



ATTACHMENTS

**Under Separate Cover
Council Meeting**

6.00pm Tuesday 24 November 2020

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THE 26TH GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

2019-20





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Council acknowledges the traditional Wadawurrung owners of the land where we live, work and meet. Council pays its respects to Wadawurrung Elders both past and present and extends that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are a part of Golden Plains Shire.

Sunset over Bunjil's Lookout in Maude.

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INTRODUCTION



Meredith Wattle by Noah Stanley. This photo was awarded the Junior Prize (up to 12 years) in the Spring in the Shire 2019, Council’s biennial amateur photographic competition, celebrating ‘What I love about Golden Plains.’

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE REPORT OF OPERATIONS 2019-20

Council’s Annual Report is not only a snapshot of our financial position and our organisation – it’s also an opportunity to let our residents, communities and stakeholders know the steps Council is taking to ensure that Golden Plains Shire continues to grow and thrive into the future.

We’ve put together some fast facts and highlights from the past financial year in the next few pages, which show you more about Golden Plains Shire and our vibrant communities.



268**MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH**
newborn home visits were conducted



2.9M**IMPRESSIONS**
across 3,363 posts on Council’s corporate social media channels



3,000+
visitors attended the third Golden Plains Twilight Market and opening of the Bannockburn Heart in December 2019



3,356**COMMUNITY SAFETY ENQUIRIES**
received by the Council’s Community Protection team



\$110,873**COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM**
invested in 32 local projects across the Shire



12,000+
HOURS OF CONSUMER SUPPORT SERVICES
provided by Active Ageing & Disability Services



53,420
enquiries received by Council’s CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM



220+**FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND EDUCATOR’S**
attended Council’s Children’s Week event in Bannockburn



2,575**COUNCIL CONNECTED WITH**
young people across 36 in-person activities



723
people responded to Council’s Future Waste Options survey



716KM
of gravel roads graded



320**NEW PLANNING PERMITS ISSUED**
The development value for these projects is more than



\$94.2M

INTRODUCTION



The Teesdale Turtle Bend Reserve is a popular recreation and events precinct that is a valuable social meeting space for the Teesdale community and attracts visitors from across the State. In 2019-20, construction began on a significant upgrade of the Reserve.

INTRODUCTION

OUR VISION, OUR MISSION, OUR VALUES



OUR VISION

A healthy, safe, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community supported by strong leadership, transparent governance and community partnerships.

Our Community, Our Economy, and Our Pride.



OUR MISSION

We will achieve our vision through:

- demonstrating good governance and involving the community in decision-making.
- working and advocating in partnership with our community to address social, economic and environmental challenges.
- promoting gender equality and equity and inclusion for all.
- sustaining a focus on long-term outcomes and delivering increased public value through good decision-making and strategic spending.
- building awareness and strategic alliances with government, regional groups and the community.



OUR VALUES

Honesty and Integrity

We will act ethically and honestly and work to continue to build the trust and confidence of the community.

Leadership

We will demonstrate strong and collaborative community leadership.

Accountability

We will act in an open and transparent manner and be accountable to our community for our processes, decisions and actions.

Adaptability

We will implement progressive and creative responses to emerging issues and will continue to work to build organisational and community resilience.

Fairness

We will base our decision-making on research, information and understanding of the needs and aspirations of the whole community and promote equitable access to the Shire's services and public places.

INTRODUCTION



In 2019-20, the reconstruction, sealing and drainage improvements were completed on a 740-metre section of Teesdale-Lethbridge Road, extending north of Shelford-Bannockburn Road. Council's new Director Infrastructure and Development Phil Josipovic and Mayor Cr Owen Sharkey viewed the completed project.

INTRODUCTION

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



E Waste Ban in Victoria

Golden Plains Shire Council implemented the State Government's ban on e-waste in landfill, opening the new e-waste storage facility at the Rokewood Transfer Station.



A New Commitment for Unsealed Roads

Council launched its new Unsealed Road Charter and online grading calendar, committing to grading and maintaining the Shire's entire 700km unsealed road network to an agreed standard.



Giving a Helping Hand

The official launch of the Equihands Youth Leadership Program 2019-20 – a partnership of Council and Hands of Change – to help young people develop leadership skills with the aid of horses.



Golden Plains Wind Farm Approval

The Federal Government approved the Golden Plains Wind Farm, one of the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*.

JULY 19

AUGUST 19



Grants Support Community Programs

A community celebration marked the 24th year of Council's Community Grants Program, with 32 community groups receiving a total of \$110,873 to complete projects to the value of \$267,012.



Green-Light for Plaza Plan

The Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal upheld Council's approval of a planning permit for the Bannockburn Plaza Redevelopment, a significant retail and office location in the Shire's largest town.



Inverleigh Structure Plan

Council advertised the proposed Inverleigh Structure Plan and Planning Scheme Amendment documents between August and October 2019. Ninety-one community submissions were received and Council decided in favour of an independent panel review.



New Look Rates Notices

The 2019-20 Rates Notices were redesigned to make this important communication easier to read and understand, supported by a comprehensive year-round information campaign.

AUGUST 19

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



Chat with the Councillors

Council’s popular Councillor Conversation Post program continued with residents meeting their local government representatives in Batesford, Teesdale and Dereel in September and November 2019.



Bannockburn Soccer Pitch No. 2

Construction began on the second soccer pitch at the Bannockburn Recreation Precinct, funded by a \$250,000 Victorian Government World Game Facilities Fund grant and \$234,000 from Council.



Courthouse Restored to Glory

The 160-year-old Smythesdale Courthouse was reopened following conservation works completed with a \$90,000 Victorian Government Living Heritage Grant.



New Customer Service Hours

Opening hours were permanently extended at Council’s Customer Service Centre in Smythesdale, following a successful trial at the busy location in the growing north of the Shire.



Celebrating Seniors Festival

Golden Plains Shire seniors celebrated the 2019 Victorian Seniors Festival with a program of engaging and enjoyable events in Dereel, Meredith, Smythesdale, Haddon and Bannockburn.

SEPTEMBER 19

OCTOBER 19



Let’s Get Active Together

Council joined VicHealth in an active campaign to encourage kids to walk, ride or scoot to school as part of the annual Walk to School program, with participation from all 15 schools in the Shire.



Children’s Week Celebration

A popular free Children’s Week celebration was attended by young people and families from all over the Shire, enjoying a range of fun interactive activities focused on healthy eating and active living.



New Process for Fire Permits

Council discontinued issuing Schedule 13 Permits to Burn by Private Persons, with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to manage these permits to burn during the Fire Danger Period.



Healthy and Super

To coincide with National Nutrition and Children’s Weeks, Council launched a children’s book, ‘The Super Veggie Four’, with more than 600 children engaged across the Shire.



Capturing Golden Plains

Spring in the Shire, Council’s popular biennial amateur photography competition, was held with the theme of “What I love about Golden Plains.”



Recognising Local Youth

The first Mayoral Youth Program was launched, celebrating the positive contributions of local young people and encouraging youth to be more actively involved in their communities.



Staying Active in the Plains

Active Golden Plains, a series of free fitness programs, was supported by Council to improve and increase physical activity and social wellbeing of residents in the Shire.



Victoria Park Sports Lighting

Construction began on the Victoria Park Recreation Reserve Sports Lighting project in Bannockburn, funded by a \$439,840 Community Sport Infrastructure grant from the Federal Government.

OCTOBER 19

NOVEMBER 19

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



Connect with Golden Plains

Golden Plains Shire Council is now on Instagram! To complement existing social media channels, the new account is focused on promoting Golden Plains as a great place to live, work, and visit.



Respect Women – Call It Out

Council supported Respect Victoria's 'Respect Women – Call It Out' campaign during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, with a social media campaign of community identities.



Golden Plains Newest Citizens

Council's held its largest citizenship ceremony in November 2019, with 20 residents hailing from around the world, gathering with their family members and friends to become Australian citizens.



Bridge Works

Council completed essential maintenance works on four local bridges: Slate Quarry Road in Meredith, Russells Bridge Road in Maude; and Geggies Road and Reserve Road Bridge in Rokewood.



Future Waste Plan

More than 723 Golden Plains Shire residents had their say on the future of waste management, in the development of Council's Waste Management Strategy 2020-2030.



Take a Creative Wander

To support the local creative industry, Creative Wanderings in the Golden Plains Shire was launched. The publication featured local artists and artist studios, festivals and community arts groups, as well as inspirational itineraries.



Haddon Recreation Centre Floor Project

Construction began on the new timber floor at Haddon Recreation Centre, a popular facility neighbouring Haddon Primary School. The project is fully funded by the Victorian Government.



A Play in the Shade

A \$26,655 Victorian Government grant was secured for new permanent shade sails over the playground at the Bannockburn Recreation Centre, creating a safer and more inviting play space.

DECEMBER 19

JANUARY 20



Open for Play

Stage One of the Bannockburn Heart was officially opened, with the new water and adventure play space a significant partnership of Council and the Federal and State Governments.



Another Great Twilight Market

The third annual Golden Plains Twilight Market attracted a festive crowd of locals and visitors to its home at the new Bannockburn Heart.



Chairing the Region

Mayor Cr Owen Sharkey was elected Chair of the Central Highlands Councils Victoria (CHCV) for the 2019-20 term. The CHCV is an advocacy group of eight central Victorian municipal councils.



Planning for the Future

Council secured a Victorian Government's Streamlining for Growth grant to partner with the Victorian Planning Authority to develop the new Bannockburn Growth Plan in 2020.



Celebrating Australia Day

For the first time, Golden Plains Shire welcomed two official Australia Day Ambassadors to help celebrate Australia Day at a number of community events across the municipality.

JANUARY 20

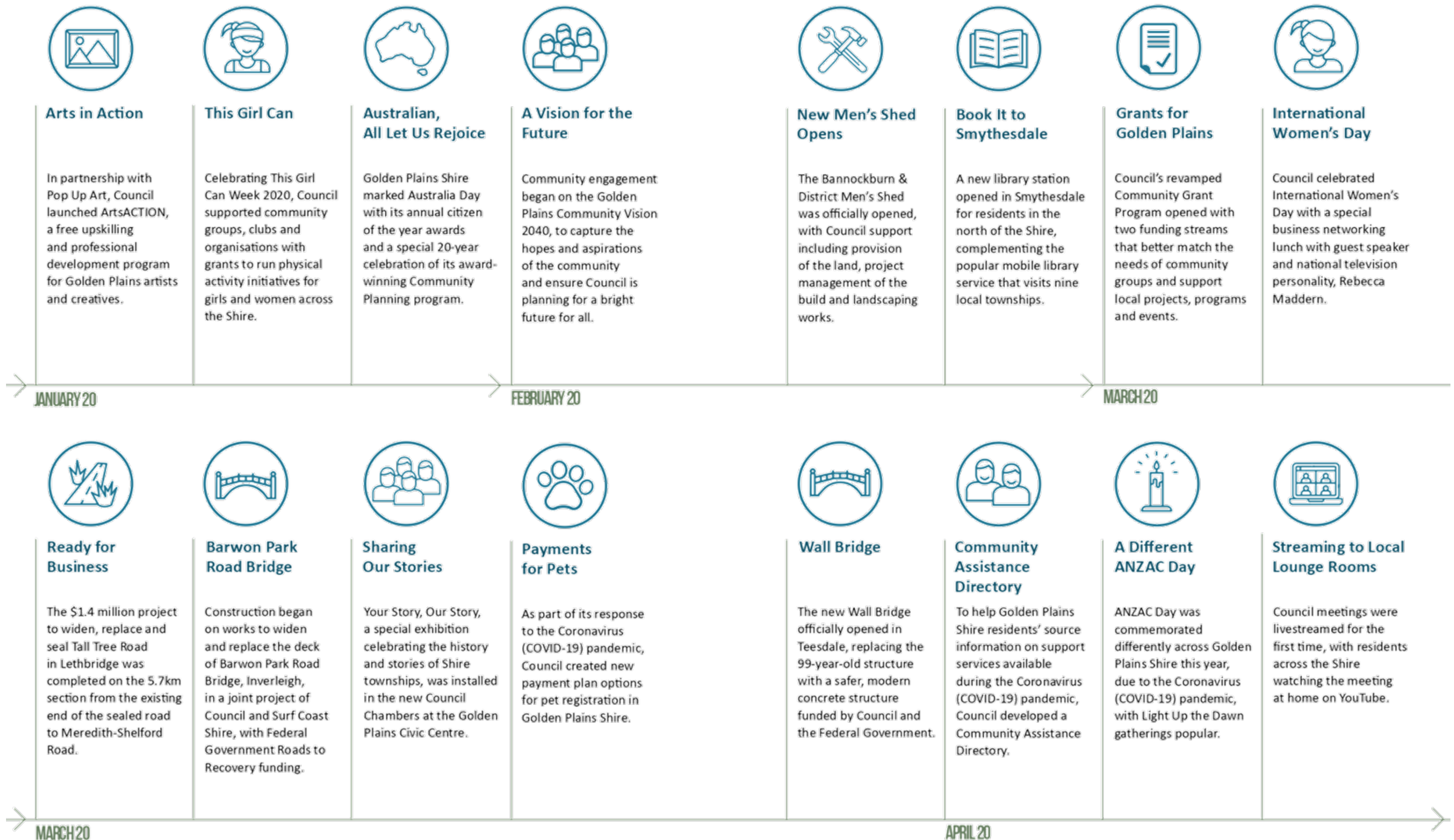


On 28 January, Council held its 2020 Australia Day Awards in Bannockburn. The award-winner were (left to right) Senior of the Year Una Miller; Young Citizen of the Year Minh-Chau Ho; Mayor Cr Owen Sharkey; Malcolm Johns of the Inverleigh's Anzac Day Service named Community Group of the Year; and Citizen of the Year Mary Foster.

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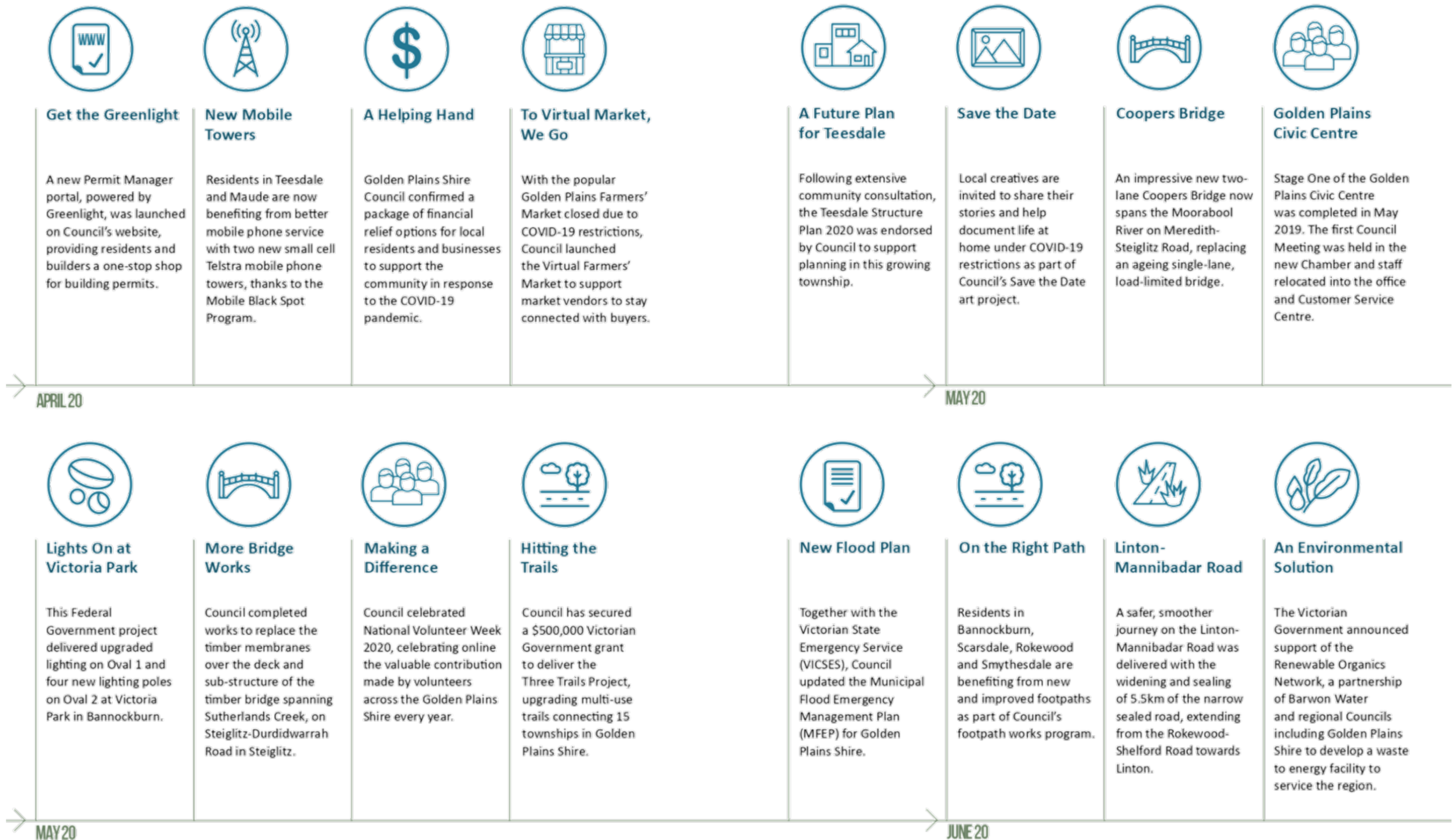
HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



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HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



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HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



Advocacy Success

After more than a year of lobbying, Council was accepted into the Victorian Government's Growing Suburbs Fund (GSF) program, eligible for funding to support its fast-growing population.



Working for Victoria

Council recruited for 20 additional fixed-term jobs, funded under the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria program, placing unemployed people in pandemic recovery positions.



Take the Back Roads

Rokewood and Corindhap played the starring roles in an episode of ABC TV's 'Back Roads' program focused on country towns uniting to support each other through the COVID-19 pandemic.



Open for Service

Council's new Customer Service Centres at The Well in Smythesdale and the Golden Plains Civic Centre in Bannockburn opened to serve the community.

JUNE 20



A Message of Hope

Council's Youth and Active Ageing team created the Messages of Hope program, with more than 150 local schoolchildren writing letters of support to isolated and aged residents in the Shire.



Pitfield-Cressy Road

Eight kilometres of Pitfield-Cressy Road was upgraded and widened west from Colac-Ballarat Road, making the road safer for all users, including heavy vehicles transporting grain to Werneth.



Lighting Up Rokewood

Four new lighting towers at Rokewood Recreation Reserve were completed and switched on, ready for night training and matches when local community sport returns.



Maude-She Oaks Road

The upgrade and widening of 3km of Maude-She Oaks Road was completed with new intersections, guard rails and sealing of road shoulders.

JUNE 20



ABC TV's Lisa Millar visited a local shearing shed to interview Trevor Kearns about his milestone of shearing one million sheep for the Rokewood / Corindhap episode of 'Back Roads,' which aired nationally on 22 June 2020. Photo courtesy of ABC TV.

INTRODUCTION

SUSTAINABILITY



Council is committed to ensuring the long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Shire.

This commitment is framed within Council’s vision of offering a lifestyle and opportunities that foster economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

This sustainability report provides an overview of how Council is responding to the interwoven areas of economic, social and environmental sustainability. It outlines Council’s major economic, environmental and social strategies; provides an overview of Council’s own sustainable performance; and highlights key initiatives that put sustainability into practice.

Annual Plan Key Result Areas	Sustainability Dimensions		
	Economic	Social	Environmental
Citizens and Customer Service		✓	
Civic Leadership	✓	✓	
Economic Development	✓	✓	✓
Environment and Land Use Planning	✓	✓	✓
Financial Management	✓		
Human Support Services	✓	✓	✓
Recreation and Community Development	✓	✓	
Roads and Streets Infrastructure	✓	✓	✓
Waste Management			

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Council has a range of strategies and plans that support and promote economic sustainability including:

- The Strategic Resource Plan which outlines the financial and non-financial resources needed to achieve the strategic objectives of the Council Plan.
- The Ten Year Financial Plan, a high level plan which informs Council about the trends in financial sustainability over the longer term.
- Asset management policies, strategies and plans which provide direction for managing Council’s asset portfolio and are aligned to the Council Plan. These include the Road Management Plan, Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Strategy.

Other important economic strategies and plans include:

- The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy which guides Council’s efforts to support local business, attract investment and grow the local economy
- The Environment Strategy 2019-2027 provides a range of aspirational objectives for both Council and community. Key themes relate to connected communities, greener economies, thriving natural environments, sustainable design and Council leadership.
- The Northern Settlement Strategy provides a high level framework to accommodate an additional 2000 people in the north of the Shire by 2030.

Challenges

- Upgrades to road infrastructure and expansion of the public transport network to connect communities and businesses across Golden Plains and to major regional centres.
- Supporting the development of job opportunities within Golden Plains Shire.
- Digital and telecommunications infrastructure and mobile coverage in rural areas.
- Managing population growth across the Shire to support existing and new residents with quality liveability and community infrastructure.

Achievements

- Strengthening Council’s strategic partnerships has delivered significant advocacy success including, as part of Peri-Urban Rural Councils Victoria, Council was named eligible to the Victorian Government’s Growing Suburbs Fund, allowing application to a new funding stream.
- Continued growth of the renewable energy industry in Golden Plains Shire, with significant progress on the Berrybank and Golden Plains Wind Farm projects.
- Council was allocated \$1.33 million from the Federal Government’s Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program which will fund Council’s selection of local projects.

- Council secured a Working for Victoria grant, under the Victorian Government’s COVID-19 relief package to employ 20 additional short-term employees to support Council’s COVID-19 recovery efforts.
- Significant government investment secured in 2019-20 includes \$1.2 million from the Federal Black Spot Program, \$500,000 from the Victorian Government for the Three Trails Project and a range of grants for local services and community infrastructure.
- New mobile towers in Maude and Teesdale, following continued lobbying efforts by Council for Mobile Black Spot Program funding.



In May 2020, Council’s Smythesdale Customer Service Centre was reopened following a significant upgrade to a new accessible location at the Well, with increased service hours and more services to better serve the residents of the north of the Shire. Mayor Cr Owen Sharkey viewed the new centre, speaking with Council customer service officer, Tessa Barbary.

INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Council has a range of strategies and plans that support and promote social sustainability including:

- Accessing seed funding which encourages community leadership when designing and developing community plans.
 - Community Development activities and programs which encourage and assist groups to be actively involved in their community for the benefit of the community.
 - The Sport and Active Recreation Strategy aiming to positively contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community and promote liveability and community connectedness by ensuring that there is a diversity of fit-for-purpose, affordable and accessible formal and informal recreation opportunities (programs, services and facilities) to encourage local residents and visitors to the area to be physically active.
- The Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan which commits Council to work with its communities to enhance health and wellbeing outcomes across the Shire.
 - Development of a Community and Social Infrastructure Plan to identify the Shire’s most critical current and future service needs, and the built facilities required to meet those needs. The Plan will respond to changing circumstances and enable easy updates and flexible use across Council to provides ongoing long-term value.

Challenges

- Providing communities and residents with equitable access to social support services and community facilities.
- Developing opportunities across a geographic area with a dispersed population and within limited resourcing.
- Providing access to transport to enable residents to travel to medical, social and work appointments.

Achievements

- In 2019-20, Council awarded \$110,073 to 32 local project across the Shire, as part of the Community Grants program. A review began this year to ensure the grant program continues to over the best support for community projects, programs and events.
- Five HEAL grants were allocated to community groups to implement healthy eating and active living initiatives.
- Completed community and recreation infrastructure projects including:
 - Opened Bannockburn Heart Stage 1 and achieved a High Commendation at the Parks and Leisure Australia Awards 2020.
 - Oval Lighting Upgrades at Rokewood Recreation Reserve and Victoria Park Ovals 1 and 2 in Bannockburn.
 - Haddon Stadium Floor Upgrade.
 - Inverleigh Netball Courts Upgrade.
 - Opened the Smythesdale Courthouse Upgrade Project.



The new Wall Bridge in Teesdale was officially opened in March 2020 by Senator the Honorable Sarah Henderson, local Teesdale historian Dianne Hughes and Mayor Cr Owen Sharkey. The 99-year-old timber bridge was replaced with a new safer structure, and an interpretative sign detailing the history of the Wall Bridge was mounted on the timber trusses repurposed from the original bridge.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Council has a range of strategies and plans that support and promote environmental sustainability including:

- The Environment Strategy, strongly linked to the Council Plan, focuses on strategic initiatives to achieve local actions, which contribute to addressing environmental sustainability issues on a broader scale.



Challenges

- Managing weeds in the Shire’s many reserves and roadsides.
- Considering future impacts of Climate Change on Golden Plains Shire.



Achievements

- Planting thousands of trees in Council reserves.
- Producing a Management Plan for the Red Gum Reserve in Batesford.
- Conducting ecological burns within Council reserves.
- Developing a Green Blue Infrastructure Guide for Councils across the Central Highlands Region to promote the sustainable use of water within communities.
- Supporting increasing Council operations to ensure disturbance to native vegetation is avoided, minimised or offset.
- Involvement in a renewable energy bulk buying program with more than 40 Victorian councils.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

MAYOR'S MESSAGE



As the Mayor of Golden Plains Shire and on behalf of my fellow Councillors, it's my pleasure to introduce the Council's 2019-20 Annual Report.

In the final year of our Council term and third year of our Council Plan, the Annual Report is a record of Council's achievements, not just over the past 12 months, but indeed it is the culmination of our commitment to the community over the past four years. As we flowed through each financial year, our Council was always looking forward, and as one project was achieved, there were always several more in the works, to achieve in our long-term plan.

This Report meets the statutory and financial reporting requirements of Council and also reflects Council's leadership in the area of transparency and good governance. However, this Annual Report is more than the sum of its facts and figures. It represents the many ideas, aspirations and successes of our Council 2016-2020, that have been achieved for our growing communities and the people of Golden Plains Shire.



A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

The year 2019-20 will forever be marked by its final few months, when our everyday lives were suddenly and significantly altered by the COVID-19 pandemic; and indeed, Golden Plains Shire was not immune. Our Council has made significant changes to services and operations to continue to support our residents, particularly those who are living in isolation, have lost their jobs, or have closed their businesses.

This Report reflects a very busy and productive year for Council with many important projects and long-term goals achieved; and yet, it ended as no one could have predicted. Our Council is committed to supporting our local residents and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and well beyond. Through these challenging times, the people of Golden Plains have risen to this momentous occasion and together, our communities will meet on the other side, stronger and more resilient than ever.



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

A hallmark of this Council term has been strengthening the strategic partnerships between Council and the State and Federal Governments. As a large rural Shire bordering Victoria's second and third largest cities, Council is passionate about advocating for quality infrastructure and greater investment for our fast-growing Shire.

In addition to representing the individual needs of Golden Plains, our Council is an engaged partner of three important municipal alliances: the G21 with the City of Greater Geelong and surrounding municipalities; Central Highlands Councils Victoria (CHCV) with the City of Ballarat and neighbouring councils; and the Peri-Urban Group of Rural Councils (PUGRC).

In December 2019, I was honoured to be elected Chair of CHCV, representing eight councils of the Central Highlands region. United by many of the same challenges and opportunities, the councils of the CHCV have an important voice in strategic regional solutions and will continue to lobby for greater State and Federal Government support for the extensive Central Highlands region.

In June 2020, the PUGRC achieved its long-term goal of acceptance into the Growing Suburb Fund for all membership councils. As an alliance of six councils with fast-growing populations bordering major cities, the State Government recognised that the PUGRC is in need of greater infrastructure investment as it welcomes many new residents relocating from Victoria's metropolitan centres.

In 2020, Council also established a partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority and with a Victorian Government grant, embarked on the precinct planning and strategic design of the Bannockburn Growth Plan. As one of the fastest growing towns in the state, the BGP will plan for 7,000 additional homes for 17,000 residents in the south of Bannockburn, ensuring the development is the best plan for new and existing residents.

BUILDING A BETTER GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

In 2019-20, Council's strong advocacy efforts were rewarded with another impressive suite of successful grant applications and a milestone year of funding announcements and completed projects. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic called a halt to several planned openings of community facilities, however construction continued and when the residents of our Shire can again gather to enjoy life, there will be new fields and courts, completed recreation lighting projects and upgraded playgrounds waiting for them.

Most notably, for many years, Council officers have worked with Councillors and the community to realise the dream of a water and adventure playspace in the heart of Bannockburn. In December 2019, the \$3 million partnership project of Council and the Victorian and Australian governments delivered this wonderful vision and at the opening, the pure joy and excitement of our younger residents discovering the Heart made for a very special day.

MAKING COUNCIL COUNT

Delivering for our communities and our people is at the core of everything local government does and why it plays an important role in the lives of our residents. While our Council is always looking forward and taking steps toward the big-picture goals, it's important to continue to serve our residents in their day-to-day lives.

This year, Council completed a significant rating strategy review and instituted new measures to reduce the fluctuating rates burden across the Shire. With a fairer municipal charge and streamlined rating categories, the revised rates program will deliver residents and businesses more reliable rates bills, delivering on a firm commitment of this Council.

Another new initiative this year, Council launched the Mayoral Youth Program to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our local young people in our communities and to inspire our growing youth population to volunteer and start their own

journey of community service.

Looking to the future, Council also embarked on supporting our community to develop its own long-term plan for the future of Golden Plains. Following extensive engagement, the Community Vision 2040 seeks to reflect the community's hopes, aspirations and priorities for the next 20 years and guide the decision-making of Council toward this vision.

A SUCCESSFUL YEAR; A BRIGHT FUTURE

In 2019-20, Golden Plains Shire Council completed the final year of its Council term as it began: delivering on its vision of 'a healthy, safe, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community supported by strong leadership, transparent governance and community partnerships.'

While there are still challenges ahead for our fast-growing rural Shire, the achievements of this Council have placed Golden Plains in a desirable position to embrace its bright future while ensuring the enviable lifestyle enjoyed in our very special corner of the world.

Cr Owen Sharkey
Mayor