

Avoca Community Action Plan 2019-20

Avoca

Community Action Plan

Pyrenees Shire Council

2018-2022

Updated in November for 2019-20



BBQ Shelter



Future Streetscape Planes



Future Playspace Plans



**Avenue of Honour
Place of Contemplation**



**Funding for Memorial
Restoration**



**Avoca Silo -
Multiplex Outdoor Art Project**

Our Vision for the Future

- Create a dynamic, sustainable and profitable business sector that supports and grows a caring community

Our Vision and Objectives for the 4 environments targeted by the shire.

Built Environment:

- To create a beautiful, safe and accessible built environment, sympathetic to its cultural and natural heritage
- To maintain and further enhance the built environment
- To carefully plan all renovations, extensions, additions to the ECC

Natural Environment:

- To act as caretakers for our natural environment by maintaining and re vegetating areas around the community,
- To promote and care for the natural environment in our local community

Social Environment:

- To provide a safe, healthy, happy social environment for all ages in the community.
- Build social relationships through events and activities, both within Avoca and throughout the broader district
- To provide opportunities to promote and support healthy lifestyles
- To celebrate the successes of the community.

Economic Environment:

- To provide opportunities to support the farming businesses in the district via workshops, field days & information sessions.
- To work with the Shire Economic Development team to support the existing businesses and grow the services to enhance our opportunities for growth.

Pyrenees Futures- 2017-18. Council conducted consultation with communities to gather ideas for future development. **Avoca** Community Consultation held in December 2017.

2019-20 : Council presented draft Streetscape Plans for display and held community information sessions and encouraged Feedback from community. Amended plans are pending.

‘Our Town’



Avoca is 183 kms northwest of Melbourne, 72 kms north of Ballarat and approximately two hours by car, and is situated at the crossroads of the Pyrenees and Sunraysia Highways.



Avoca is located between the larger cities of Ararat and Maryborough, on the banks of the Avoca River and nestled at the eastern base of the Pyrenees Ranges.



The town is situated in the gently undulating basin of the Avoca River, which rises in the Pyrenees Ranges to the west. To the south, the region is bounded by low hills of the Great Dividing Range; eastwards, the basin ends in a dry forested rise; to the north the Avoca River runs slowly through the plains of the Wimmera before petering out in swamps near Kerang.



The town and river were named after Avoca, the village and River Avoca in County Wicklow, Ireland.

‘Our History’

The DJA DJA WURRUNG people were the first to occupy the area in and around Avoca and knew it as ‘Peerick’. Pastoralists came after the first European, Major Mitchell, passed through the area in 1836. The 1840’s saw the beginning of timber harvesting to supply the growing communities surrounding the forest. Gold was discovered in 1852, 3 kms east of Avoca.



A police camp of some 50 troopers was established in 1853 and a lock-up built the following year. An impressive Bank of Victoria was built in 1854 to capitalise the new-found wealth; a series of businesses set up shop; the Avoca Hotel opened its doors in 1854; the Union Hotel in 1855; a Wesleyan Church was built in 1856; a National School in 1857; and the courthouse in 1859.



Avoca was one of the first goldfields in the north western area of Victoria in the 1850's and 1860's. By 1853 the population had grown to 14,000, but as the reefs around Avoca were patchy, many left the goldfields.

The French observed the suitability of the soil for grape vines and established grapes as early as 1848. The altitude and the latitude reflected the conditions in France's Bordeaux region. Long, cool ripening periods and a disease free environment prompted the planting of several vineyards.

In the Victorian Gazette February 6th 1861 the town was proclaimed a township by Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Victoria. The town's population had dropped back to 768 by 1871. The railway line from Maryborough was opened in 1876. However, by this time the gold rush was all but over. Slowly the farmers began to reassert themselves. Between the 1870's to the 1890's mixed farming - sheep, cattle, orchards - started to dominate in the area. There were various attempts to use dredges to extract the gold and these continued intermittently throughout the 20th century with the last dredge stopping operations in 1957.



On Sunday the 6th February 2011 the community of Avoca gathered in the Pyrenees Garden at the northern end of town to witness the unveiling of the 150th plaque by two senior residents Nance Chapman and Alma Field, before taking an historical walk to the Avoca Court House for the official re-enactment of the Governor's proclamation, declaring Avoca a township.

Governor Barkly (alias Barry Clarke), with the good people of Avoca- 20



The Avoca Soldiers' Memorial was built in 1921 and is prominent in the park in the centre of High Street. The memorial cost £1,100. The Avoca memorial, which was initially conceived as a band rotunda, is an irregular octagon with eight piers carrying a roof obscured by a parapet. A frieze above the columns contains the names of the main areas where volunteers from Avoca fought: Gallipoli, France, Palestine and Belgium. In 2014 the gun was re painted and the site around the cenotaph was beautified, with seating, flag pole and paving added. The community came together in large numbers in April 2015 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Landing at Gallipoli. The 100th anniversary will be celebrated in November 2021 following restoration work to commence this year.



The railway line from Maryborough to Avoca was officially opened by Governor Sir George Bowen on 20th October 1876. It was first closed in 19 .. And again reopened to serve the community. In 1995 the line from Ararat to Maryborough was closed temporarily for conversion to standard gauge and it ran until 2004. The railway hasn't seen any freight traffic since 2004, however upgrades to the Maryborough Ararat line in 2018 have seen freight trains once again using the line as part of the Murray Darling Basin Rail Project.



history.

On the 20th October 2016 the community celebrated the 140th anniversary of the opening of the rail line from Maryborough to Avoca. Approximately 200 students and staff, residents and visitors gathered at the brick, railway Goods Shed to welcome the 'train' carrying the 'Governor' and 'Queen Victoria'. A re-enactment of activities that took place 140 years ago (ie school children participation, special song and poem, Chinese element,) delighted the gathering and acknowledged this significant date in the town's



State Government, Pyrenees Shire joining the 200 community members at the refurbished station and new art gallery.

In 2014 Avoca Community Arts & Gardens Inc began the process of applying for funding from VicTrack's- Community Use Grant Program to restore the neglected Railway Station Building as an Art Gallery, workshop/ building and community nursery. The application was successful and work commenced on the restoration project in August 2016, with the Official Opening of the Avoca Community Arts & Gardens Precinct and Gallery 127 taking place on 25th March 2017. This was a spectacular affair with representatives from VicTrack,



Over the weekend 350 people visited the station for a number of events including the first special art exhibition by well-known artist Mal Gilmour. The gallery open 4 days a week and has hosted numerous special exhibitions along-side many general exhibitions. Additionally it has presented musical evenings, art workshops and writing and poetry reading afternoons. The plant nursery on the platform attracts garden enthusiasts to the station and there have also been 2 successful garden workshops since the opening.

Council has facilitated a strategic planning and community consultation process for the future of the arts & gardens precinct and was presented and endorsed by Council 2017. The Arts & Gardens group now also leases the land/buildings on the opposite side of the track from Grain Corp and this has been included into the strategic plan for the entire precinct.

The Arts & Garden's committee was nominated for Best Community Event – Station Opening in the Neoen Grampians Pyrenees Business Awards 2017 and was successful in taking out the award.

The reopening of the rail line from Maryborough to Ararat as part of the Murray Basin Rail Project to Portland was announced in 2015. Work commenced on the upgrade of the line in 2017 was completed in early 2018.



It was officially opened on the 19th November 2019

In 2017 it was discovered that the town's folk established an Avenue of Honour from the railway station, along York Ave to High St in June 1918. Its two fold purpose was to honour the serving men and women of WW1 and to beauty the entry to town from the station. Little is recorded about the avenue and little remains of the trees that were planted 100years ago. Two grants from State & Federal Governments enabled the community to create a Place of Contemplation amid 3 storyboards that tell the history of the

Priorities for 2019-20

Council has been allocated \$2million for Drought Relief Projects- \$1m to be spent by June 2020 and \$1m by end of 2020. We will need to liaise with Council to develop projects that meet the criteria and best suit the community.

- **Futures Planning for Avoca**- community consultation sessions; collection of data; presentation to community & council
Avoca Framework & Streetscape Plan
- **Activate Avoca Project**- funding successful for 3 elements- i)revitalization of central business streetscape/accessibility, ii)repurposing the Town Hall Precinct to develop multi-functional office space for community use and new businesses, iii)beautification of Railway Station precinct/driveway/carparking,
Sit on Reference Group to assist with finalizing project by March-May 2020
Also part of this project is the Playspace and replacement of Shelter/Pergola
- **Streetscape in High St** Streetscape Plan from Council
Also War Memorial renovations- apply for further funding in 2020 to support the **successful application in 2018**. Establish a Memorial Appeal account to raise funds from the community to complete restoration work in time for 100th birthday in 2021.
- **Railway Precinct:** a)Strategic plan completed. Investigate options for funding for identified stages
b)Avenue of Honour- **funding from 2 grants successful**. Develop the Avenue of Honour-Place of Contemplation site by Nov 2019 – **Opened Nov 2019**. Complete the works on the site to link with carpark at the station and the walkway thru land to Boyce St.
Watering system for Ave of Hon Garden and back lit solar lighting of the laser cutouts
c)Investigate opportunities to redevelop the other side of the railway line (oat shed, goods shed precinct) with Grain Corp and Pyrenees Shire Council via Avoca Community Arts & Gardens.
Possible establishment of 'The Oat Shed Antique Market'
d)Silo Project – **funding successful in 2018**. Commence work now that agreement has been signed. Due for completion July 2020
- **Roads:** a)CROSSROADS – realignment/roundabout. This is a vital section of the town as it encompasses the intersection of 2 major highways and has been overlooked in the Streetscape Plan.
The community would like to see VicRoads and Council investigate best options for improving safety at this intersection. Lobby State Govt / Vicroads.

b)Passing Lanes on Sunraysia Hwy: following the community meeting (and meeting with police earlier) it has become evident that this is a major road safety issue within the community and should be actioned in our CAP.

c) intersection at North St/Homebush Rd/Barnett St especially now that CFA will relocate to that area, it also leads to industrial park and arts and gardens precinct, and **it is a school zone. Investigate option to improve accessibility and safety**

d)Boyce St near the railway crossing in Homebush Rd is deteriorating & very uneven
e)Liebig St – investigate option to establish appropriate sealed car parking space

near the nursing home / doctor's surgery.

f) Investigate the introduction of designated pedestrian crossings to facilitate safer movement between both sides of High St particularly for the needs of the elderly and the young.

g) Integration of the overlooked divided road plantation sections at both ends of the town into the Streetscape Plan.

- **Swimming Pool:** a) Heating for the pool
b) Repairs & beautification to car park
c) Signage on lower fence-open and closed; also safety signs. Replace fencing. Retiling of pool
d) Storage shed and First Aid room
e) Review contract with YMCA in 2020
- **Signage:** Council conducted audit on town signage in 2018- Meet with Council to finalise signage plan esp for Arts & Gardens precinct
a) Events frames at entrances to town- promote the use of the event frames to community groups for their events. Also develop management guidelines to be kept at Info Centre
b) signage for the Avoca Station-Gallery127 ; for the Bullock Dray and other areas in town.
c) Historical Signage for buildings-maybe a footpath trail thru town
- **Avoca Chinese Garden** -Next stage –managing the garden. Meet with Council to discuss options for moving forward with the garden.
Lighting upgrade with funds from PSC
Garden Seat with funding from Avoca Community Bank
5th Birthday Celebrations – October 2019
- **NBN: (connected Jan 2019)** work with NBN to inform community of how to access the NBN by July 2020.
- **Cambridge St Walkway** a) beautification to complement the Chinese Garden
b) Stop traffic coming into the walkway area.
Also issue of traffic entering Cambridge St / walkway especially car and caravans...this is an OH&S issue as vehicles and vans back out onto highway. Investigate possibility of blocking off one side of the road with bollards (or the like) on the left side so vehicle can't easily turn into the zone but traffic can access and exit on other side. As per Streetscape Plan – Civic Spine
- **CHWater**-Shire to organise discussions with CHW re water quality (Desal Plant usage) and quantity (underground water)
Is the Desal plant being used?
Possible recycling of waste water back into town to water town gardens, ovals etc if salt content is ok.
Maybe use Drought funding for something like this.
- **Residential Plan for Avoca.**
a) Rezone land for developing housing land.
b) Independent Living units – MDHS investigating plans/options for the land near the nursing home.(site of old hospital)

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