

# Community Engagement Summary Report

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## Yarrawonga Framework Plan



August 2019



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Context and purpose

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) considers the input and opinions of Victorian communities as integral to achieving our vision of planning great places. The VPA and Moira Shire recognise that inclusion and engagement, particularly at the early and formative stages of the Yarrawonga Framework Plan project, is vital to building and maintaining community trust and producing a better outcome for the community. We are committed to undertaking a robust and comprehensive engagement with community and other stakeholders.

This community engagement report summarises the feedback received during the community visioning process for the Yarrawonga Framework Plan. A range of engagement methods were used to consult the community, and this report documents the key messages that were received. These key messages inform the vision statement for the Yarrawonga Framework Plan. Everything else in the Framework Plan is geared towards achieving that vision statement.

## 1.2 Project background

The VPA is assisting Moira Shire Council in delivering a Framework Plan as part of the 2018/19 *Streamlining for Growth* program. The Framework Plan is a high-level plan that identifies residential and industrial growth areas in the township for the next 50 years. It will provide greater certainty to Council, agencies and investors about likely development sequencing and supporting infrastructure priorities.

This project builds on previous work completed with funding under the 2016/17 *Streamlining for Growth* program, which produced the Yarrawonga Growth Management Strategy. It also builds on Moira Shire Council's previous strategies such as the *Major Towns Strategy Plan Review 2018* (prepared by SD Planning).

## 1.3 Previous community engagement

### Past community engagement in Moira Shire

The VPA acknowledges that Moira Shire Council has conducted several community engagement processes in the past year. A review of previous community engagement processes was undertaken by the VPA, including:

- Yarrawonga library and town hall engagement (March-May 2019)
- Yarrawonga aerodrome feedback process (August-October 2018)
- Yarrawonga multisport stadium project engagement (August-October 2018)
- Major Towns Strategy Plan Review engagement (May 2018)
- Recreation Strategy 2016-2026 engagement (2016)
- Wellbeing for All Ages 2017-2021 engagement (2017)

While these engagement processes do not directly impact the Framework Plan, it gave the VPA a greater understanding of the issues that were important to the community.

### Agency consultation

As part of the framework planning process, the VPA conducted targeted agency consultation to identify key issues and opportunities and inform the approach towards addressing key issues.

A stormwater drainage strategy was also undertaken as part of the framework planning process, during which an agency workshop was held. Agency feedback was later collated on the draft stormwater drainage strategy.

## 2 WHAT WE HEARD

### 2.1 Summary of feedback

Feedback generally indicated the community are supportive of seeing Yarrawonga become a town which values open space, its community of all abilities and a thriving and diverse local economy.

Consistent messages emerged regarding improving the range of community and recreational facilities such as playgrounds, event spaces, sporting fields, open spaces and caravan facilities. Numerous comments suggested suitable community uses within heritage buildings. Greening Yarrawonga was also important to the community ensuring there are shaded spaces available throughout the town.

There was significant community support for seeing Belmore Street remain a lively and cultural centre of the town for both the community and the economy. The use of the former school site was also a key issue that emerged throughout the engagement. Several community group representatives expressed the desire to see the site adapted for community uses.

Many community members felt that infrastructure and utilities throughout the town could be improved or maintained. This included provision of bike lanes and walking tracks, and improved pedestrian safety especially among main roads. Improved facilities for the elderly and people of all abilities was also a re-emerging issue throughout all engagement.

Whilst a range of particular issues and opportunities were raised throughout the engagement, key principles that emerged throughout the process include:

#### Recreation, Environment and Heritage

- Provide more connected and high-quality open space
- Protect the natural environment, particularly biodiversity and waterway health
- Increase tree coverage and amenity of streets
- Provide recreation facilities, particularly for young families and older residents
- Stronger focus on adaptive reuse of heritage buildings and celebration of Yarrawonga's history

#### Economy

- Strengthen the role of Belmore Street as the centre of town, through improved amenity and more diverse uses
- Support a robust economy that leverages opportunities in the region
- Support retail and commercial uses that draw investment into the township

#### Infrastructure and Utilities

- Enhance safety of key roads, particularly Belmore Street and Murray Valley Highway
- Support an integrated network of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure
- Implement drainage infrastructure to address flooding events and protect water quality of the lake
- Provide certainty around major infrastructure such as the bridge, freight routes and aerodrome
- Ensure servicing needs of existing and future residents are met

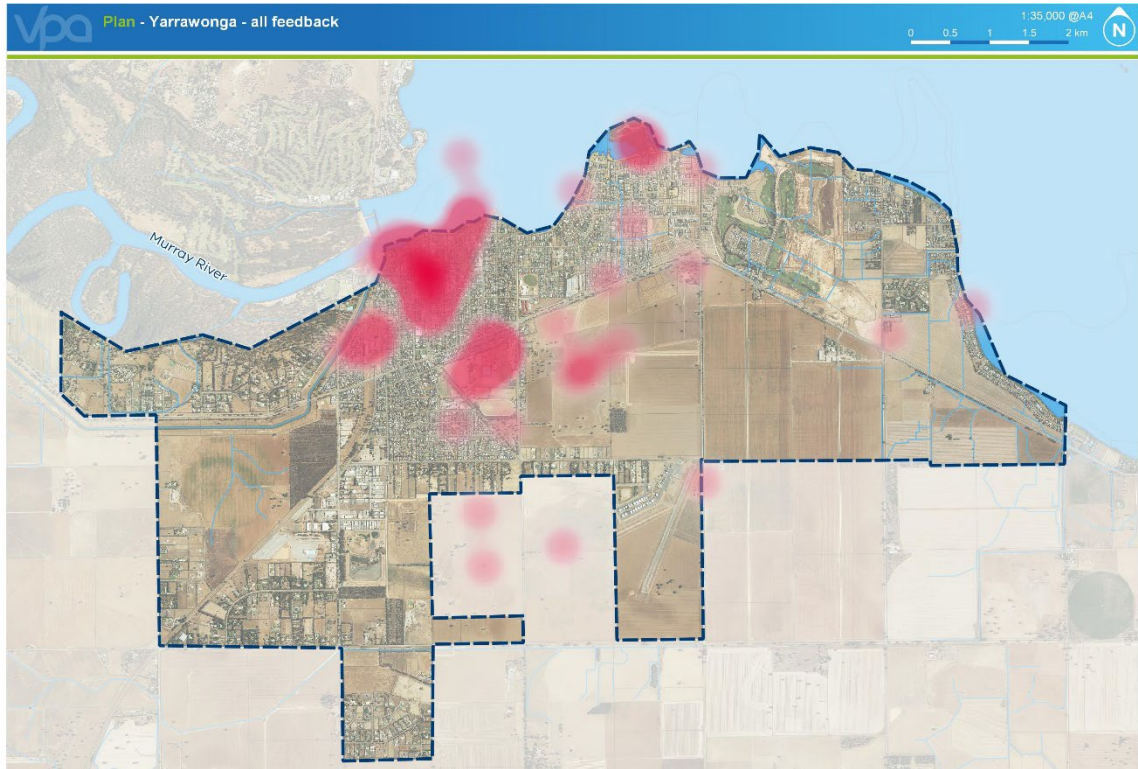
#### Housing and Community Facilities

- Ensure continued provision of community facilities for all ages and abilities
- Ensure community infrastructure is well located in central locations and easily accessible
- Protect Yarrawonga's rural character and unique lifestyle amenities
- Ensure that future housing estates are well integrated with the existing township as well as each other

## 2.2 Online story map

A total of 54 pieces of feedback were received through the online story map. Overall online feedback was positive and sought to ensure Yarrawonga continued to flourish and support the needs of all members of the community. Figure 1 displays the locations of where feedback was left in the town.

Figure 1 Heat map of all community feedback



Many comments were focused on Belmore Street, Victoria Park and recreational spaces along the foreshore. This indicates the importance of these locations to the community.

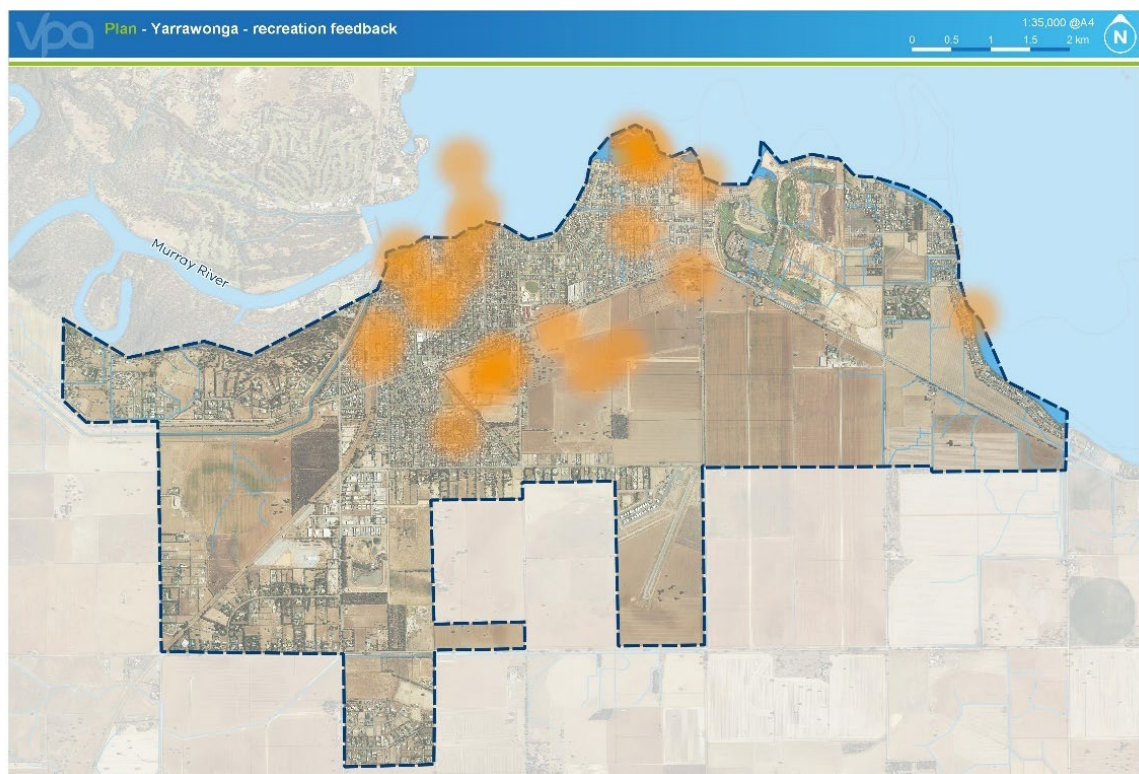
## Recreation, Environment and Heritage

This category received the highest number of community responses with a total of 25 comments recorded online. Many comments related to areas located along the lake front, Belmore Street and the Murray Valley Highway. Key themes that emerged in this section included a need for more open space, better tree coverage and better recreation facilities in new development, particularly play facilities for children.

A significant theme that emerged was protection of the natural environment and open space such as “retention of old growth trees” and “native trees”. There were 7 comments regarding improving sports facilities such as “a new oval” or “better facilities and provisions for the netball courts” and “a beach access on the lake for kayaking”.

Other comments included improving rubbish management (particularly on Chinaman's island), cycle connections to Bundalong, and celebration of both Aboriginal and Historic Cultural Heritage in Yarrawonga (e.g. interpretive signage and heritage events).

Figure 2 Heat map of comments relating to Recreation, Environment and Heritage

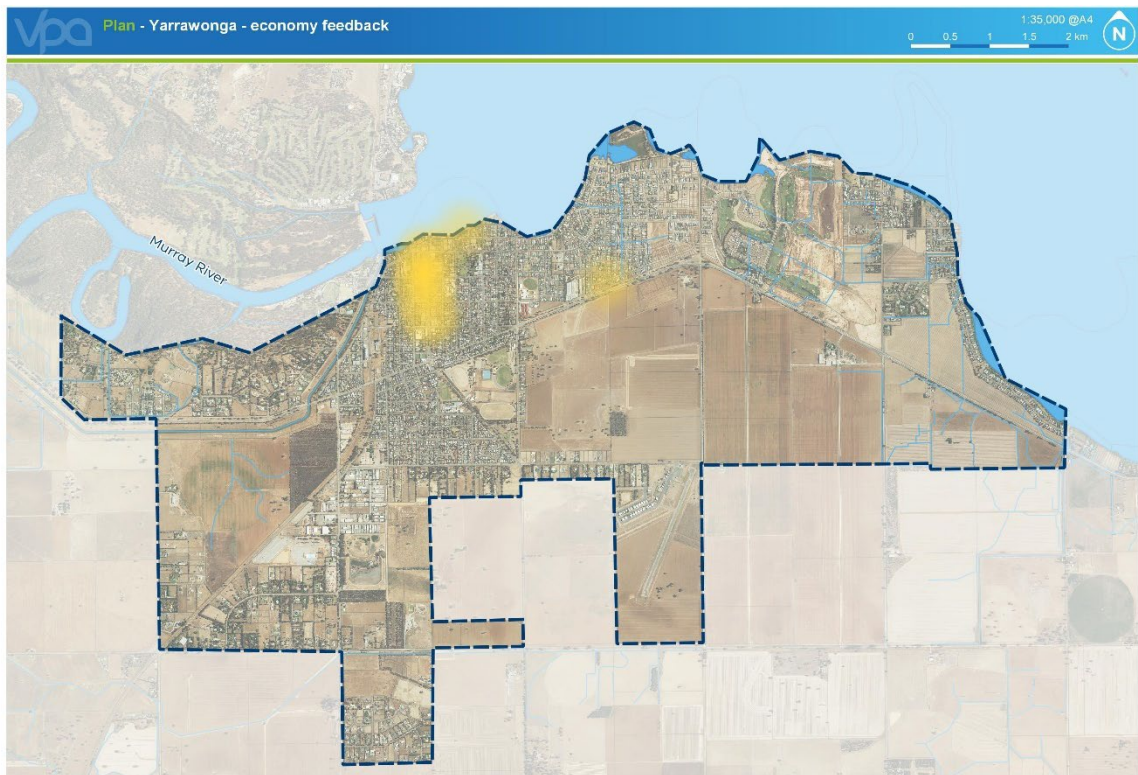




## Economy

This section received 10 comments and mostly related to Belmore Street which is Yarrawonga's main street. A recurring message was the need for more diverse uses on the main street, for example boutique retail and food offerings. The amenity of Belmore Street was raised, with suggestions to provide off street parking and streetscape improvements (e.g. street trees). Several comments also raised the need to improve pedestrian and road safety by addressing "dangerous intersections" and challenging crossings for pedestrians.

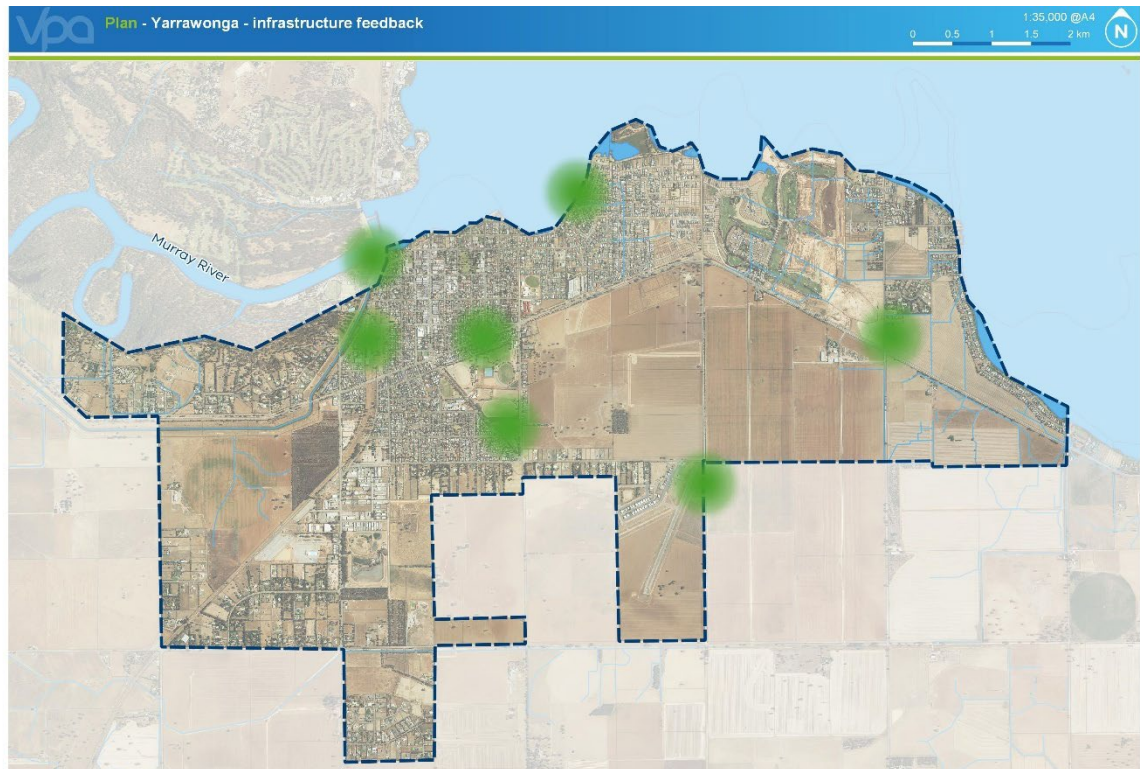
Figure 3 Heat map of comments relating to Economy



## Infrastructure and Utilities

This category received 7 comments in total and were dispersed across the township. Comments included the need for improvements to access points along the Murray Valley Highway, increased pedestrian safety near main roads, and improved footpaths and cycling infrastructure. Other comments raised the need to plan for major infrastructure such as the cemetery and future bridge between Victoria and NSW.

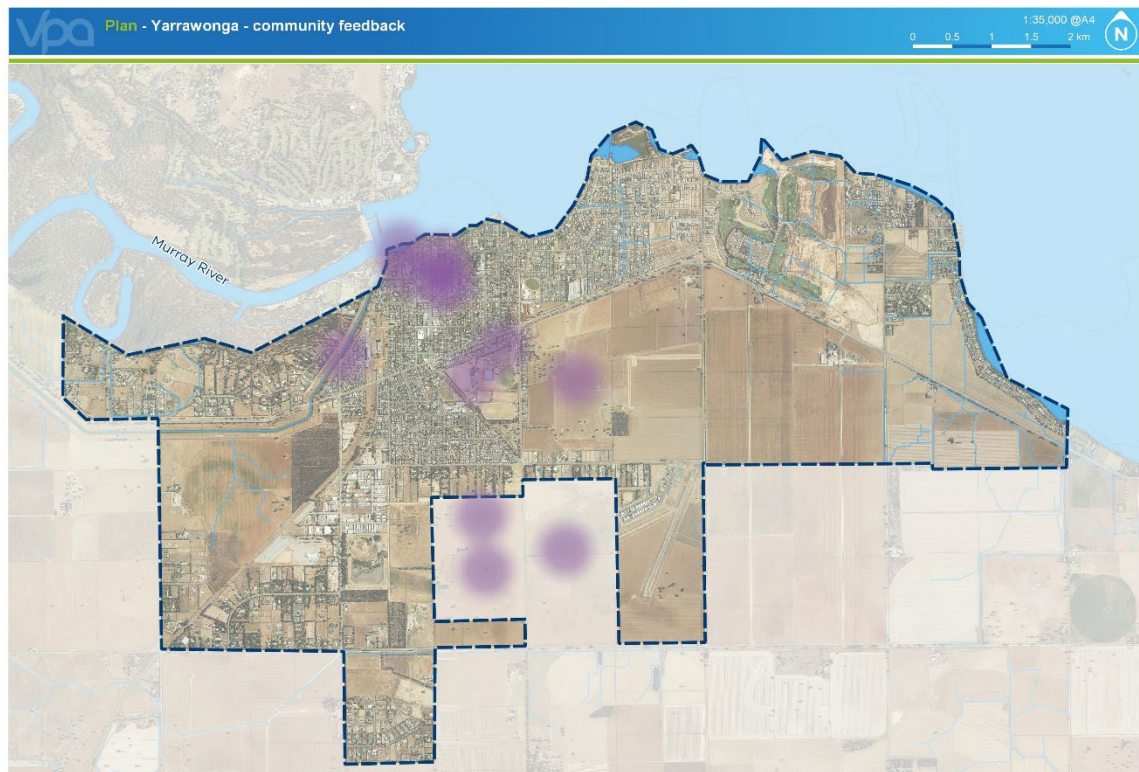
Figure 4 Heat map of comments relating to Infrastructure and Utilities



## Housing and Community Facilities

A total of 12 comments were received about Housing and Community Facilities, with a wide range of topics raised. Community members highlighted the importance of providing health services such as hospitals, aged care and mental health services. Several comments suggested for core uses to be contained within Belmore Street, reinforcing the importance of Belmore Street as the town centre. Other comments proposed more youth services, further education institutions, passenger train services and sporting facilities.

Figure 5 Heat map of comments relating to Housing and Community Facilities





## 2.3 Community drop-in sessions

There were 127 responses recorded from the community drop-in session. Priorities that emerged from face to face community engagement included better care for the natural environment and open spaces, improved pedestrian and cycling tracks, adaptive re-use of heritage sites for community uses (in particular the school site) and provision of community infrastructure and recreational facilities.

Figure 6 Community drop-in session at Yarrawonga Information Centre



### Recreation, Environment and Heritage

Like the online story map, this theme received the highest number of responses with 42 comments recorded in total. Nearly half of responses called for greater protection of the environment and provision of open space. Many comments raised examples of underutilised open spaces such as playgrounds, existing parks (e.g. Victoria Park, Kennedy Park) and public open space including the showgrounds. Six comments highlighted the protection of environmental values such as biodiversity, the lake and native vegetation. Innovative ideas for enhancing the environment included wildlife corridors and renewable energy (e.g. micro grids).

The recreational spaces that experienced strong support included multi-sport facilities, event spaces, caravan facilities and improved lake amenity for families and tourism. The need was raised to appropriately plan and locate recreational facilities according to community demand. Concerns were also raised regarding the provision of open space and walking and cycling tracks, both in the existing urban area and in new estates.

Several community members felt strongly about the heritage and culture of the township, highlighting that there should be acknowledgement of Yarrawonga's history. There was strong emphasis on the need for adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, particularly for community uses.

### Economy

There was a total of 25 comments recorded regarding the economy. Half the responses centred around Belmore Street, with comments relating to provision of higher order retail, streetscape improvements, a greater focus on pedestrians and introduction of specialty shops. Suggestions for Belmore Street included tourism events (e.g. festivals) and reducing heavy vehicle traffic down the street. Overall, community feedback emphasised the importance of Belmore Street as the town centre. Several comments also proposed introducing secondary and local activity centres to support Belmore Street.

Other comments raised the importance of transport connections to Yarrawonga's local economy. The aerodrome, train station and bus infrastructure were mentioned as possibilities for future connections to Yarrawonga.

## Infrastructure and Utilities

There were 21 comments broadly concerning infrastructure and utilities. There was a focus on ensuring infrastructure caters to a broad demographic, particularly older residents and young children. Many comments also mentioned the need to plan for appropriate utility and servicing infrastructure such as roads, gas, telecommunications and energy.

Three comments related to improving the drainage infrastructure in the township. Three comments called for better usage of the aerodrome, such as creating an airport or aviation training facility.

Road infrastructure was highlighted as an issue in some locations such as Witt Street, Belmore Street and Vanguard Street. Provision of cycling paths and footpaths was raised as a consideration for both existing and future residential areas.

## Housing and Community Facilities

There were 39 comments concerning housing and community facilities. Key issues that emerged include the lack of facilities for younger people (e.g. playgrounds, youth services) and more public meeting spaces. The rural lifestyle character of the township is something that the community values and wants to preserve.

Many comments raised the need to maintain provision of a mix of community infrastructure, including medical, sporting and arts facilities. Access to these facilities was also mentioned as being important, particularly as the township grows. Several comments also suggested adaptive reuse of heritage buildings for community purposes.

Comments regarding housing alluded to the need to maintain the amenity of future development, in order to preserve Yarrowonga's character. Key concerns included access to new estates, density of development and adequate street widths.

## 2.4 Written feedback

The VPA received 5 written submissions. The messages gathered from written submissions were largely aligned with feedback received online and in drop-in sessions, albeit with greater detail provided on site-specific issues. A summary of the key themes from written feedback under each of the four principles follows:

### Recreation, environment and heritage

Submitters highlighted that Yarrawonga is the fastest growing town in the Moira Shire and therefore felt that recreational facilities needed to be accommodated for in Yarrawonga. Multiple submissions mentioned the need for a heated pool in Yarrawonga for the wellbeing for all ages and abilities. Improvements to other sporting facilities such as football grounds, basketball, gym and indoor multipurpose courts were also raised to be important.

Submissions highlighted a strong desire for more green spaces and tree cover throughout the town and to take better care of existing parks. Suggestions were made for open spaces covered both passive and active recreation spaces.

A strong theme throughout all written submissions was the value of Yarrawonga's built heritage. There was a recurring call to maintain and preserve heritage buildings for community uses. Specific buildings raised include the court house, town hall, fire station and former primary school site. There was also concern over the potential location of the new library and ensuring it does not negatively impact on heritage values. It is worth noting that some submissions also criticised previous engagement regarding the redevelopment of the town hall site. While out of the scope of the Framework Plan, this is a broader learning about potential improvements to future planning processes in Yarrawonga.

Many written submissions aspired for a Yarrawonga to become a hub for the arts, with suggestions for cultural and entertainment uses such as dance, music, comedy and theatre in the heart of town.

### Economy

Submissions raised the need to promote economic growth in the town through diversification of the economy. Growing the technological, industrial and commercial industries was thought of as important, to balance out strengths in the tourism industry. Submitters felt that boosting local employment was important, given projected population growth in the township.

Submissions acknowledged the importance of tourism to the economy. The Yarrawonga Information Centre was highlighted as a facility to be improved. Other suggestions included festivals and events in the township to attract visitors.

### Infrastructure and utilities

Submitters raised concerns over road infrastructure, as well as road and rail freight infrastructure. Submitters hoped for better connections to Yarrawonga in the future, with suggestions for passenger rail and a bus service for all ages. Submitters felt that walking and cycling tracks could be enhanced, particularly given that many areas in the town lack footpaths and cycling paths.

### Housing and community facilities

There was a strong desire for new community infrastructure and such as open space, a library, performance spaces and arts facilities. Submitters consistently suggested adaptive reuse of heritage buildings for these community facilities, with specific mention of the town hall, former school site and old court house. Several submissions also provided detailed plans for future uses in the former school site.

A diverse mix of housing offers was also raised as important in the submissions.

Submissions acknowledged Yarrawonga's anticipated population growth. While there were a range of views on the mix of housing, a key theme was the character of the township. Submissions raised heritage values and rural and lifestyle amenity as being key contributors to Yarrawonga's character. Additionally, it was recognised

that car parking spaces during peak times are inadequate and that fluctuating parking demand should be addressed.

## 3 ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Aims and objectives

The purpose of this visioning process was to consult with the Yarrawonga community on their vision for the future of Yarrawonga to 2050. The engagement process was developed bearing in mind that council had recently conducted several engagement processes on separate projects. Therefore the focus of this visioning exercise was to prompt participants to think holistically about the township and identify broader principles for growth.

Additionally, it is acknowledged that limited community engagement occurred in development of the Yarrawonga Growth Management Strategy. It was largely a technical report and forecasting process that formed an evidence base for the framework plan. Therefore, community engagement at this stage of the process is appropriate and contributes to a robust product.

### 3.2 Overview of methodology

Three main avenues were used to collect comments for the community visioning process between 26<sup>th</sup> June to 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019:

- Online story map
- Community drop-in sessions
- Written feedback.

These three avenues were chosen with the intention of reaching a broader cross section of the community, through the provision of both online and face-to-face methods of engagement.

#### Online story map

The online story map was made available from 26 June 2019 to 19 July 2019. The story map allowed for comment 'pins' to be dropped on a map of Yarrawonga, identifying place-based and general comments to be made across four themes:

1. Recreation, Environment and Heritage
2. Economy
3. Infrastructure and Utilities
4. Housing and Community Facilities.

Each theme contained prompting questions to assist participants.

The online story map was promoted by Moira Shire Council on its website, Facebook page and local newspapers in the two weeks prior to its launch. The VPA also promoted the story map on its webpage and Twitter page. A total of 54 items of feedback was received.

#### Community drop-in sessions

Two community drop-in sessions were held on Thursday 4 July 2019 at the Yarrawonga Visitor Information Centre. Representatives from council and the VPA were present from 1-3pm and 4-6.30pm. The drop-in sessions provided an opportunity for lengthier conversations with community members to address questions and clarify the scope of the framework plan.

Four A1 boards were used to collate comments, with the four boards displaying the same themes and prompting questions as the online story map (above). Stickers and post-it notes were used to document spatial and general comments about the township. A total of 13 attendees were recorded for the drop-in sessions however it is likely that a small number of attendees were not recorded during periods of the evening when the room was crowded.



### Written feedback

The VPA also welcomed written feedback via mail from 26 June 2019 to 19 July 2019. This provided community members who preferred offline methods of engagement to write in directly with their comments. A total of 5 written submissions were received.

## 4 NEXT STEPS

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### 4.1 Implementation

The Framework Plan is a high-level plan that identifies residential and industrial growth areas in the township for the next 50 years. A key objective of the framework plan is to provide greater certainty to Council, agencies and investors about likely development sequencing and supporting infrastructure priorities. Many of the technicalities associated with infrastructure provision and sequencing involve co-ordination between multiple agencies and are out of the scope of the Framework Plan, for example the future bridge alignment. Other site-specific projects, such as the town hall redevelopment and aerodrome, are being investigated by Moira Shire Council through separate processes.

However, the engagement process of the Framework Plan can deliver value by identifying major considerations for the future growth of the township. The principles of the Framework Plan are founded on things that are important to the community, such as protection of heritage and environmental values, provision of infrastructure and community facilities, ensuring access for people of all ages, and diversification of the economy.

The inclusion of these principles in the Framework Plan will ensure that they are front-of-mind in the planning process, and that future development occurs in a manner that considers what the community values.

### 4.2 A Vision for Yarrawonga 2050

Based on the engagement process and feedback gathered, we found that the Yarrawonga community envisages that:

***Yarrawonga in 2050 will be a town that embraces people of all ages and abilities, offering a unique lifestyle experience that centres around heritage, the natural environment and the arts. Yarrawonga will be a renowned destination for visitors and businesses looking to establish a presence in the region, supported by robust connections with its surrounds.***

### 4.3 Project timeline

This community engagement was used to understand the key values of the Yarrawonga community. This process was used to help create a vision for Yarrawonga in 2050 and will be the basis of the Yarrawonga Framework Plan.

The next steps will be using information in this report to finalise the draft Framework Plan for the Yarrawonga township which will guide the development of Yarrawonga to 2050.

## 5 ATTACHMENTS

### 5.1 Attachment 1 – Drop-in session advertisement




# Do you have a vision for Yarrawonga in 2050?

**The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA), in partnership with Moira Shire Council, is preparing the *Yarrawonga 2050: Framework Plan* to guide sustainable development of Yarrawonga for the next 30 years.**

**We are seeking your ideas and feedback on your vision for Yarrawonga in 2050 and what it will offer to you, your children and even your grandchildren. We are keen to hear from residents, visitors and business.**

**Please make sure you submit your ideas by Friday 19 July 2019.**

**What is a framework plan?**

The Framework Plan will become part of Moira Shire's Planning Scheme and will guide the preparation and consideration of future, more detailed local plans and planning permit applications.

**What will happen to your feedback?**

Your feedback will be used to inform the preparation of the Framework Plan that will be presented to the VPA and Council for approval.

**Where can I find further information?**

The framework plan builds on earlier projects including the *Yarrawonga Growth Management Strategy 2018*, *Major Towns Review Strategy 2018* and will be informed by the *Yarrawonga Stormwater Drainage Strategy* that is currently underway. To learn more about these visit [www.vpa.vic.gov.au/project/yarrawonga-framework-plan](http://www.vpa.vic.gov.au/project/yarrawonga-framework-plan).

**Have your say:**



**Online**  
Visit [www.vpa.vic.gov.au/project/yarrawonga-framework-plan](http://www.vpa.vic.gov.au/project/yarrawonga-framework-plan)



**By mail**  
Mail your feedback to:  
Victorian Planning Authority  
Level 25, 35 Collins Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Att: Crystal Tang



**In person**  
**Thursday 4 July**  
Yarrawonga Visitor Information Centre  
1 Irvine Parade, Yarrawonga  
1pm - 3pm & 4pm - 6:30pm




**If you have any questions for the project team, please call Crystal Tang at VPA on 9651 9600 or Peter Stenhouse at Council on 5871 9222.**