

## **BALRANALD SHIRE**

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2032

**FEBRUARY 2022**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT BALRANALD SHIRE.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. OUR LIFESTYLE .....</b>	<b>5</b>
WHAT PEOPLE VALUE .....	5
CURRENT ISSUES .....	5
FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	6
<b>2. OUR COMMUNITY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
WHAT PEOPLE THINK.....	7
CURRENT ISSUES .....	7
FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	8
<b>3. OUR ECONOMY.....</b>	<b>9</b>
WHAT PEOPLE SUGGESTED .....	9
CURRENT ISSUES .....	9
FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	10
<b>4. OUR INFRASTRUCTURE .....</b>	<b>11</b>
COMMUNITY RATINGS .....	11
CURRENT ISSUES .....	11
FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	12
<b>5. OUR ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>13</b>
PLACES PEOPLE VALUE .....	13
CURRENT ISSUES .....	13
FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	14
<b>6. OUR COUNCIL .....</b>	<b>15</b>
WHAT PEOPLE SUGGESTED .....	15
CURRENT ISSUES .....	15
FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	16
<b>NEXT STEPS .....</b>	<b>17</b>

## INTRODUCTION

Under the NSW Local Government Act 1993 all Councils in NSW are required to prepare a Community Strategic Plan (CSP) to define the local community's vision and aspirations for the future.

The Community Strategic Plan is the highest level of strategic planning undertaken by a council—all other plans must support achievement of CSP objectives. Under the Act the CSP must:

- Articulate the community vision and reflect aspirations.
- Consider state and regional plans as they apply to the council.
- Contains, as a minimum, community vision, strategic directions and outcomes, and a means of measuring progress.
- Be based on social justice principles.

We need to think carefully about how we want Balranald Shire to evolve in the future.

*Shaping Balranald Shire 2022* outlines some high level and important issues for our area. It aims to put forward:

- Positives and negatives in our area
- Issues of most relevance and importance to the community
- A framework that will inform more detailed action plans and future initiatives
- All aspects of community life, not just those within Council's control

All Councils in NSW are required to report regularly to the community on all levels of their integrated plans. Balranald Shire Council's reporting on the progress of *Balranald Shire 2032* will be based on a set of indicators which will provide regular evidence of changes in priority areas within the plan. Reports will include:

- Progress reports at least every 6 months on the principal activities in the Delivery Program
- An annual report which includes the achievement of Council in implementing the Delivery Program
- An end-of-term report detailing Council's progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan during the 4-year term

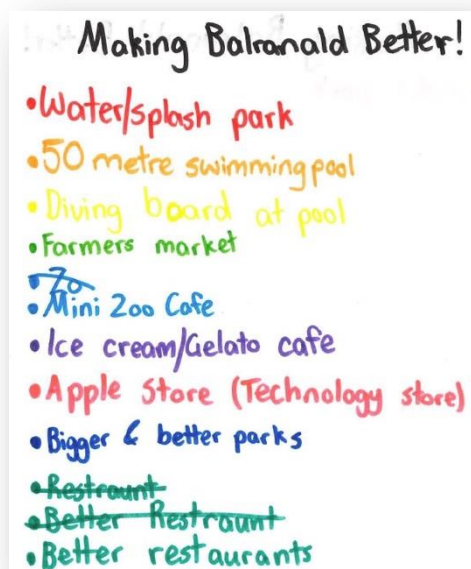


Figure 1 -  
Ideas from a  
local Year 5/6  
student

## ABOUT BALRANALD SHIRE

Balranald Shire is located 850km south west of Sydney and 450km north of Melbourne and boasts a progressive well serviced and vibrant community. The Shire's economy has traditionally relied upon dry-land and irrigated agricultural production of grains, wool, sheep meat and beef. Primary production is now diversifying to encompass horticulture, viticulture, organic agriculture and the growing of fruit and nut trees. Tourism is also an important economic driver.

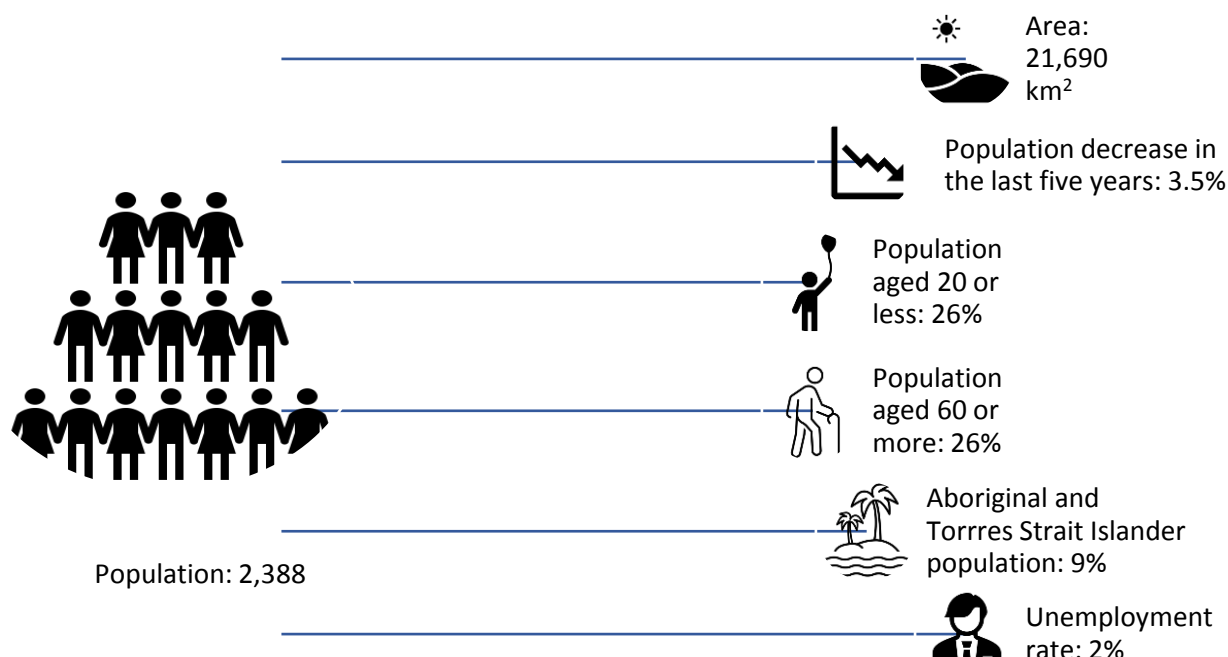


Figure 2 - Demographics of Balranald Shire

This plan has been prepared in partnership with our community, and taking into account their views and aspirations. Thank you to the following individuals and groups who provided their thoughts and input:

- Interview participants from Balranald Shire, Euston and Kyalite
- Council committees who participated in focus groups, including the Euston Progressive Advisory Committee, the Social Inclusion Committee and the Art Gallery Committee
- 35 people who responded to our survey, including
  - Around 75% who have lived in the Shire for over ten years
  - People living in Balranald township, Euston, and the western side of the Shire
  - People from all age groups including under 18s and over 65s

Our Community Vision Statement is what our community aspires to become, and expresses what we value most about our area:

***"In Balranald Shire we grow and develop our lifestyle, our services, our businesses, our infrastructure, our natural environment and our Council to support a thriving, resilient and engaged community"***

# 1. OUR LIFESTYLE

## What People Value

The community survey asked people **“What do you like about living in Balranald Shire?”**

*“Balranald is community minded... you are never alone”*

*“I like smaller towns and Balranald has all facilities for the older generation, it’s a lovely tidy and green town”*

*“It has been a great place to bring up our family. There is a great hospital and health service.”*

*“It’s peaceful and surrounded by natural beauty and serenity”*

*“There are lots of well-meaning and hard-working people here and many folks are prepared to volunteer their time for a multitude of causes”*

## Current Issues

The table below outlines some of the lifestyle issues raised in recent times and through community and staff consultation:

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neat and attractive village</li> <li>• Upgraded town centre</li> <li>• Scenic river front</li> <li>• On the highway, generates passing traffic</li> <li>• Rich history – indigenous and European</li> <li>• Great social life</li> <li>• Public art</li> <li>• It has a low crime rate, especially for serious crimes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very hot in summer and cold in winter</li> <li>• Covid rules have been difficult and confusing, especially cross border issues</li> <li>• Land constraints to growth – flood prone or agricultural land</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Lack of variety of things to do for young people</li> <li>• Hard to maintain sufficient professional services</li> <li>• We don’t have enough good quality housing</li> <li>• Rental markets are limited and competitive</li> <li>• We need more competition in the local building industry</li> <li>• Perceptions of inequity outside Balranald eg Euston</li> </ul>

## Future Directions

### Objective 1.1 – Maintaining and beautifying our town centres

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing the river front</li> <li>Maintaining public amenity and cleanliness of local streets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include river front projects into Council's long term capital works program</li> <li>Levels of service for street amenity and cleanliness are published and achieved</li> </ul>

### Objective 1.2 – Improving access to a diverse range of housing opportunities

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host a housing summit to generate innovative ideas</li> <li>Develop a housing strategy</li> <li>Review the Local Environmental Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing summit is held and generates ideas that are followed through</li> <li>Housing Strategy is adopted by 2024</li> <li>LEP review facilitates community involvement and complies with planning laws</li> <li>Increase in developable land and housing</li> </ul>

### Objective 1.3 – Improving local access to education and careers

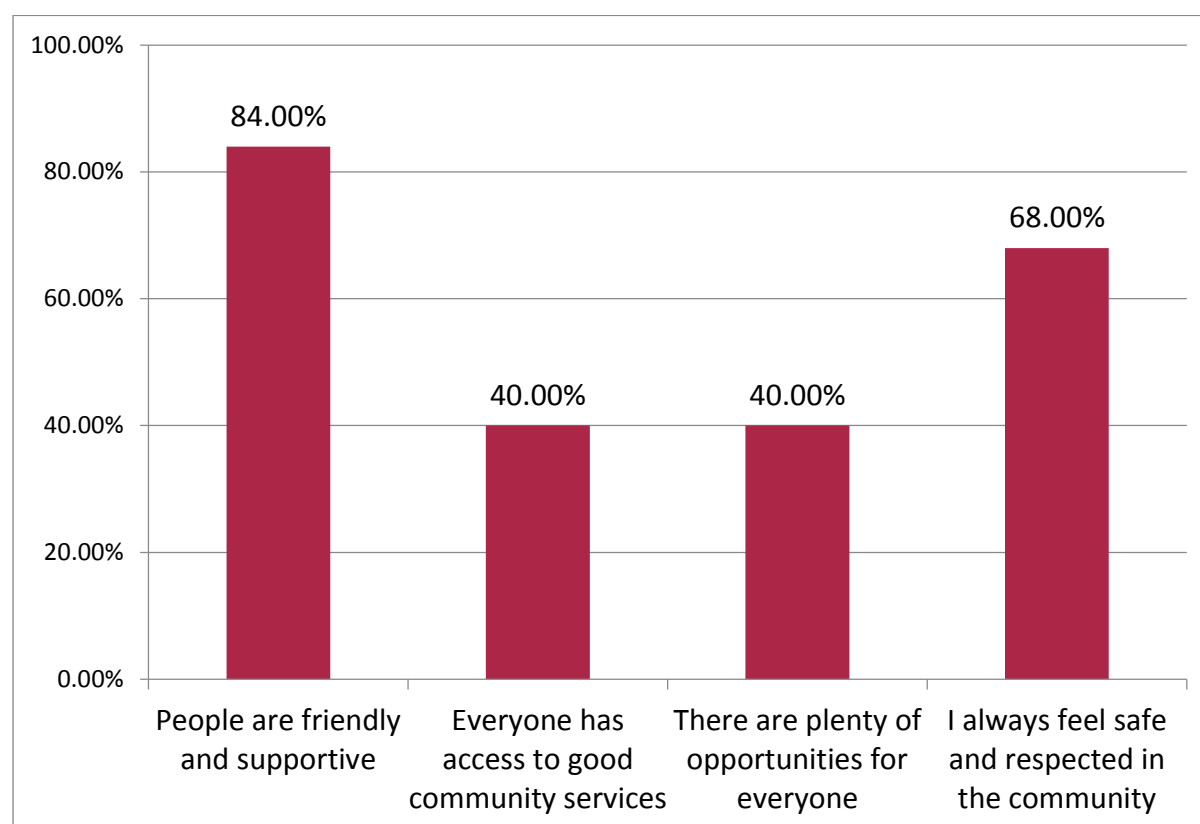
Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for vocational training, apprenticeships and traineeships</li> <li>Identify opportunities for local people to work locally</li> <li>Identify and promote online training opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocational education pathways exist and are used by local people</li> <li>Career guidance, scholarships and local placements are available for local people</li> <li>Increase in local uptake of online training</li> </ul>

### Objective 1.4 – Promoting community safety

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in partnership with the NSW Police to monitor and respond to incident occurrences and trends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response times for police</li> </ul>

## 2. OUR COMMUNITY

### What People Think



### Current Issues

The table below outlines some of the community issues raised in recent times and through community and staff consultation:

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep and strong networks and family relationships</li> <li>• We care for our own</li> <li>• Strong and resilient community</li> <li>• Passionate people likely to stay</li> <li>• Thriving football, motor cross, pony and netball clubs</li> <li>• Five Rivers Festival</li> <li>• Service NSW office attracts visitors who are driving through and stop to do their chores</li> <li>• Art gallery</li> <li>• Aged care hostel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long waiting list for daycare</li> <li>• Distance for specialist health care</li> <li>• Education and income levels are lower than the state average</li> <li>• Volunteers are running out of steam</li> <li>• Some instances of domestic violence</li> <li>• Poor opportunities for post-secondary education, too many teens drop out of high school then become under-employed</li> <li>• Travelling services often have insufficient time for face to face contact with clients</li> </ul>

## Future Directions

### 2.1 Focus on community inclusion and wellbeing

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in partnership to deliver health, wellbeing and inclusion services and programs</li> <li>Identify and close any access gaps to community services</li> <li>Implement the Disability Inclusion Action Plan</li> <li>Work in partnership with the Balranald Local Aboriginal Land Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community survey shows upwards trend on feelings of inclusion and wellbeing</li> <li>Access to services improves</li> <li>Local spaces and buildings allow physical access for everyone</li> <li>Collaborative projects are undertaken to improve community wellbeing</li> </ul>

### 2.2 Innovate and improve community services, activities and events

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate and foster collaboration in delivering a program of community events</li> <li>Prepare a rolling service review program to refresh Council community services and facilities</li> <li>Council operates a dynamic library service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support regular and new events</li> <li>Community events are well attended</li> <li>Service review program is developed and published</li> <li>Review availability of children's services</li> <li>Improvements are made to community services and facilities</li> </ul>

### 2.3 Provide opportunities for sport and recreation across the shire

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and upgrade parks and sporting facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital improvements to sport and recreation facilities</li> <li>Community participation in facility maintenance and management</li> </ul>

### 2.4 Encourage local culture and opportunities for artistic expression

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the utilisation and development of the art gallery and local theatre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital improvements to local cultural facilities</li> <li>Community participation in arts and culture</li> </ul>

## 3. OUR ECONOMY

### What People Suggested

The community survey asked people “Do you have any suggestions for improving economic development in Balranald Shire?”

*“Tourism-supported businesses are struggling, we need tourism marketing strategies”*

*“Encourage new industries”*

*“Encourage local kids to explore opportunities to work in town with pathways to local businesses”*

*“Skills development is critical. It’s the missing piece of the puzzle. If you can’t attract skilled staff you don’t grow economically and socially”*

*“Establish and grow our industrial precincts”*

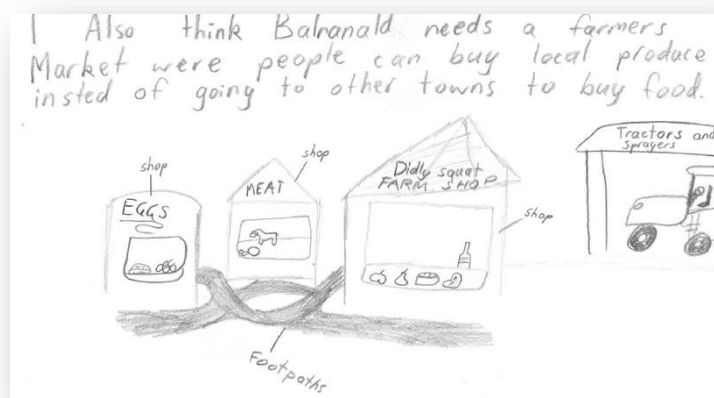


Figure 4 - Farmer's Market imagined by a local Year 5/6 student

### Current Issues

The table below outlines some of the economic issues raised in recent times and through community and staff consultation:

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversity of industry types eg carrots, pistachios, grapes, wheat and sheep</li> <li>Solar and wind farms</li> <li>Growth of the almond industry</li> <li>Mineral sands industry</li> <li>Community support for new businesses, to make things easier</li> <li>Visitors Centre and Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covid and drought have been hard on local businesses</li> <li>Some pockets of underemployment in the community</li> <li>It’s hard to recruit staff, or sometimes its hard to hold on to them</li> <li>We don’t have enough builders and tradespeople</li> <li>Executive housing is a problem for recruiting professional staff</li> <li>Mungo has 60,000 visitors per year but only a sixth come through Balranald</li> <li>Fluid influx of workers as industries rise and fall eg mining</li> <li>The solar and nut farms offered high wages that drew people out of town</li> </ul>

## Future Directions

### 3.1 Support the expansion of our local industries

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct local business networking and training initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local businesses attend training and networking initiatives</li> <li>Maximise regional development opportunities</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Nurture local businesses

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and communicate government funding opportunities for covid recovery</li> <li>Develop innovation facilities to encourage new and expanding businesses</li> <li>Support the growth of local industry sectors eg renewable energy, agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation with new businesses to set up in the Shire</li> <li>Creative use of existing facilities to develop innovation spaces</li> <li>Identify and promote funding for local businesses eg Covid Recovery</li> <li>Business development support is available for industry growth sectors</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Increase tourism and visitation to the area

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare and implement a local tourism and marketing strategy</li> <li>Maximise tourism to Mungo National Park</li> <li>Seek partners and funding to promote the area</li> <li>Improve signage and town entrances for visitors</li> <li>Identify and promote local heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the local tourism and marketing strategy</li> <li>Regular consultation with key stakeholders eg Destination Riverina Murray, NPWS etc.</li> <li>Investment in signage and entrances to local towns</li> <li>Heritage assets are included in local marketing initiatives</li> </ul>

## 4. OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

### Community Ratings

The community survey asked people “How would you rate the infrastructure in Balranald Shire?”

Roads	★ ★ ½
Water and Sewer	★ ★ ★
Footpaths	★ ★ ★
Parks and Playgrounds	★ ★ ★ ½
Sport and Recreation Facilities	★ ★ ★ ½

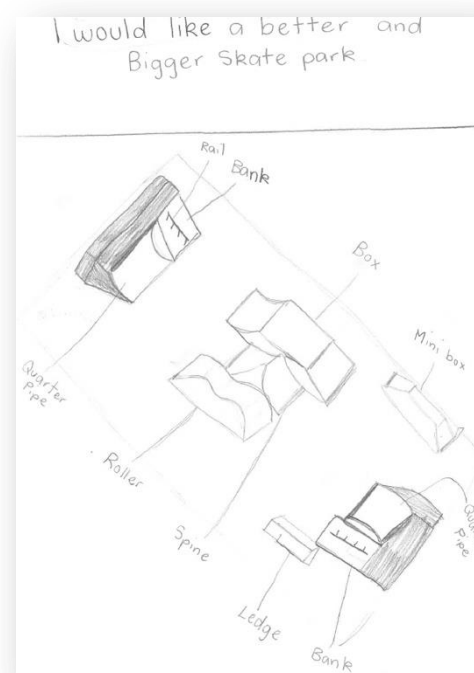


Figure 5 - Drawn by a local year 5/6 student

### Current Issues

The table below outlines some of the infrastructure issues raised in recent times and through community and staff consultation:

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking trails and Ben Scott bridge</li> <li>Local hospital and schools</li> <li>Skate park and bike track for kids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ageing water and sewer assets</li> <li>Enormous road network that is underfunded</li> <li>All standalone assets – VIC, library, council offices, theatre</li> <li>We have money for capital investment but not enough for improvement and maintenance</li> <li>Asset plans keep getting done and re-done</li> <li>Failing infrastructure</li> <li>Road closures affect tourism visitation</li> <li>Rural residents can't get into town in the rain because the roads are impassable</li> <li>Road to Mungo floods in poor weather</li> <li>Community facilities need to be made more accessible to all age groups</li> <li>Trucks drive too fast through the main street</li> </ul>

## Future Directions

### 4.1 Maximising grant funding to improve infrastructure

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with regional partners to identify and apply for new government funding</li> <li>• Maximise opportunities to apply for funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant funding attracted into the area</li> <li>• Grant projects achieved on time and on budget</li> </ul>

### 4.2 Explore opportunities to better manage public buildings and facilities

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise opportunities to rationalise and combine public assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset condition and building utilisation assessments are completed regularly</li> <li>• Community service levels identified and achieved</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Adequately plan for and maintain all Council assets

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a ten year Asset Management and Long Term Financial Plan to improve assets in the medium term</li> <li>• Prepare a Water and Sewer facilities upgrade plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and update AMPs for all asset classes</li> <li>• Capital works plans and reports published annually with the Operations Plan, including explicit funding criteria and project ranking</li> <li>• Develop an up to date Water and Sewer facilities plan</li> </ul>

## 5. OUR ENVIRONMENT

### Places People Value

The community survey asked people “**which are your favourite natural places in Balranald Shire? When and why do you go there?**”

*“I love the walking paths across the river and the swing bridge”*

*“Lake Paika - we go there as often as we can.”*

*“Lake Yanga and Lake Benanee - I go to these places to relax and enjoy the scenery and peace and also the wildlife.”*

*“Yanga National Park- particularly by the lake. We go as a family to enjoy some nature.”*

*“The Murray River at Euston, twice a month.”*

*“The River Bend, it is calming and peaceful and has history”*

### Current Issues

The table below outlines some of the environmental issues raised in recent times and through community and staff consultation:

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse and unique landscapes</li> <li>• Beautiful river front, recreation on the river</li> <li>• Mungo National Park</li> <li>• Lake Paika, Yanga Lake and Lake Benanee</li> <li>• Secure water supply</li> <li>• Unique local species – Regent Parrot and Southern Bell Frog</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerability to seasonal climate cycles eg drought, floods etc</li> <li>• Blue-green algae in the Murray Darling River</li> <li>• We need to make sure sacred sites aren’t overwhelmed with visitors</li> <li>• Wildlife is killed on the roads</li> </ul>

## Future Directions

### 5.1 Celebrate and promote our unique local environment

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and expand the walking trail network</li> <li>• Refresh the marketing and public art around the Southern Bell Frog and the Regent Parrot</li> <li>• Manage local trees to maximise public amenity and safety</li> <li>• Work with relevant state agencies to enhance key environmental assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking trail projects completed</li> <li>• Undertake marketing of environmental assets</li> <li>• Public trees are safe and attractive</li> <li>• Environmental projects undertaken in partnership with state agencies</li> </ul>

### 5.2 Protect our water assets

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the installation of water tanks through education</li> <li>• Explore the feasibility of a high level weir and fish ladder for Lake Yanga</li> <li>• Advocate for our area through the Murray-Darling Basin debate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in local water tanks</li> <li>• Progress on the Lake Yanga weir project</li> <li>• Active participation in regional water security forums and committees</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Manage our waste sustainably

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with regional partners to develop and implement a Waste Management Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress on the Waste Management Strategy</li> </ul>

## 6. OUR COUNCIL

### What People Suggested

The community survey asked people **“Do you have any suggestions for Council in planning the future of Balranald Shire?”**

*“Continue with advisory groups and have a council rep there to get a feel for current community issues.”*

*“Don't worry about winning more grant funding if you are struggling to manage existing funded infrastructure projects.”*

*“Huge job involved in planning the future as who knows what the future will be. Good luck, we appreciate all that our council does for this Shire.”*

*“Really listen to the community, don't just tick the box. Stop bringing people that don't care about the community.”*

*“Encourage senior Council staff and the Administrator to mix with and participate in community activities to have a better understanding of our strengths and weaknesses and identify real local opportunities.”*

*“Remember volunteers are scarce and you will find the volunteers are aging and volunteering on many different committees. Don't burn out what you have or there will be no one to take their place.”*

### Current Issues

The table below outlines some of the Council issues raised in recent times and through community and staff consultation:

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant local employer</li> <li>• Recent grant funds</li> <li>• Regular community newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turnover has been high</li> <li>• Rates are low compared to surrounding areas</li> <li>• Very reliant on grant funding</li> <li>• Limited customer service in Euston</li> <li>• The shire is very large to drive across</li> <li>• Ageing fleet of plant and equipment</li> </ul>

## Future Directions

### 6.1 Develop capabilities

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop community leadership and volunteer capacity</li> <li>Conduct a staff training needs assessment to enhance skills and staff engagement</li> <li>Nurture local talent for future employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and celebrate local volunteers</li> <li>Provide community training and opportunities to develop and enable civic leadership</li> <li>Roll out a regular staff training program</li> <li>Provide constructive feedback to local applicants in recruitment processes</li> </ul>

### 6.2 Engage and inform the local community

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase opportunities for Council to listen to community views</li> <li>Operate a system of community committees on issues of broad public interest</li> <li>Continue to publish a community newsletter and an up to date website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in opportunities to express views and ideas between Council and the community</li> <li>Annual survey of community committee members</li> <li>Community newsletter and Council website are informative and up to date</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Address financial sustainability

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a Long Term Financial Plan and resource its monitoring and implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long Term Financial Plan is adopted and published</li> <li>Annual and six monthly reports provide the community with information about the finances of the Council</li> </ul>

### 6.4 Develop and maximise strategic planning and partnerships

Strategies	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for our area within regional bodies such as Far West JO and Riverina-Murray RDA</li> <li>Work across the state border on cross-border initiatives</li> <li>Undertake village planning for areas outside Balranald eg Kyalite and Euston</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership and participation in key advocacy committees and forums</li> <li>Village plans are implemented</li> <li>Works and projects completed in Euston, Kyalite, and rural areas</li> </ul>

## NEXT STEPS

This plan has been developed after a comprehensive community engagement process. The draft plan will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days, at which time the community are invited to make submissions. The Council will adopt the plan before June 2022.

