



DRAFT

Rushworth & District Place Based Plan

2024 - 2033





Our Vision

Rushworth celebrates community,
heritage and landscapes and
welcomes all people to share the
future of this golden town

MOTOFINISH CAFE

*Great home cooked food
and fantastic coffee*

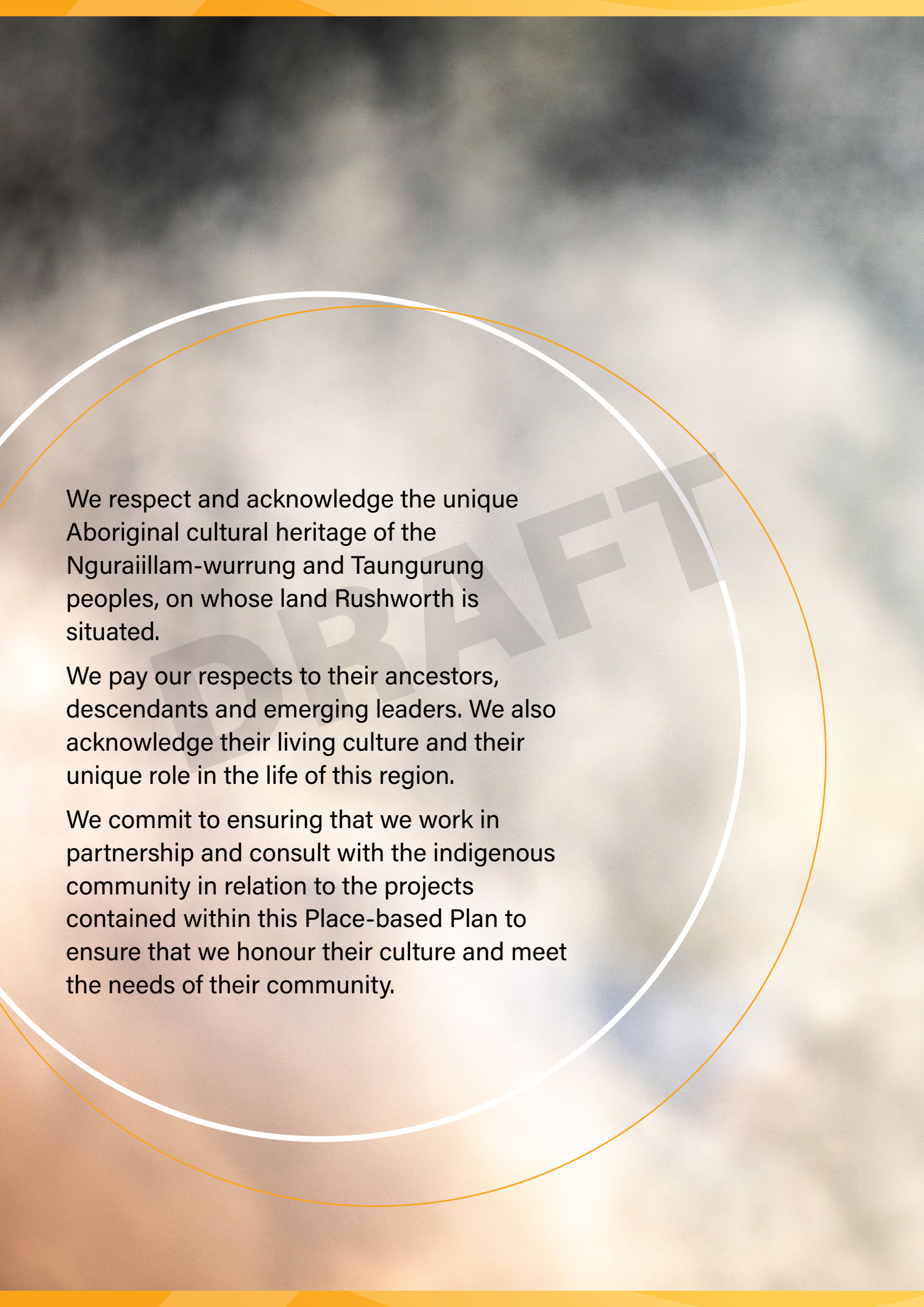
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Contents

1.0 Executive summary	1
Quick win priorities (1-12 months)	3
Short term priorities (1-3 years)	3
Medium-term priorities (4-7 years)	3
Medium- to long-term priorities, i.e. undertaken across a large timespan (4-10 years)	3
Projects undertaken across the 10-year timespan (i.e. 1-10 years)	3
Ongoing priorities	3
2.0 Introduction	4
A key outcome of the Rushworth Place-Based Plan is a community that is resilient, connected and able to adapt to changing situations.	5
What is a place-based plan?	5
Who is involved in developing a place-based plan?	5
Who did we engage with?	5
How is the place-based plan structured?	6
How will the Place-Based Plan be used?	6
3.0 Our town	7
4.0 Our people	11
5.0 Our vision, key focus areas, objectives and actions	15
5.1 Tourism, events and business	17
5.2 Health, wellbeing and culture	19
5.3 Built and natural environment	20
5.4 Community participation and resilience	22
6.0 What happens next and who is responsible?	24
7.0 Acknowledgements	26
8.0 Action Plan	28
Appendix	35
Demographics	36



We respect and acknowledge the unique Aboriginal cultural heritage of the Nguraiillam-wurrung and Taungurung peoples, on whose land Rushworth is situated.

We pay our respects to their ancestors, descendants and emerging leaders. We also acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

We commit to ensuring that we work in partnership and consult with the indigenous community in relation to the projects contained within this Place-based Plan to ensure that we honour their culture and meet the needs of their community.

1.0 Executive Summary



Our community

Rushworth's diversity is also its strength. Rushworth is made up of many long-term residents who have helped to shape the community. They farm the land surrounding the town, operate or work in businesses and protect the unique Goldrush era heritage buildings and the local forest and national park that Rushworth is renowned for. The town has also welcomed many new residents in recent years. These new residents have been drawn to Rushworth for the heritage buildings, the bushland, the waterways and the friendly, laidback country lifestyle on offer. Many of these newer residents have immersed themselves in establishing local businesses, assisting with events and growing the arts community.

Together, all residents have the vision of retaining and promoting the slow-paced life of Rushworth where people have time to connect with one another and to enjoy a quality way of life. They are also united in their view about protecting and enhancing the bushland and waterways surrounding Rushworth.

Purpose of the plan

The Rushworth community, through extensive engagement, has identified the aspects of the town that are important to local residents and the actions required to enable the community to thrive into the future. These actions have been incorporated into the plan and will help guide the community and its partners in delivering important programs, services and infrastructure over the next 10 years.

The process undertaken

The Rushworth Place Based Planning Committee was instrumental in the development of this plan. Members of the committee helped to develop engagement tools and were actively involved in engaging with and promoting opportunities for the community to have their say. This plan will help to guide decision making by the community, Campaspe Shire Council and other key stakeholders in relation to initiatives in Rushworth over the next 10 years. Over 500 local residents shared their ideas about a reimagined Rushworth during the engagement period (June to September 2023):

June 2023	▶ 2 Drop-in sessions with 130 attendees
June 2023 to August 2023	▶ 189 Community surveys - representing the views of 315 people
July 2023 to August 2023	▶ 7 Interviews with State Government agencies and local organisations
July 2023 to August 2023	▶ 74 Drawings from school children and pre-schoolers
July 2023 to August 2023	▶ 6 Written / Telephone Community Submissions
August 2023	▶ 4 Workshops with 25 participants
September to December 2023	▶ Review of Community and Stakeholder Data and draft development
January to February 2024	▶ Validation of draft plan with the Rushworth community
March 2024	▶ Endorsement by Council

A detailed community engagement plan supports the Place Based Plan.

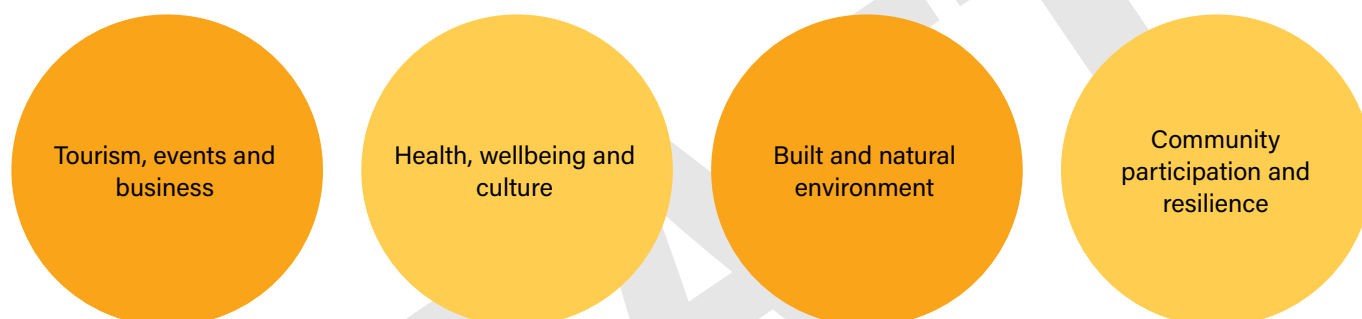
Our vision

Together the community has agreed upon a shared vision for the town and surrounding region. It is:

Rushworth celebrates community, heritage and landscapes and welcomes all people to share the future of this golden town.

Our four key focus areas

To help achieve the vision, four key focus areas were developed:



Underpinning each of our four focus areas is leadership and planning.

Our four objectives

Each of the four key focus areas have been supported by an objective. These are as follows:



Our agreed projects

Through numerous community engagement activities, the Rushworth community has identified opportunities to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community and to increase the overall liveability, prosperity and sustainability of the town.

Below is a summary of each of the proposed 19 projects agreed upon by the Place Based Plan Committee (note that implementation of some projects occurs in all priority groupings):

Quick win priorities (1-12 months)

- Establish a governance group.
- Develop additional visitor information.
- Develop facilities for Recreational Vehicles (RVs), Electric Vehicles (EVs) and caravans.
- Establish a youth space.

Short term priorities (1-3 years)

- Provide information to Council about gaps in the walking / cycling network.
- Develop a Rushworth and District sport and recreation master plan.
- Explore climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.
- Develop an older adults active living strategy.

Medium-term priorities (4-7 years)

- Upgrade visitor accommodation.

Medium- to long-term priorities, i.e., undertaken across a large timespan (4-10 years)

- Implement projects from the footpaths and trails strategy.
- Implement projects from the active living strategy for older adults.

Projects undertaken across the 10-year timespan (i.e., 1-10 years)

- Implement projects from the Rushworth and District sport and recreation master plan.

Ongoing priorities

- Develop additional water-based events and activities at Waranga Basin.
- Develop additional activities and facilities in Whroo Forest and Heathcote-Graytown National Park
- Activate Rushworth town centre through events.
- Advocate for GPs and health professionals.
- Support the development of an arts precinct.
- Support habitat restoration project.
- Advocate for road safety improvements in and around Rushworth and District.
- Engage with the agricultural sector.
- Support clubs and organisations.
- Establish programs for children to improve literacy, cognitive and language skills.
- Establish programs for young people.

"Rushworth's attractiveness is that it offers residents and visitors alike access to an environment that is natural, quiet, peaceful. We need to retain this while also providing comfort and hospitality as well as access to fast communication and ease of travel." (Survey respondent)



2.0 Introduction



A key outcome of the Rushworth Place-Based Plan is a community that is resilient, connected and able to adapt to changing situations.

What is a place-based plan?

Place-Based Plans focus on making places better. The process involves looking at, listening to, and engaging with community members who live, work and play in a particular place (from a street to an entire town) to understand their needs and aspirations. Campaspe Shire Council holds a significant role as an advocate, by lobbying on behalf of the community on issues that are not services of Council. For example, improved access to public transport. Ultimately, a place-based plan describes what you want your town to look like, function like and feel like.

Who is involved in developing a place-based plan?

Community members nominate themselves to join a Place-Based Plan Committee. Members are chosen based on their community involvement and specific skills. The township place-based plan committee utilises Council's services and gain support, aided by Council's Community Development team. Independent consultants, that are not from Council, help the committee to develop its plan.

Who did we engage with?

Extensive community engagement occurred to develop the plan. The first stage of this engagement included:

- Community survey – 189 surveys completed (representing the views of 315 people).
- Drop-in sessions – 130 people engaged with.
- Workshops – 4 workshops held with 25 participants.
- Interviews – with State Government agencies and local organisations - 7.
- Drawings from school children and pre-schoolers – 74.
- Written / telephone submissions – 6 received.

The second stage of engagement included validating the draft place-based plan with Council's Executive Leadership Team, Councillors, and the broader Rushworth community. The Place Based Plan is then endorsed by Campaspe Shire Council.

In addition to community engagement, a broad range of relevant documents including Campaspe Shire Council's Plan were reviewed and a demographic analysis undertaken.



"The real gold of Rushworth are the people. Moving from an outer eastern suburb of Melbourne, the first lesson I learnt about Rushworth is that it is impossible to pop up to the shops for 5 minutes. A trip to the shops is going to take at least 30 minutes, and you can expect to have five different conversations with five different people."
(Survey respondent)

How is the place-based plan structured?

The place-based plan incorporates a vision which reflects the community's future ambitions. Several objectives and actions have been developed to help achieve the vision.

The plan clearly identifies the direction the Rushworth community wishes to further develop and enhance in relation to:

1. Tourism, events and business
2. Health, wellbeing and culture
3. Built and natural environment
4. Community participation and resilience

Underpinning these four areas are strong community leadership and quality planning. Effective leadership and planning at the local level are critical factors in the realisation of identified projects. Hence the priority of the Rushworth Place Based Plan is for the Rushworth community to develop a governance structure to ensure that a group of local residents takes responsibility for implementation and monitoring of the Place-Based Plan.

How will the Place-Based Plan be used?

The Place Based-Plan will be used to:

- identify key community projects that are realistic and achievable (identified through community engagement and research)
- identify partnerships.
- stimulate economic growth and investment.
- provide an evidence base of need.
- attract funding.
- advocate for specific resources and initiatives
- guide the provision and management of programs, services and facilities for the community.

To maintain momentum and to ensure continued engagement by the community, the plan has identified some quick wins, as well as some short, medium and longer term priorities. There are also some advocacy projects incorporated into the plan.

"It's slow-paced rustic beauty, surrounded by the forest and its bird life. I love the community's passion about our town, and the spirit of making do and how that brings people together. I love the authenticity of the historical relics, old shop signage and layers of the past meeting the present. I love the town values repurposing and everything hand made."
(Survey respondent)

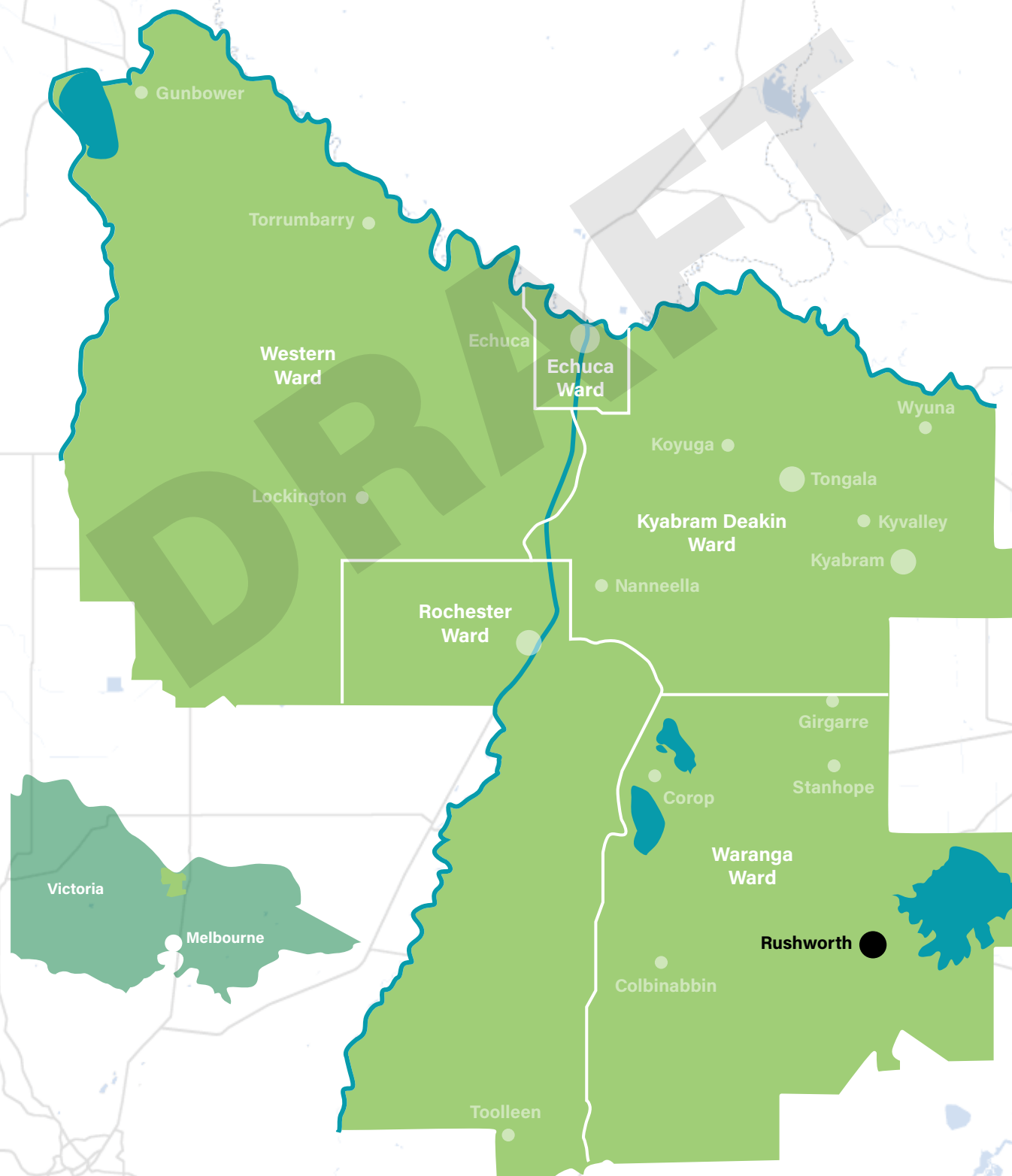




3.0 Our Town

Overview

Rushworth is situated in the southern part of the Campaspe Shire, 65km south-east of Echuca, 48km south-west of Shepparton and 181km north of Melbourne. It is renowned for its National Trust classified historic buildings along High Street, its former gold rush days and its Box-ironbark Forest. Farming also makes a significant contribution to the Rushworth community and the local economy. There is a new sense of optimism in town, with the establishment of a number of new businesses in recent years.



Our history

For more than 60,000 years, the Ngurai-illam-wurrung (pronounced 'nu-rai ill-am wu-rung') and Taungurung people (pronounced 'tun-guh-rung') have cared for the land in the district and retained their strong attachment to country. The Rushworth community acknowledges the care of the land provided by our First Nations people and welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership to continue to protect and care for the land and its waterways into the future.

Major Thomas Mitchell and his party of explorers were the first Europeans to set foot in the Rushworth district in 1836. Settlers moved into the area in 1845 and commenced farming of the land. Already a stop-over for miners travelling between the gold diggings in Beechworth and Bendigo, gold was discovered in the Whroo Forest in 1853.

Rushworth got its name from one of the gold commissioners, Richard Horne (a poet and friend of Charles Dickens) who was sent to oversee the gold rush in the 1850's. In 1854 the town was surveyed and by 1858 the township comprised of a police camp, a wooden courthouse, five hotels, two breweries, a school, seven large stores, 20 tradesmen's shops and two banks. Ten years later, the Waranga Echo newspaper was established.

During the height of the goldrush, Rushworth and district had a population of 40,000 people. By the 1870's the gold rush was over, and the population declined. Timber milling replaced gold mining in the 1880's, and flourished in the area until the 1940's. The railway line was established in 1890.

Now Rushworth is charming small town of 1,411 people offering a variety of services to residents and visitors, surrounded by forest, National Park and farmland. It has been classified as a National Trust Urban Conservation Area due to its significant historical buildings and farming continues to be an integral part of the community. Key townships or villages that make up the district of Rushworth include Rushworth, Carag Carag, Moora, Wanalta, Waranga and Whroo.



"I love the beautiful heritage of our main street. I love our wonderful old buildings. I love the majestic ironbark forest and the Waranga Basin. I love the connection to history and my own heritage. I love the sense of community." (Survey respondent)

Facilities, services, clubs and organisations

In addition to various farming enterprises in the district and local businesses (e.g., supermarket, hotels, cafes, bakery, petrol station, bank, opportunity shop, etc), Rushworth also incorporates a range of facilities and services within the township. These include:

- Campaspe Shire Service Centre
- Geyle Street Playground
- Lake Waranga Caravan Park
- Lions Park Playground, BBQ and toilet
- Miners Pick Caravan Park
- Rushworth Arts Depot
- Rushworth Bowls Club
- Rushworth Cemetery
- Rushworth Comfort Station
- Rushworth Community House
- Rushworth Court House
- Rushworth Fire Station
- Rushworth Golf Club
- Rushworth Kindergarten
- Rushworth Library
- Rushworth Mechanics Institute
- Rushworth Museum
- Rushworth P-12 College
- Rushworth Police Station
- Rushworth Post Office
- Rushworth Public Park Reserve
- Rushworth Senior Citizens Hall
- Rushworth Shire Hall
- Rushworth Speedway
- Rushworth Swimming Pool
- Rushworth Uniting Church
- Rushworth Village Green
- Skatepark
- St Mary's Catholic Church
- St Mary's Primary School
- St Paul's Anglican Church
- VICSES Rushworth Unit
- Waranga Aged Care Hostel
- Waranga Food Bank and Op Shop
- Waranga Medical Centre Goulburn
- Waranga News
- Waranga Rail Trail

Some of the existing clubs and organisations within Rushworth include:

- Angling Club
- Astronomical Society of Victoria - Shepparton
- Dart Club at Criterion Hotel
- Field and Game Club
- Foodshare
- Friends of Hostel
- Kite Flyers Club
- Machinery Preservation Club
- Moora Recreation Reserve Committee
- Rushworth Arts Depot
- Rushworth Band
- Rushworth Bank Board
- Rushworth Cemetery Trust
- Rushworth CFA
- Rushworth Community House
- Rushworth Community Support
- Rushworth Cricket club
- Rushworth Speedway
- Rushworth Events Inc.
- Rushworth Fire Brigade
- Rushworth Football Netball Club
- Rushworth Garden Lovers Club
- Rushworth Golf Club
- Rushworth Hall Committee
- Rushworth Kindergarten
- Rushworth Market
- Rushworth Recreation Reserve COM
- Rushworth RSL
- Rushworth Senior Citizens Club
- Taungurung
- VICSES Rushworth Unit
- Waranga Boat Club
- Waranga Catchment Landcare Collective
- Waranga News
- Waranga Rail Trail Friends

The background image shows a tractor pull event. In the foreground, a man is driving a blue Fordson tractor. To the right, another man is driving a red tractor. In the background, there are spectators, a stop sign, and trees. A large orange circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, and a smaller orange circle is overlaid on the bottom right side, containing a group of six stylized people.

4.0 Our People

4.0 Our People

The following images provide a snapshot of the Rushworth community (ABS Suburbs and Localities), based on the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census. A more detailed overview is provided in the Appendix.



Current population
1,411 people



Median age
56 years of age (compared with 38 years of age for Victoria)



People over 65
32.5% (457) (compared with 16.8% for Victoria)



Population growth
-9.1% from 2016-2036¹



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
3.1% (compared with 1.0% for Victoria)



People born in Australia
77.3% (compared with 65.0% for Victoria)



Born overseas
England (2.9%), Thailand (1.3%), Philippines (0.9%), Netherlands (0.7%) and New Zealand (0.6%)



Median household weekly income
\$850 (compared with \$1,759 for Victoria)



Currently attending TAFE, university or tertiary institution
7.4% (compared with 24.5% of Victorians)



Those with a bachelor's degree or above
7.9% (compared with 29.2% of Victorians)



Voluntary work in the last 12 months
17.9% (compared with 13.3% for Victoria)



People with long term health conditions
58.5% (compared with 38.9% for Victoria)

Other factors impacting our community

The Place Based Plan has been prepared by taking into consideration the needs of local members of the community, but also by placing a lens over broader impacts occurring at a local, state or national level and considering the impacts of these issues. Some of the factors impacting the Rushworth community now, and in the future include:

Locally specific factors

People:

- High percentage of retirees living in Rushworth and moving to the area.
- Lack of childcare options in Rushworth.
- Some students are attending schools in other towns, rather than in Rushworth.
- The town of Rushworth is ranked as the most disadvantaged from a socio-economic perspective in the Shire and has the highest unemployment rate of all towns in the Shire.
- Lack of locally available employment opportunities.
- Growth in people working from home (which can make Rushworth even more attractive to people looking to relocate)
- Strong desire by local residents to have a say regarding things that matter to them.
- Avoidable and premature deaths for people living in the Shire are much higher compared with Victoria, and rates for women living in Rushworth, Kyabram and Rochester were higher than for other towns in the Shire.
- Avoidable deaths from transport accidents are almost 4 times higher than the state average in Rushworth, Kyabram and Rochester.
- Compared with Victoria, children from Rushworth who are in their prep or foundation year, are significantly more vulnerable in terms of their language development and cognitive skills (13.5% of children in Rushworth are vulnerable against this domain, compared with 7.2% of Victorian children).
- 23.6% of Rushworth households have run out of food in the last 12 months (compared with 9.6% for the Shire).
- 19.5% of local residents don't feel valued.
- 29.5% of people rate their health as fair or poor (compared with 18.3% for the Shire).
- 38.3% of local residents are overweight and 27.3% are obese (compared with 35.6% and 29.2% respectively for the Shire).



Infrastructure and services

- Ageing community infrastructure and insufficient funds to renew or upgrade this infrastructure.
- Establishment of more 'up-market' businesses in the last few years.
- Development of the Waranga Rail Trail is likely to bring in increased tourism.
- Lack of services for more vulnerable people in the community, e.g., mental health support.
- Limited housing stock, vacant land and rentals in Rushworth.
- Lack of accommodation for visitors.
- Lack of connectivity in the town and lack of safe pathways.
- Lack of GPs locally.
- Slow uptake of NBN services in Rushworth.
- A lack of information about available services, programs and activities in Rushworth.
- Strong appreciation of heritage buildings by local residents and visitors.

Broader environmental factors

Greater focus on sustainability and the impact of climate change, e.g., water saving measures, solar panels, environmental protection and renewable energy.

- Climate change impacts – resulting in a higher risk of floods, grass fires, drought and heat-related incidents.
- High interest rates – resulting in mortgage stress and potentially higher rents for some.
- Increased cost of living, including utility costs and fuel costs.
- High rates of mental health issues and loneliness impact people's health and wellbeing.



"The Rushworth of the future would have a variety of choices of places to eat good quality meals. Its people would stay in the town and would educate their children in the town in those beautifully resourced schools!" (Survey respondent)

The background of the page is a photograph of a brick building with a large, white, spoked wheel on its wall. To the right, a tall, metal telecommunications tower rises into the sky. The scene is set on a red-tiled roof.

5.0 Our Vision, Key Focus Areas, Objectives And Actions



Our Vision

Rushworth prides itself on its quality of life, prioritises friendly spaces, values its heritage, ensures progress is sustainable and protects its Box-Ironbark forests that richly surround this golden town.

Our vision describes what we want Rushworth and District to be like in the future.

Our focus areas and objectives tell everyone what we want to achieve and relate directly to our vision.

5.1 Tourism, events and business

Objective: To grow the economy and increase prosperity in Rushworth

Information

Visitors can easily find out about local tourist attractions and businesses such as the ironbark forest, Waranga Basin, heritage buildings, museum, events and speciality shops before arriving in Rushworth or upon arrival in town.

Visitor accommodation

Visitors to Rushworth will have a variety of accommodation options ranging from quality camping sites through to hotel and Airbnb options.

Visitor services

Visitors arriving in Rushworth by caravan or motor home will have a safe place to park their vehicles close to the town centre. They will also have a space to charge their vehicles and to off-load waste.

Waranga Basin Development

Both locals and visitors to Rushworth and District will have access to a diversity of water-based activities available at Waranga Basin. People will travel from all over the state to take part in activities and events at the Basin.

Activation of the town centre

Both locals and visitors to Rushworth will be able to enjoy a variety of events related to local assets such as the heritage, bushland, waterways, food, wine and local performers. Such events will bring additional people and revenue to the town.

Businesses

Our existing shops and businesses are well supported by local residents and visitors to Rushworth. People are able to purchase the basic goods and services they need within Rushworth, without necessarily having to drive elsewhere. The product range within Rushworth continues to grow to meet the needs of both local residents and visitors to the area.

Employment

The increased range of tourism opportunities and events in Rushworth will help to create additional local employment opportunities for our residents.



"The Rushworth I would love to see in the future is one where there are more businesses open, including interesting eclectic shops as well as businesses needed for day to day living."
(Survey respondent)

The community will achieve this by:

1. **Providing information for visitors** about the attractions within Rushworth and District (using heritage branding that we develop) through:

- Updating existing Rushworth map.
- Providing information at the Waranga Rail Trail gateway.
- Developing potential itineraries identifying how to spend a half day or full day in Rushworth.
- Utilising the museum as a visitor information centre (in addition to its historic displays), e.g., using the alcove for brochure / map displays.
- Developing a dedicated Rushworth website and use of social media sites such as instagram, Facebook and tik tok to promote the area.
- Installing a large map of the town on the Lions Park toilet external wall.
- Installing signage at the eastern entry to the Shire to promote the tourist attractions in Rushworth.
- Placing plaques on buildings in High Street and Moora Road.
- Developing interpretive signage incorporating QR code links to photos, videos or audio recordings of older residents recounting historical events or ways of life in Rushworth.
- **Promoting existing accommodation** by mapping and promoting it and will advocate for an **upgrade to the caravan park** at Waranga Basin, including the possible provision of glamping, kayak and stand-up paddle board hire.

2. Developing a **Recreational Vehicle and Caravan stop and waste dump** with **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations** in a central location in Rushworth so that visitors can more easily park and access shops and services in Rushworth.

3. Encouraging and promoting additional events and water-based activities such as fishing, sailing, triathlons, Bush Nipper program and water skiing at **Waranga Basin** for the enjoyment and safety of local residents and visitors alike.

4. Establishing **new events** in Rushworth and District for the enjoyment of local residents and to attract visitors to our area, e.g.:

- Rushy Ironbark Triathlon.
- Food, wine and music festival.
- Events that celebrate our wildflowers, birds and gold.



5.2 Health, wellbeing and culture

Objective: To promote opportunities for our community to be healthy, active and creative

Lifestyle

Our people understand the importance of health and have embraced healthy and active lifestyles. People are physically active and eat healthy meals.

Health and wellbeing

People living in Rushworth can access General Practitioners (GPs) and a range of health professionals when needed to enable them to optimise their health and wellbeing. These services are inclusive, accessible and readily available to all through face-to-face provision, telehealth or outreach. Older adults and people with disabilities will be supported to remain living at home as long as possible and children who require additional support to thrive are connected to appropriate services when needed.

Culture

Our people can explore their creativity and to enjoy taking part in creative activities and events. Through their cultural experiences, residents develop new skills; enhance their self-esteem and confidence; enjoy their creations / experiences; and create meaningful connections with others in the community.

The community will achieve this by:

1. Advocating for **additional GPs and health professionals** to service Rushworth on a permanent or visiting basis to provide a broad range of health services to our residents, including mental health support, primary prevention, alternate medicines and health promotion.
2. Supporting the development of an **arts precinct** that links the Art Depot sheds, the Court House and the Shire Hall.



5.3 Built and natural environment

Objective: To enhance our natural assets and the places and spaces around us

Footpaths and trail

Our footpaths and shared walking / cycling trails are safe and well maintained and connect local residents and visitors to key locations in the town such as shops, schools and recreational areas and to nearby locations such as Whroo Forest and Waranga Basin.

Sport and recreation facilities

Our residents have access to a diversity of sport and active recreation facilities within Rushworth and surrounding areas such as Moora, Waranga Basin and Whroo Forest. These spaces are inclusive, accessible, sustainable and well-utilised.

Whroo Forest and Heathcote-Graytown National Park

Local residents and visitors to Rushworth enjoy the gold fossicking activities, wildflowers and trails that have been created within Whroo Forest and Heathcote-Graytown National Park. Whilst in the forest and national park, they have the opportunity to learn about its history, flora and fauna.

Habitat

We undertake measures to protect our local flora and fauna and to manage it sustainably. As a consequence, local birds, animals, reptiles and frogs are able to thrive.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Our community embraces initiatives that will help it to reduce its impact on the environment. We are also prepared for any climate-related emergency such as floods, fire, excessive temperatures, droughts, etc that come our way.

Roads

Our roads are safe and maintained in good condition. They provide valuable connections between towns.

Farmland

We acknowledge the significant and ongoing contribution of farming to food and fibre production within the region and to our local economy, and we support our farming community wherever possible.



"Connectivity for children to access the P-12 and visit their friends and connectivity for residents, especially those using mobility scooters, to access the High Street without having to resort to travelling on the Bendigo Murchison Road." (Survey respondent)

The community will achieve this by:

1. Informing Campaspe Shire Council of any **missing links in the footpath / trail network** and of any potential trail related tourism opportunities within the township and the surrounding area. Council will then include this information in its mapping system and Active Transport Strategy for future consideration.
2. Undertaking a **township sport and recreation master plan** to identify upgrades required to sport and active recreation facilities in Rushworth and Moora including the skate park, swimming pool, nature-based play, the bowling club, Rushworth P-12 Stadium, Rushworth Public Park Reserve and Moora Recreation Reserve. The master plan will explore how to best activate sport and active recreation facilities through programming, shared usage, shade, seats, play spaces, outdoor fitness equipment, picnic facilities, etc.
3. Enhancing and protecting **Whroo Forest and the Heathcote-Graytown National Park**, including advocating for the development of sustainable opportunities such as:
 - Guided tours, e.g., wildflower tours.
 - Gold fossicking and gold panning.
 - Tracks / trails suitable for walking and cycling from Rushworth to Waranga Basin, linked to the Waranga Rail Trail.
 - A walking / cycling connection from Rushworth to Heathcote via the Heathcote-Graytown National Park and connecting to Shepparton in the other direction.
4. Supporting Waranga Catchment Landcare Collective to undertake **ecological thinning of local Box-Ironbark woodlands and forests** on private land (in partnership with landholders) for habitat restoration and eco-friendly firewood. This project will result in rapid habitat improvement for threatened woodland species such as Critically Endangered Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot (both priority species in the Federal Government's Threatened Species Action Plan) as well as more than twenty other threatened woodland birds, five reptiles, four mammals and two frogs.
5. Exploring ways to help our community respond to the risks of **climate change** through measures such as:
 - Promoting ways to help residents to ensure that their homes are climate-ready (i.e., retro-fitting existing homes to provide comfortable and safe living conditions for vulnerable residents).
 - Conduct workshops to help local residents prepare emergency plans.
 - Seek funding to help local aid and service clubs to prepare for events such as evacuations and mass gatherings in emergency situations / natural disasters.
6. Advocating for **road safety improvements** in and around Rushworth and District to VicRoads and Campaspe Shire, particularly for:
 - Waranga Outlet Bridge
 - Rushworth-Nagambie Road to Reedy Lake Road (complete the sealing of this section).
7. **Engaging with the agricultural sector** to:
 - Secure the future of farming in the region.
 - Facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information about agricultural practices.
 - Connect farmers to one another and to the broader community.



5.4 Community participation and resilience

Objective: To provide opportunities for our local residents to actively participate in the community and connect with one another

Leadership

A formal structure is established to provide leadership in relation to implementation of the Place Based Plan. This group is inclusive and representative of the local community. It actively seeks funding to implement projects contained within the Place Based Plan and establishes partnerships with relevant organisations to help implement initiatives or advocate for changes.

Participation

We provide opportunities for the community to participate in a range of different activities to improve their health and wellbeing, enjoy the natural environment, have fun, develop their skills and make new social and business connections. These activities may be associated with local clubs and organisations or may be undertaken informally. Our club and organisational volunteers are well supported and opportunities to take part in volunteering are well advertised within the community.

Children

Our children's development is supported through a variety of fun and educational experiences. They, and their families, feel a strong sense of connection to the community.

Young people

Our young people have a safe and inclusive place to go to meet with their peers and to seek support with any issues that they may experience. They feel a strong sense of connection to the community.

Older adults

Our older adults are supported to continue to live an active and healthy life and feel a strong sense of connection to the community. They have access to a variety of enjoyable and engaging activities and public spaces are inclusive, welcoming and accessible. Should they no longer be able to care for themselves at home, quality aged care facilities are available for those who need it.

Belonging

All people in Rushworth have a strong sense of belonging and look out for one another. They know their neighbours and feel safe and supported at all times. Our people never hesitate to lend a hand to those in need.




"A legacy needs to be left for future generations, we have enjoyed the legacy left by previous generations. Sustainable education precinct, complete health care for all ages, viable businesses. A cohesive approach by all to establish these things and taking control of the destiny of the town. Be a strong voice to advocate what is needed not what is perceived by other bodies as to what is needed." (Survey respondent)

The community will achieve this by:

1. Establishing a **governance group** made of interested local residents to implement the Place Based Plan and to be a voice for Rushworth. The terms of reference for the governance group will clearly outline the community's values and vision (particularly around areas such as tourism, events and business; health, wellbeing and culture; built and natural environment; and community participation and resilience).
2. Working in partnership with Campaspe Shire Council to **support and develop clubs and organisations** in Rushworth, e.g., sports clubs, business networks, special interest groups, etc, and to seek ways in which to link volunteers to these clubs and organisations (e.g., through the development of an app and promotion in the Waranga News).
3. Establishing or facilitating programs, activities, events and services in the community that are designed to enhance literacy, cognitive and language skills of children, as well as enhance their (and their family's) inclusion and connection to the community, e.g.:
 - A free toy library.
 - A program which involves older adults reading to children.
 - Home parenting education and support programs.
 - Children's events such as Teddy Bear's Picnic.
4. Establishing a youth space in Rushworth that provides opportunities for young people to meet up with other young people, connect with the community and to access activities, events, programs and services, e.g.:
 - Mentoring programs.
 - FReeZA events (music, arts, etc).
 - Life skills.
 - Education and employment skills.
 - Social activities.
 - Mental health support.
5. Undertaking an **active living strategy** for older adults to identify ways to enhance their life as they age in the community by exploring inclusion, connectivity, accessibility, services, programs, events and support.





6.0 What Happens Next And Who Is Responsible?



6.0 What happens next and who is responsible?

A committee comprising local residents will need to be established by the community as a priority to take on the role of implementing the plan. The structure of this committee is still to be decided by the community. This committee will be supported by Campaspe Shire Council.

Some of the principles that may guide the community committee include:

- **Participation** – the committee invites broad cross-representation from a variety of community-based organisations and individuals to participate in the implementation of initiatives included in the Place Based Plan.
- **Partnerships** – the committee seeks to develop partnerships to assist in the implementation of initiatives.
- **Community benefit** – the committee aims to implement initiatives that will help the community to thrive, be better connected and become more resilient.
- **Evidence of need** – initiatives undertaken by the committee will be based on clear evidence of need.
- **Accountability** – the committee takes accountability for implementation of initiatives.
- **Transparency** – the actions of the committee are reported to the broader community on a regular basis.
- **Sustainability** – wherever possible, initiatives implemented by the committee will be sustainable.

The initiatives identified in the Rushworth Place Based Plan should be reviewed annually, and the entire plan reviewed at five and ten-year intervals.



7.0 Acknowledgements



7.0 Acknowledgements

The following members of the Rushworth Place Based Plan Committee were instrumental in guiding the development of this plan and will play a pivotal role in its implementation going forward:

- Sarah Pain (Co-chair)
- Andrew Larkin (Co-chair)
- Matt Barlow
- Graeme Hanigan
- Mark Labozzetta
- Jasmin Le Deux
- Crystal Pateman
- Louise Costa
- Ann Spittles

Campaspe Shire Waranga Ward Councillor, Cr Adrian Weston; Campaspe Shire Council Officers Jess Ibbeson, Jo Bradshaw, Samantha Smith, Cheryl Hammer, Astrid O'Farrell, Bobbi Aitken and Sam Campi provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the project. Wendy Holland, from Communityvibe worked in partnership with the community to prepare the Rushworth Place Based Plan.

Further information

For more information about the Rushworth Place-Based Plan, please contact:

Community Development Team

Campaspe Shire Council
PO Box 35
Echuca Vic 3564
Phone number: 1300 666 535

8.0 Action Plan



8.0 Action Plan

The 19 key actions identified by the community that will help achieve the vision for Rushworth are as follows. Note that the achievement of these actions will be dependent on attracting sufficient funds and resources. Whilst actions are listed under a specific focus grouping; they may in fact be relevant to numerous focus groupings.

Quick win = 1-12 months;

Short-term = 1-3 years

Medium-term = 4-7 years

Long-term = 8-10 years

Ongoing = continuously

Tourism, Events and Business

Objective: To grow the economy and increase prosperity in Rushworth

Project	Details	Potential partners	Priority
Visitor information	<p>We will provide information for visitors about the attractions within Rushworth and District (using heritage branding that we develop) through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updating existing Rushworth map (quick win) ▪ Providing information at the Waranga Rail Trail gateway (quick win) ▪ Developing potential itineraries identifying how to spend a half day or full day in Rushworth (quick win) ▪ Utilising the museum as a visitor information centre (in addition to its historic displays), e.g., using the alcove for brochure / map displays (quick win) ▪ Developing a dedicated Rushworth website and use of social media sites such as instagram, Facebook and tik tok to promote the area (short term) ▪ Installing a large map of the town on the Lions Park toilet external wall (short term) ▪ Installing signage at the eastern entry to the Shire to promote the tourist attractions in Rushworth (short term) ▪ Placing plaques on buildings in High Street and Moora Road (short term) ▪ Developing interpretive signage incorporating QR code links to photos, videos or audio recordings of older residents recounting historical events or ways of life in Rushworth (medium term) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Heritage Victoria ▪ Tourism Victoria ▪ Rushworth Museum ▪ Rushworth Heritage Group ▪ Rushworth Historical Society 	Quick win to medium term
Visitor accommodation	<p>We will better promote existing accommodation by mapping and promoting it and will advocate for an upgrade to the caravan park at Waranga Basin, including the possible provision of glamping and kayak and stand-up paddle board hire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goulburn Murray Water ▪ Lake Waranga Caravan Park Managers ▪ Echuca Moama Tourism ▪ Campaspe Shire Council 	Medium-term

Tourism, Events and Business

Objective: To grow the economy and increase prosperity in Rushworth

Project	Details	Potential partners	Priority
Facilities for Recreational Vehicles, Electric Vehicles & Caravans	We will develop a Recreational Vehicle and Caravan stop and waste dump with Electric Vehicle (EV charging stations) in a central location in Rushworth so that visitors can more easily park and access shops and services in Rushworth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Tourism Victoria 	Medium-long term
Waranga Basin development	We will encourage and promote additional events and water-based activities such as fishing, sailing, triathlons, Bush Nipper program and water skiing at Waranga Basin for the enjoyment and safety of local residents and visitors alike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waranga Boating Club ▪ Goulburn Murray Water ▪ Fisheries Victoria ▪ Surf Life Saving Victoria ▪ Campaspe Shire Council 	Ongoing
Activating Rushworth town centre	<p>We will establish new events in Rushworth and District for the enjoyment of local residents, to highlight our assets and to attract visitors to our area, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rushy Ironbark Triathlon ▪ Food, wine and music festival ▪ Events that celebrate our wildflowers, birds and gold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rushworth Events Committee ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Local businesses ▪ Community groups ▪ Event management companies 	Ongoing

Health, Wellbeing and Culture

Objective: To promote opportunities for our community to be healthy, active and creative

Project	Details	Potential partners	Priority
Health	We will advocate for additional GPs and health professionals to service Rushworth on a permanent or visiting basis to provide a broad range of health services to our residents, including mental health support, primary prevention, alternate medicines and health promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waranga Medical Centre Goulburn ▪ Royal Flying Doctor Service ▪ Health professionals ▪ Campaspe Shire Council 	Ongoing
Art Depot	We will support the development of an arts precinct that links the Art Depot sheds, the Court House and the Shire Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rushworth Art Depot Steering Group ▪ Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Rushworth Community House ▪ Rushworth Events ▪ Arts Victoria ▪ Regional Development Victoria. 	Ongoing

Built And Natural Environment

Objective: To protect and enhance our natural assets and the places and spaces around us

Project	Details	Potential partners	Priority
Footpaths and trails	We will feed any information about missing links in the footpath trail network in Rushworth and District into Campaspe Shire Council's mapping system and Active Transport Strategy to better link key areas in the town and to create opportunities for tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaspe Shire Council • Rushworth P-12 College • St Mary's Primary School 	Medium- to long-term for implementation
Sport and recreation facilities	We will undertake a township sport and recreation master plan to identify upgrades required to sport and active recreation facilities in Rushworth and Moora including the skate park, swimming pool, nature-based play, the bowling club, Rushworth P-12 Stadium, Rushworth Public Park Reserve and Moora Recreation Reserve. The master plan will explore how to best activate sport and active recreation facilities through programming, shared usage, shade, seats, play spaces, outdoor fitness equipment, picnic facilities, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaspe Shire Council • Rushworth P-12 College • Rushworth Public Park Reserve Committee of Management • Moora Recreation Reserve Committee of Management • Sport and recreation clubs / organisations 	Short-term for master plan Medium- to long-term for implementation
Whroo Forest and Heathcote-Graytown National Park	<p>We will enhance and protect Whroo Forest and the Heathcote-Graytown National Park, including advocating for the development of sustainable opportunities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided tours, e.g., wildflower tours (short term) • Gold fossicking and gold panning (medium term) • Tracks / trails suitable for walking and cycling from Rushworth to Waranga Basin, linked to the Waranga Rail Trail (medium term) • A walking / cycling connection from Rushworth to Heathcote via the Heathcote-Graytown National Park and connecting to Shepparton in the other direction (long term) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushworth Museum • Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) • Parks Victoria • Campaspe Shire Council • Greater Shepparton City Council • City of Greater Bendigo • Private sector 	Short-term to long-term
Habitat restoration	We will support Waranga Catchment Landcare Collective to undertake ecological thinning of local Box-Ironbark woodlands and forests on private land (in partnership with landholders) for habitat restoration and eco-friendly firewood. This project will result in rapid habitat improvement for threatened woodland species such as Critically Endangered Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot (both priority species in the Federal Government's Threatened Species Action Plan) as well as more than twenty other threatened woodland birds, five reptiles, four mammals and two frogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waranga Catchment Landcare Collective • Catchment Management Authority • Trust for Nature • Universities 	Ongoing

Built And Natural Environment

Objective: To protect and enhance our natural assets and the places and spaces around us

Project	Details	Potential partners	Priority
Climate change mitigation and adaptation	<p>Work in partnership with emergency services to help our community respond to the risks of climate change through measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting ways to help residents to ensure that their homes are climate-ready (i.e., retro-fitting existing homes to provide comfortable and safe living conditions for vulnerable residents) ▪ Conduct workshops to help local residents prepare emergency plans ▪ Seek funding to help local aid and service clubs to prepare for events such as evacuations and mass gatherings in emergency situations / natural disasters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) ▪ Country Fire Authority ▪ State Emergency Service ▪ Victoria Police ▪ Emergency Management Victoria ▪ Campaspe Shire Council 	Short-term
Road safety	<p>Advocate for road safety improvements in and around Rushworth and District to VicRoads and Campaspe Shire, particularly for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waranga Outlet Bridge ▪ Rushworth-Nagambie Road to Reedy Lake Road (complete the sealing of this section) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VicRoads / Rural Roads Victoria ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Victoria Police 	Ongoing
Agriculture sector	<p>Engaging with the agricultural sector to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure the future of farming in the region ▪ Facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information about agricultural practices ▪ Connect farmers to one another and to the broader community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural industry bodies ▪ Farming community 	Ongoing

Community Participation and Resilience

Objective: To provide opportunities for our local residents to actively participate in the community and connect with one another

Project	Details	Potential partners	Priority
Governance	We will establish a governance group made of interested local residents to implement the Place Based Plan and to be a voice for Rushworth. The terms of reference for the governance group will clearly outline the community's values and vision (particularly around areas such as tourism, events and business; health, wellbeing and culture; built and natural environment; and community participation and resilience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rushworth community ▪ Campaspe Shire Council 	Quick win
Club and organisational support and development	We will work in partnership with Campaspe Shire Council to support and develop clubs and organisations in Rushworth, e.g., sports clubs, business networks, special interest groups, etc, and to seek ways in which to link volunteers to these clubs and organisations (e.g., through the development of an app and promotion in the Waranga News)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Local business owners ▪ Existing clubs and organisations ▪ Waranga News 	Ongoing
Children's education and development	<p>We will establish or facilitate programs, activities, events and services in the community that are designed to enhance literacy, cognitive and language skills of children, as well as enhance their (and their family's) inclusion and connection to the community, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A free toy library ▪ A program which involves older adults reading to children ▪ Home parenting education and support programs ▪ Children's events such as Teddy Bear's Picnic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Rushworth Pre-School ▪ Rushworth Library ▪ Rushworth P-12 College ▪ St Mary's Primary School ▪ Rushworth Community House Ongoing 	Ongoing
Supporting young people	<p>We will establish a youth space in Rushworth that provides opportunities for young people to meet up with other young people, connect with the community and to access activities, events, programs and services, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentoring programs ▪ FReeZA events (music, arts, etc) ▪ Life skills ▪ Education and employment skills ▪ Social activities ▪ Mental health support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Young people ▪ Rushworth P-12 College ▪ Victoria Police ▪ Kyabram Blue Light Disco Committee 	Ongoing
Older adults	We will undertake an active living strategy for older adults to identify ways to enhance their life as they age in the community by exploring inclusion, connectivity, accessibility, services, programs, events and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaspe Shire Council ▪ Council of the Ageing (COTA) Victoria 	<p>Short-term for strategy</p> <p>Medium- to long-term for implementation</p>



Appendix



Demographics

The following table provides an overview of the Rushworth community (ABS Suburbs and Localities), based on the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census. Rushworth is expected to decline in population between 2016-2036 in the order of 9%.



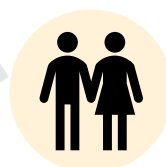
Current population
1,411 people



Females
48.5%



Males
51.5%



Median age
56 years of age (compared with
38 years of age for Victoria)



0-4-year-olds
3.7% (52) (compared with
5.8% for Victoria)



5-19 years
12.9% (181) (compared with
17.8% for Victoria)



20-44 years
17.9% (251) (compared with
35.4% for Victoria)



45-64 years
33.2% (467) (compared with
24.2% for Victoria)



People over 65
32.5% (457) (compared with
16.8% for Victoria)



People born in Australia
77.3% (compared with 65.0%
for Victoria)



**Top countries of birth (other
than Australia)**
England (2.9%), Thailand (1.3%),
Philippines (0.9%), Netherlands
(0.7%) and New Zealand (0.6%)



**Languages spoken at
home other than English**
Thai (1.1%), Filipino (0.6%),
Italian (0.6%), Tagalog
(0.4%) and Punjabi (0.3%)



**Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander (as a % of
population)**
3.1% (compared with 1.0%
for Victoria)



**Median household weekly
income**
\$850 (compared with \$1,759
for Victoria)



**Top 5 industries of
employment**
1. Hospitals (except
psychiatric)
2. Supermarket and grocery
stores
3. Aged care residential
services
4. Dairy cattle farming
5. Other social assistance
services



Top 5 occupations
1. Labourers
2. Managers
3. Professionals
4. Community & personal
service workers
5. Clerical & administrative
workers



Full time employment rate
49.4% (compared with
56.2% for Victoria)



Part time employment rate
38.7% (compared with 32.3%
for Victoria)



**Average number of motor
vehicles per dwelling**
2.0 (compared with 1.8% for
Victoria)



Unemployment rate
4.0% (compared with 5.0% for
Victoria)



**Currently attending TAFE,
university or tertiary
institution**
7.4% (compared with 24.5%
of Victorians)



**Those with a bachelor's
degree or above**
7.9% (compared with 29.2%
of Victorians)



**Voluntary work in the last
12 months**
17.9% (compared with 13.3%
for Victoria)



**People with long term
health conditions**
58.5% (compared with
38.9% for Victoria)



**Homes owned outright or
with a mortgage.**
81.1% (compared with
68.3% for Victoria)



Homes rented
13.1% (compared with 28.5%
for Victoria)



**Mortgages that exceed 30% of
household income**
13.2% (compared with 15.5% for
Victoria)



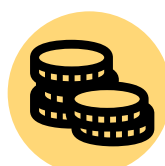
**Rents that exceed 30% of
household income**
38.0% (compared with
30.9% for Victoria)



**Single or lone person
households**
41.0% (249) (compared with
25.9% for Victoria)



**Average number of people
per household**
2% (compared with 2.5% for
Victoria)



**Earn less than \$650 per
week**
36.5% (compared with 16.4%
for Victoria)



**Earn more than \$3000 per
week**
5.2% (compared with
24.2% for Victoria)

Strengths

Employment

Rushworth has a slightly lower unemployment rate compared with Victoria and an almost identical workforce participation rate, although a greater proportion of people living in Rushworth are employed part-time and less full-time. From an occupational perspective, Rushworth residents are involved in a variety of occupations ranging from labourers to professionals to community and personal services. Employers of local residents include hospitals, aged care facilities, social assistances services, supermarkets and dairy farms.

Housing

The demographic analysis tells us that there is a higher level of home ownership and lower level of rental in Rushworth compared with other towns and cities in Victoria, potentially creating a higher level of housing security than in some other locations. The amount of mortgage and rental stress is also lower in Rushworth than in Victoria at the time of the 2021 ABS Census.

Volunteers

Compared with Victoria, the population of Rushworth has a higher level of volunteerism. Many of these volunteers are likely to be associated with local groups and organisations such as the Op Shop, sporting clubs, etc.

Challenges

Children and young adults

There is a significantly lower percentage of children and young adults between 0-44 years of age living in Rushworth compared with Victoria. Presumably a high percentage of this group moved away for study or employment purposes. The gap in this age group may result in labour shortages in occupations that traditionally rely on younger people, such as hospitality or harvesting. It may also result in fewer local people being able to fill sporting team positions, thereby requiring sports people to be brought into town from places like Bendigo or Shepparton, or for clubs and organisations that rely on younger people to fold or not be established in the first place.

Wages

Weekly household wages in Rushworth are less than half the amount received by Victorian households on average. It is likely, given that the median age of Rushworth is 56 years of age, that a high number of local residents may have retired and are living on the pension or their superannuation. This much lower disposable income level is likely to impact the ability of some community members to afford goods and services such as medical bills, groceries, fuel, club / organisation memberships, etc.

Education

The percentage of people currently studying at TAFE / tertiary level, or whose highest educational achievement is a bachelor's degree or above is much less than for Victoria overall. This could potentially limit job opportunities for Rushworth residents where tertiary level education is a requirement.

Health

Over half of the population of Rushworth has long term health conditions. This may impact the types of support local residents need and may ultimately result in some people moving to other locations, particularly as they age, to receive the level of support required. It may also limit the types of programs people may become involved in.

Growth

Whilst the growth rate for Campaspe Shire is estimated to be 10.67% between 2022 and 2036, much of this growth will occur in larger centres with land available for housing development, e.g., Echuca West and Kyabram. Rushworth and District (which includes places like Colbinabbin), is only expected to have a growth rate of 0.3% (or the addition of 7 more people in this 14-year period).³

Other factors impacting our community.

The Place Based Plan has been prepared by taking into consideration the needs of local members of the community, but also by placing a lens over broader impacts occurring at a local, state or national level and considering the impacts of these issues. Some of the factors impacting the Rushworth community now, and in the future include:

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census QuickStats – Rushworth (Suburbs and Localities): <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL22215>

Forecast.id: <https://forecast.id.com.au/campaspe>

Locally specific factors

People:

- High percentage of retirees living in Rushworth and moving to the area.
- Lack of childcare options in Rushworth.
- Some students are attending schools in other towns, rather than in Rushworth.
- The town of Rushworth is ranked as the most disadvantaged from a socio-economic perspective in the Shire and has the highest unemployment rate of all towns in the Shire.
- Lack of locally available employment opportunities.
- Growth in people working from home (which can make Rushworth even more attractive to people looking to relocate).
- Strong desire by local residents to have a say regarding things that matter to them.
- Avoidable and premature deaths for people living in the Shire are much higher compared with Victoria, and rates for women living in Rushworth, Kyabram and Rochester were higher than for other towns in the Shire.
- Avoidable deaths from transport accidents are almost 4 times as high in Rushworth, Kyabram and Rochester compared with Victoria.
- Compared with Victoria, children from Rushworth who are in their prep or foundation year, are significantly more vulnerable in terms of their language development and cognitive skills (13.5% of children in Rushworth are vulnerable against this domain, compared with 7.2% of Victorian children).
- 23.6% of Rushworth households have run out of food in the last 12 months (compared with 9.6% for the Shire).
- 19.5% of local residents don't feel valued.
- 29.5% of people rate their health as fair or poor (compared with 18.3% for the Shire).
- 38.3% of local residents are overweight and 27.3% are obese (compared with 35.6% and 29.2% respectively for the Shire).

Infrastructure and services

- Ageing community infrastructure and insufficient funds to renew or upgrade this infrastructure.
- Establishment of more 'up-market' businesses in the last few years.
- Development of the Waranga Rail Trail is likely to bring in increased tourism.
- Lack of services for more vulnerable people in the community, e.g., mental health support.
- Limited housing stock, vacant land and rentals in Rushworth.
- Lack of accommodation for visitors.
- Lack of connectivity in the town and lack of safe pathways.
- Lack of GPs locally.
- Slow uptake of NBN services in Rushworth.
- A lack of information about available services, programs and activities in Rushworth.
- Strong appreciation of heritage buildings by local residents.

Broader environmental factors

- Greater focus on sustainability and the impact of climate change, e.g., water saving measures, solar panels, environmental protection and renewable energy.
- Climate change impacts – resulting in a higher risk of floods, grass fires, drought and heat-related incidents.
- High interest rates – resulting in mortgage stress and potentially higher rents for some.
- Increased cost of living, including utility costs and fuel costs.
- High rates of mental health issues and loneliness impact people's health and wellbeing.