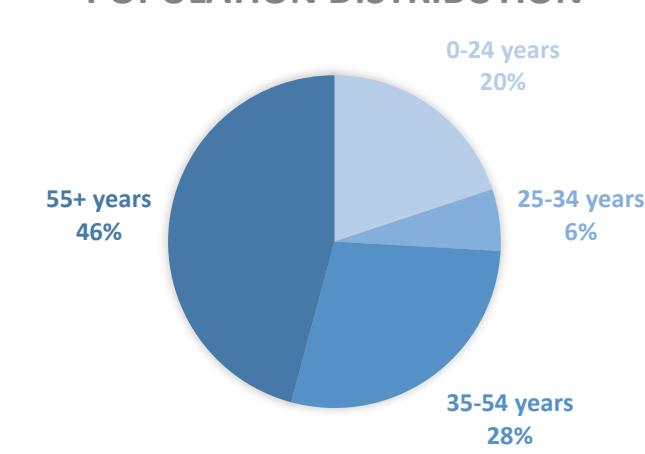
Joseph Best's brother Henry established his vineyard 'Concongella' in 1886, to the north west of the Great Western settlement and successfully exported his wine to Britain and India for many years. He was also a member of the Stawell Shire Council in 1872-75, a trustee of various public institutions and founder and captain of the Great Western Rifle Club. Following his death, his son Charles ran the vineyard, before the business was sold to Frederick Thomson in 1920 with the Thomson descendants still operating the business today known as Best's Great Western. Key buildings throughout the town were constructed between the late nineteenth century and the early to mid twentieth century. The town was surveyed in 1859 by George Langford who named many of the streets after prominent British engineers including Brunel, Stephenson, Paxton, Cubitt, Rennie and Locke. The sports reserve was established in 1915 and significant street planting occurred in the 1930's, followed by the creation of the Memorial Park in 1956.



Community Profile:

The following data is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 census:

Population		POPULATION DISTRIBUTION	
Total Population:	425		
Gender:	51.3% male		
	48.7% female		
Median age:	52 years		
A&TSI	6 (stated)		
Households		FAMILY COMPOSITION	
Number of families:	120		
Average number of people per household:	2.2		
Average number of children per family:	1.7		
Total private dwellings:	220		
Long-term Health Conditions		Income & Housing	
Arthritis	19.1%	Median weekly household income:	\$1,474
Asthma	9.6%	Median monthly mortgage repayments:	\$1,231
Mental health condition	8.9%	Median weekly rent:	\$200
Cancer	5.6%	Average number of motor vehicles per dwelling:	2.2
Diabetes	5.6%	Dwellings owned (outright or mortgage)	90%
Other long-term health conditions	10.8%	Dwellings rented	10%



Community Vision:

The GWFP Committee established a 10-year vision for the township based on community feedback:

A thriving, connected and safe township that proudly celebrates its village charm, rich wine heritage and historic character, while embracing modern infrastructure and sustainable growth.

Great Western is proudly evolving into one of Victoria's most charming rural destinations—a beautiful and peaceful wine village nestled in the heart of the Grampians wine region. This unique township blends heritage, nature, and community spirit, creating a place where people want to live, work, and visit.

Our streetscapes are a standout feature—carefully maintained, thoughtfully designed, and lined with greenery that reflects the village's commitment to preserving its natural beauty and historic character. The town centre is alive with activity, drawing locals and visitors alike to explore a vibrant mix of boutique retail stores, gourmet cafes, wine bars, and artisan offerings, all set against a backdrop of iconic heritage buildings and a proud winemaking legacy.

A sense of safety and welcome is at the heart of our community. With traffic calming measures, improved pedestrian infrastructure, and community-led safety initiatives, Great Western is a place where families feel secure and connected. The growing number of young families choosing to call the township home is a testament to our family-friendly amenities, including a well-supported school, upgraded playgrounds, and local sporting and recreation facilities.

Population growth is being thoughtfully managed to protect the village character while enabling investment and development that supports local prosperity. Our community is united and engaged—local businesses, wineries, volunteers, and civic groups collaborate to strengthen the town's identity, support one another, and deliver events and initiatives that bring people together.

As Great Western moves into the future, we remain committed to maintaining our proud heritage, enhancing our streets and services, supporting economic diversity, and fostering an inclusive and connected community where everyone belongs.



Guiding Principles: Planning & Development:

To support land use and development planning, the Great Western community have established a set of guiding principles to underpin their vision for the township. It is hoped that these principles will inform the Great Western Land Use & Development Plan:

1. Preserve and Enhance Village Character

- Respect the historical identity of Great Western by encouraging architecture, streetscapes, and landscaping that reflect its wine village heritage.
- Limit building heights, lot sizes and street frontages to maintain a human-scale environment and rural charm.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of historical buildings over demolition or unsympathetic redevelopment.
- Avoid the use of unnecessary 'suburban' elements and infrastructure within the streetscape (e.g. bollards, kerb and channel, parking bay line marking) that could detract from the heritage / village character of the town.
- New buildings should generally match the setbacks of neighbouring buildings, with a strong preference for buildings that address the street and visually contribute to the streetscape character.

2. Maintain Open Space and Separation

- Ensure generous setbacks and spacing between buildings to retain a sense of openness and privacy.
- Avoid urban sprawl by clearly defining the town boundary and growth limits.
- Prioritise green buffers, view corridors, and tree planting to enhance the visual landscape and community wellbeing.

3. Define a Clear and Cohesive Commercial Precinct

- Concentrate commercial and hospitality activities within a defined Main Street precinct, reinforcing a vibrant and walkable core.
- Support mixed-use development within the precinct where appropriate (e.g. shopfront with residence above) to enhance activation and economic viability.
- Discourage scattered commercial development that undermines the coherence of the village centre.

4. Support Compatible Growth and Diversity

- Plan for low-density, family-friendly housing that aligns with village living and supports community growth (in particular, the attraction of young families).
- Provide for a range of dwelling types that meet the needs of young families, retirees, and workers without compromising character.
- Ensure that any expansion areas reflect the existing grain of development and integrate seamlessly with the township.

5. Protect and Enhance Natural and Agricultural Assets

- Safeguard surrounding vineyards, farming land, and natural features from incompatible development.
- Promote sustainable land use that aligns with the wine and tourism identity of the region.
- Encourage land management practices that support biodiversity, soil health, and climate resilience.

6. Strengthen Community Connectivity and Walkability

- Maintain and improve pedestrian access throughout the township, especially around the main street and key community assets.
- Ensure new developments include safe walking and cycling connections to the town centre, school, and recreation areas.
- Support public space improvements that foster community interaction and local events.

7. Engage Community in Planning Decisions

- Maintain transparent and inclusive consultation processes for all major land use changes.
- Respect local knowledge and values in shaping the future of the township.
- Foster community stewardship over public spaces and local assets.

Great Western SWOT Analysis:



Township Strengths

- **World-class wineries**

Great Western has a unique cluster of international quality and award-winning wineries with winemaking highly visible within the township and surrounds.

- **Heritage and history**

Reflected in its historical buildings and streetscapes, Great Western was first settled in the 1840's and has a rich history of grazing, gold mining and wine making.

- **Quaint village vibe**

The township has a distinct and attractive 'village environment' highly valued by the community and visitors with services distributed along a short section of Main Street.

- **Natural environment / proximity to the Grampians National Park**

Ideally located just a short drive from the Grampians National Park, Great Western is also close to the Ararat Hills Regional Park, the Jallukar Nature Conservation Reserve, Langi Ghiran State Park and the Black Range (with Bunjil's Shelter's rock art).



Township Weaknesses

- **Community and visitor safety / Western Highway**

Great Western is located on the Western Highway (A8). Approximate 6,500 vehicles pass through the town's main street every day of which approximately 20% are heavy vehicles. This creates a significant safety and amenity issue for the township.

- **Land use planning / housing availability**

Current limitations with the Victorian planning scheme impact the ability of the township to grow and develop. There is currently a shortage of housing stock for sale and for rent.

- **Main Street retail and hospitality offerings (limited)**

Currently the Great Western main street includes quality retail and hospitality offerings (pub, café, general store, petrol station and pharmacy), with an opportunity to expand on these services.



- **Tourism**

Great Western doesn't capture a significant number of visitors to the Grampians National Park (approximately 2.4 million visits per year). Although

- **The Drives (Seppelt underground cellars) and Bests underground cellars**

The renowned cellar door experiences at both Seppelt and Bests include an opportunity to view the historically significant underground cellars, the former of which is 3kms long and includes the Ian McKenzie Museum.

- **Two major visitor events (Seppelt Great Western Cup, Great Western Rodeo)**

Great Western hosts two major events both held at the Racing & Recreational Reserve that attract thousands of visitors to the township every year.

- **Community spirit and drive / volunteerism**

There exists in Great Western a unique sense of self determination. Committed community leaders invest significant time and energy to drive the township forward, achieving outstanding progress.

- **Local sporting clubs**

For a small community, Great Western boasts many opportunities for recreation and leisure pursuits, with the progressive Football & Netball Club, the Racing Club, archery, riding club, tennis and racquetball at the heart of the community.



- **Service access / location between Ararat and Stawell**

Great Western's location between Stawell and Ararat provide the community with excellent access to community health and wellbeing services.

- **Great Western Wine and Heritage Cycling Trail**

A unique trail across Great Western, which connects 18 points of historical interest including three major wineries. Enjoy your first tasting at Best's Wines, before cycling to Seppelt and finishing at Grampians Estate for a remarkable wine and ride experience.

included in the Northern Grampians Touring Route, Great Western is not included in the 'Grampians Way' touring route.

- **Next gen volunteering**

Great Western relies on a dedicated and committed group of volunteers across key community organisations. The township is mindful of the importance of attracting younger volunteers to sustain capacity into the future and inject new ideas.

- **Amenity and streetscapes**

Although Great Western is an attractive township, there are opportunities to improve aesthetics with streetscape treatments. The Memorial Park masterplan (funding dependent) will create a 'village green' for both residents and visitors.



- **Vulnerability to extreme weather events (bushfire, flooding, drought)**

Great Western has a history of flooding (Concongella Creek) with local prosperity also significantly impacted by droughts and bushfire events.

- **Ageing demographic**

With 46% of the population aged over 55 years, Great Western's ageing population provides unique challenges for the community.

- **Public transport**

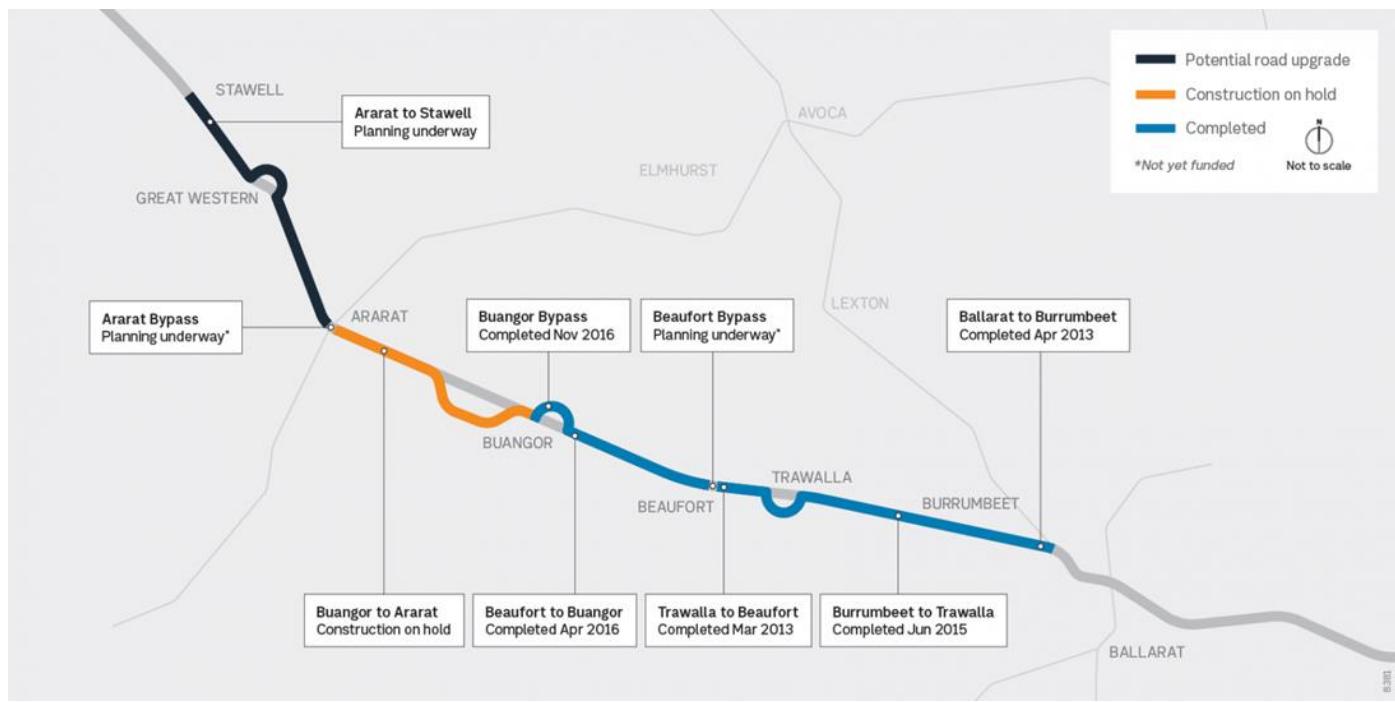
Great Western is serviced by Vline with good connectivity to regional centres. Challenges relate to non-drivers accessing medical appointments in Stawell, Ararat or Ballarat.



Operating environment

Between Ararat and Stawell, the daily traffic count is around 6,500 vehicles, with approximately 20% being commercial vehicles (www.expressway.net.au).

Planning is underway for the much-anticipated State Government project to upgrade the Western Highway from Ararat to Stawell, including exploring the potential for a bypass to the north of the township of Great Western. Planning work completed includes reviewing and, where necessary, updating previous work undertaken by VicRoads, including technical studies, designs and approvals in line with current design requirements, legislation and industry standards. At the time of writing, no funding has been committed to building this section of the Western Highway upgrade. The potential for a bypass is viewed positively by the township, with community members seeing opportunities to improve safety, amenity (liveability) and strengthen the local economy.



The current constrained funding environment and multiple state government projects either underway or committed limit the potential for this project to be completed within the 10-year time frame of this plan. State Government

elections in 2026 and 2030 (and Federal Government elections in 2028 and 2031) could provide advocacy opportunities for the Great Western bypass.

The Australian wine industry is also experiencing challenging market conditions with overall local consumption down and a trend towards cooler climate wines. This shift in consumer preferences had led to an oversupply of certain varietals, some of which have been a signature of Great Western wine makers (e.g. shiraz). On a positive note, the premium wine market (for which Great Western is known) is showing an upward trend in demand (both locally and overseas).

At the time of writing, gold mining exploration firm Aureka were exploring five potential targets along the 'Stawell Corridor' with prospecting at 'Resolution' and 'Adventure' not far from Great Western. The potential for gold mining brings with it both opportunities and challenges for the Great Western community. Potential positives include economic growth, job creation and infrastructure development. However, the personal impact on the livelihoods for specific landholders as well as negative environment impacts make any gold mining investments contentious and potentially fractious within the community.

With reliable digital connectivity, rural townships like Great Western offer a quieter lifestyle, more affordable housing, and a stronger sense of community. These factors can appeal to both individuals and families seeking balance and a healthier and safer lifestyle, with the potential to increase the local population and support local businesses.

Strategic Focus Areas:

The GWFP aligns priorities and key deliverables with four strategic focus areas:

1. Tourism and Economic Development

The development of tourism will be an important part of economic opportunities for Great Western. The strategic location of the township along a major transport corridor, its proximity to the Grampians National Park and other destination regions and the quality and long standing of wine making present tangible development and marketing opportunities. In addition, the village features of the township and the opportunities to expand the retail and service offer for both residents and visitors without impacting on the village aesthetics of the township will also add to tourism-based outcomes.

The history and heritage of the township, including its gold mining, vineyards and winemaking are a significant point of difference and present a unique and strong proposition upon which to build tourism and appropriate economic activity. This includes strengthening the brand and marketing of Great Western as a wine village and ensuring that these important elements are integrated into strategic projects and marketing initiatives.

The proposed Great Western Land Use & Development Plan (NGSC) and subsequent advocacy for relevant changes to the planning scheme could give rise to economic benefits within the township and increase the availability of much needed housing stock. Currently, a local developer is exploring the potential to subdivide a 10-acre lot within the town, including the development of six independent living units (for retirees) and a bowling green. Five per cent of the land will be made available as public use open space. In addition, planning approval has been granted for a 59-room hotel. The development would transform the rear of the existing Salingers café.

2. Community Health, Wellbeing & Lifestyle

A strong, connected community is built on opportunities for people to come together, stay active, and feel a sense of belonging. Great Western is embracing this through a range of local priorities. Thriving sporting and recreational clubs are at the heart of township life in Great Western, helping people of all ages build friendships and stay healthy. The local Football and Netball Club facilitates a range of different health and wellbeing initiatives for the local community (e.g. mental health night, health check night, men's haircuts, Thursday night dinners).

Regular events like movie nights, arts programs, and small music gatherings, bring opportunities for engagement, inviting locals to connect and participate in shared experiences – at the same time activating local community facilities. For older residents, activities that promote active ageing ensure that everyone can stay involved, valued, and well.

The potential for a local community gym at the Football and Netball Club, open to all, would support physical and mental wellbeing, while the walking and cycling trail encourages outdoor activity and appreciation of the township's history and natural beauty.

A community transport service could help remove barriers to health service access. Public art installations have the potential to add beauty, identity, and local pride to shared spaces. And at the centre of it all, a community directory of "what's happening in Great Western" is something that will keep everyone informed and engaged.

3. Community Assets, Infrastructure & Land Use

The community places high importance on the retention of the village and community features of Great Western. Previous investment in sewer infrastructure in the centre of the township supports the concentration of appropriate development within the heart of Great Western and to curtail ribbon-type development that will ultimately detract from the village characteristics. The number of larger lot sizes with multiple road accesses within the township present opportunities for landowners for appropriately planned and designed sub-divisions. By providing a range of housing options including heritage cottages and houses and low-density rural lots, Great Western can be a lifestyle choice for a broad range of people.

There are a number of community assets and services that contribute to community life for residents as well as providing facilities for local and visitor events. Many of these facilities have been developed by the community who continue to have an important role in their management, upkeep, planning and development. Facilities and services include the Primary School, Racecourse Precinct, Memorial Park, Recreation Reserve, township businesses and community clubs and associations. Like many small communities, these facilities are highly reliant on the support and participation of residents for their management and ultimately their longer-term sustainability. The community therefore is the major stakeholder in determining their future. NGSC and other agencies have an important role in supporting, guiding and contributing to community service planning and development and advocating for appropriate investment and development. The completion of the Recreation Reserve upgrade in 2025 has revitalised a major asset for the community.

The masterplan for Memorial Park provides long term advocacy priorities for that important 'village green' precinct. Funding has already been received for some Stage 1 improvements. The Great Western Performing Arts Centre - Common School 1867 Project is the first stage of restoring the original Great Western Common School built in 1867 and dedicated in 2016 as the Great Western Performing Arts Centre. NGSC has funded an architect and heritage consultant to do a repairs and maintenance report on the building to make this space suitable for arts and cultural activities for small groups. This community asset will also be listed on the Great Western Heritage Trail.

The high likelihood of a bypass (in the long term) necessitates early planning for a more liveable and desirable destination. The proposed Great Western Land Use & Development Plan (NGSC) will be a critical step towards achieving the community's vision for Great Western.

4. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is crucial for the long-term resilience and prosperity of Great Western. The community are vulnerable to environmental risks, including flooding, drought, and bushfires. The local agricultural community—central to the economy and identity of Great Western—is highly susceptible to prolonged dry periods.

One critical area of concern is the Concongella Creek, which poses a flood risk to parts of the township. Regular maintenance, including debris removal and vegetation management, is essential to reduce this threat. At the time of writing, the Great Western Flood Study had commenced. A model of the severe 2011 flood event was prepared as the basis to understand the extent of flooding in the township and surrounds. The Great Western community shared their knowledge with Council and its consultants to 'ground-truth' the model by providing feedback and photographs of floodwaters on their properties. Community input has now be incorporated into the model, and further community consultation will occur on the updated model. Additional engagement opportunities are proposed when flood mitigation measures are prepared.

Support for weed and pest control, particularly through collaboration with local Landcare groups, is also vital to protect both farmland and the surrounding bushland ecosystems.

With the State Government rolling out a new recycling policy, there is an opportunity for Great Western to enhance its waste management practices and reduce waste to landfill. This initiative, alongside community support for renewable energy adoption—such as solar panels on homes and public buildings—can significantly reduce the township's environmental footprint. Infrastructure upgrades, including the expansion of the sewage system, will also be essential to cater to a growing population in a sustainable way.

Bushfire risk is significant. Land management strategies such as controlled burns, vegetation clearance, and emergency preparedness planning can help protect lives and property. Finally, sustainable access to recreational assets should be preserved, ensuring that both residents and visitors can continue to enjoy nature while respecting its vulnerability.

The Plan:

The Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and will result in a 12-month action plan that will sit as an appendix to this document.

Acronyms:

GWFC = Great Western Future Committee

GWFNC = Great Western Football & Netball Club

GWRRR = Great Western Racing & Recreation Reserve

HC = Hall Committee

CFA = Country Fire Authority

NGSC = Northern Grampians Shire Council

1. Tourism & Economic Development:

Priorities / Key Deliverables	Lead	Support	Timing									
			25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
Provide support to NGSC for the development of the Great Western Tourism Action Plan	GWFC		■									
Provide support to NGSC with the development of GW's destination brand identity and roll out	GWFC		■	■								
Complete any assigned actions in the Great Western Tourism Action Plan	GWFC	GWRRR		■	■	■	■					
Develop and launch an annual springtime music event at the Racing & Rec Reserve	GWRRR	GWFC		■	■	■	■					
Develop and launch an annual wintertime event at the Racing & Rec Reserve (possibly bikes/cycling)	GWRRR	GWFC						■	■	■	■	■
Continue to develop and promote the Seppelt Great Western Cup (Jan) and Great Western Easter Rodeo	GWRRR	GWFC		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Advocate to NGSC for improved signage and wayfinding within the township	GWFC			■	■	■						
Establish clear protocols and responsibilities for Social Media content development/updates	GWFC		■	■								
Continue to advocate to Grampians Tourism to increase the tourism profile of Great Western	NGSC	GWRRR		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Continue to support events associated with wine making	GWFC			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Continue to grow, develop and promote the camping experience at the Rec Reserve	GWRRR	GWFC		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Advocate for funding to install a dump station at the Racing & Rec Reserve	GWRRR	GWFC		■	■	■						
Advocate for funding to improve drainage at the Racing & Rec Reserve	GWRRR	GWFC			■	■	■	■	■			
Advocate for funding to upgrade power circuitry and supply at the Racing & Rec Reserve	GWRRR	GWFC					■	■	■			

2. Community Health, Wellbeing & Lifestyle

3. Community Assets, Infrastructure & Land Use

4. Environmental Sustainability