

REGIONAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS



NOWA NOWA

Written By

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Acknowledgement of Country

Nowa Nowa Community Development Group acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land, the Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel people and their enduring relationship with country.

NNCDG aspires to strengthen its partnerships and supports Aboriginal participation in management processes for land and natural resources. We recognise Australia's rich cultural heritage and aim to encourage integrated decision making now and in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

The Nowa Nowa Futures Project is a Local Development Strategy (LDS) funded project hosted by the Nowa Nowa Community Development Group. The funding is part of the Victorian Forestry Transition Program which is the Victorian Government's forestry policy to cease native timber harvesting. Nowa Nowa is one of 11 places identified for support for the town and district to diversify its business and industry interests.

SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGY

The LDS utilises Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3), a collaborative policy approach that promotes regional innovation, economic transformation, and sustainability by focussing on a region's existing strengths. The foundation of which is that the greatest knowledge of a region and commitment to its future is held by the people and organisations that are based there (Foray et al 2012, p.35).

S3 utilises a quadruple helix model to ensure that all those necessary in the region are actively involved. The quadruple helix model involves representation from community, industry/business, Government and education/research.

Local Development Strategy

The first phase of the project involved a desktop analysis reviewing reports and data from a variety of agencies and organisations. The data included:

- the history of the area
- demographic data (age, education, employment, income)
- geographical information
- local and projected industry trends

Following advice from the community regarding preferred communication, a flier introducing the project with an invitation to participate was distributed by the Nowa Nowa General Store. A webpage (<https://www.nowanowa.org.au>) was also created to provide more detailed information on the project and an introductory event with approximately 70 attendees was held to introduce the Project Manager to the community.

A large portion of interviews were sourced via word-of-mouth recommendations from community members once the interview process had commenced.

During the interviews each community member shared what they saw as the assets, strengths, challenges and opportunities of the town and wider area, and what they would like for the future of the community.

Eighty six interviews were conducted over a six-month period.

Governmental bodies and relevant local corporations were also consulted during the interview process, including (but not limited to): the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, GunaiKurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, East Gippsland Catchment Management Association, Victorian Skills Authority, Destination Gippsland and East Gippsland Shire Council.

The information was collated to inform this report. Following the release of this report a process of 'Entrepreneurial Discovery' will commence and Innovation Working Groups will be established to further research, refine and undertake feasibility of the identified innovation opportunities. The process involves a number of steps to ensure that the initiatives are supported by evidence, embraced by the community and are a process of collaboration.

NOWA NOWA

OVERVIEW

Nowa Nowa is a small village in East Gippsland, Victoria. The town is strongly rooted in Aboriginal history and nearby Lake Tyers (Bung Yarnda) is a sacred Indigenous site.

At the last census, Nowa Nowa and the surrounding areas including Toorloo Arm, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, Wairewa, Tostaree and Wombat Creek had a population of 634.

History, art and nature converge in this small pocket of East Gippsland, which is located on the Princes Highway, about 20km east of Lakes Entrance,, 29km Bruthen and 37km west of Orbost. Buchan is located 33km to the north.

Set at the junction of fresh water Boggy Creek and the tidal waters of Lake Tyers, Nowa Nowa, which means "meeting of the waters" is a good place to enjoy the outdoors. Visitors can wander sign-posted walks and discover the abundance of birds and other wildlife. Easy walking trails lead to water or bush locales, including the 1.2 kilometre Sculpture Walk along the shores of the Nowa Nowa Arm and the 4.3 kilometre Rail Trail Ramble, which takes visitors to the historical Stoney Creek trestle bridge, built to service the rail line in 1914.



The Nowa Nowa district history has been dictated by it's geography. It sits at the junction of an estuary lake and the forested foothills that rise up to form Victoria's high country, with the nearby locality of Wairewa nestled in the fertile farming valley of Hospital Creek.

Such a place can provide food from the water, marshlands, and forest: the waterway provides easy transport to the coast, while the freshwater creeks supply not only water but a guide up into the hills. These connections allow the trade and social connection vital to all people.



HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

1800s

The arrival of European people to the Nowa Nowa area brought a time of great conflict and change from the mid to late 1800s.

The nearby Lake Tyers Mission was first set up in 1861 as part of the colonial government's policy of the 'protection of Aborigines' and became home to Indigenous people from all over Victoria.

Nowa Nowa was formally gazetted as a township in 1888 and became a thriving community based around timber harvesting, milling and transport.

1900s

The Aborigines Protection Board took over the management of the Lake Tyers Mission in 1908, and from the 1930s began to force people off the reserve. This process continued in the 1950s under the government's assimilation policy. Some of these people took up residence in and around Nowa Nowa.

At the height of Nowa Nowa's industry timber milling was the main industry in Nowa Nowa. The first and second mill was built in 1923 and by the 1930s, there were six mills and one in nearby Tostaree, together employing over 300 people supplying railway sleepers for the rail line the ran between Bairnsdale and Orbost, power poles, bridge timbers and construction timber for housing.

Nowa Nowa State School opened in 1912. The school serviced the children of local timber harvesters, mill workers, rail line workers and Aboriginal families.

Nowa Nowa Tavern opens early 1900s.

Wairewa State School opened in 1923. This serviced local families. Tostaree School opened in the early 1920s. This school hall is now located in Nowa Nowa and is referred to as the "small hall".

Nowa Nowa General Store opens 1925.

1950s - 1990s

In the 1960s, a local service station owner built a stockcar track beside Boggy Creek, which was kidney shaped and had trees in the middle. Both men and women raced at Nowa Nowa. The track closed in 1977.

Both Wairewa and Tostaree Schools close. Five sawmills close, leaving only two sawmills in the Nowa Nowa township remaining - Adams and Montana.

Nowa Nowa Community Health Centre opened in 1974.



2000s.

Nowa Nowa has a history of quirky and interesting events. In more recent years, local makers and artists created Yarnfest and Nowa Nowa Nudes (sculpture and art). Both events were well-attended and supported across the state.

The 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires. The impact in Wairewa and surrounding area was substantial.

From 2020 - 2023 Nowa Nowa saw a string of business closures, as well as the Primary School.

There is a strong Aboriginal culture and history that's intertwined with Nowa Nowa.

NOWA NOWA IN DETAIL

PLACE

For the purpose of the Nowa Nowa LDS, the area of the project has been defined as pictured on the left.

The Nowa Nowa Community Development Group was specific in defining the boundaries of the district, which encompass Nowa Nowa, Wairewa, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (LTAT), Wombat Creek, Tostaree, Hospital Creek and Toorloo Arm.

Remplan was asked to provide a specific analysis of economic and business characteristics relating to the area covered. This analysis primarily is sourced from the 2021 Census data with additional inputs provided for tourism data.

Total Land Area covered (ha): 54,897.752.



PEOPLE

From the 2021 Census, the estimated residential population of the Nowa Nowa area was 634. In comparison to the wider East Gippsland population of 48,887, Nowa Nowa makes up 1.2%.

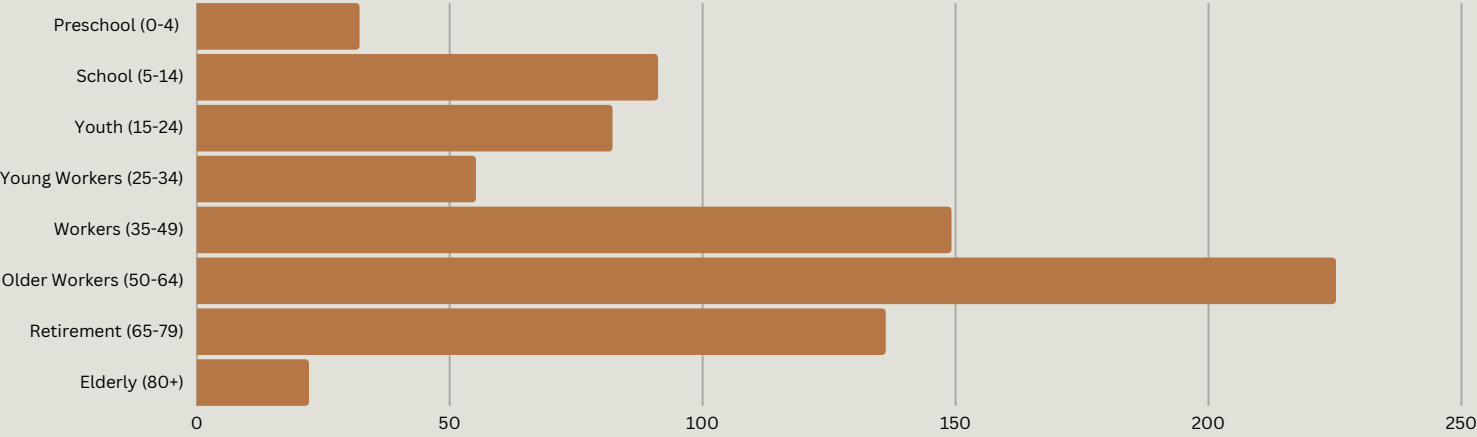
The median age in Nowa Nowa (55) is only slightly higher than that of the wider East Gippsland area (50). It is, however significantly higher than the Victorian median (38). This brings health, community and transport challenges.

Median personal income for Nowa Nowa residents was \$525, similar to the wider East Gippsland region (\$506) and significantly lower than Victoria (\$803).

Median Age	
Nowa Nowa	55
East Gippsland	50
Victoria	38

Median Personal Income	
Nowa Nowa	\$525
East Gippsland	\$506
Victoria	\$806

Population by Age in the Nowa Nowa Area



EDUCATION

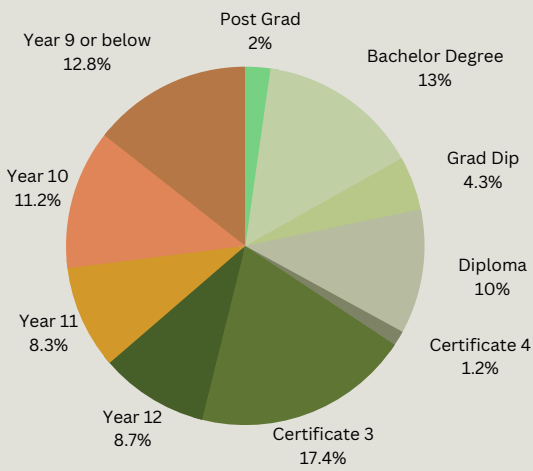
Tertiary education figures are lower in Nowa Nowa than the rest of the state in all areas except for Certificate 3 and 4. Qualification levels required for major employment industries in Gippsland are thought to influence the higher-than-average number of people that have certificates as their highest level of attainment (State Government of Victoria 2022, p 25).

There were 412 people who stated they were currently studying during the most recent Census. Of these, the top four stated courses were:

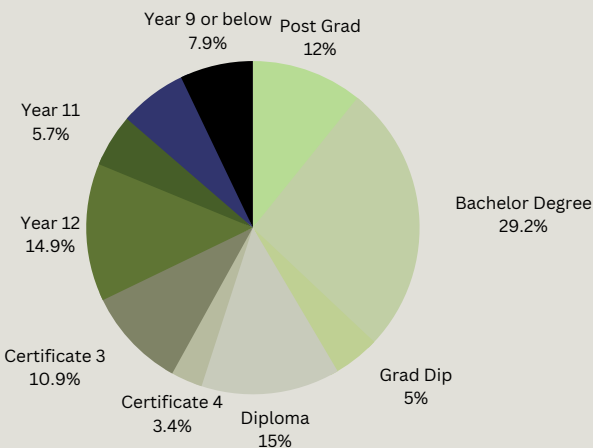
- Engineering and Related Technologies (12%)
- Society and Culture (9%)
- Architecture and Building (8.5%)
- Health (6%)
- Not Stated (36%)

Interestingly, the main age group studying in the Nowa Nowa area is aged 55-64.

All young people primary school-aged and above must travel for their education due to the closure of Nowa Nowa Primary School in 2020. The closest primary school is at Toorloo Arm and the closest secondary school is at Lakes Entrance. There is also a kinder at Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. Some young people travel further afield for schooling (to schools in Bruthen, Orbost and Bairnsdale).



Nowa Nowa highest level of education attainment 2021



Victorian highest level of education attainment 2021

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY

Out of the residents living in the Nowa Nowa area, 49% do not have a stated long term health condition. This compares to 50.3% in East Gippsland and 61% in Victoria.

There is a health centre in Nowa Nowa run by Gippsland Lakes Complete Health. A General Practitioner is on site for a half day each week, plus limited Allied Health at six week intervals. The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust also has a Health Centre, with a GP for two half days and similar Allied Health. There is the option for a private practitioner to use the rooms on the 'off days'.

The SEIFA (Socio Economic Indexes for Areas) index of disadvantage score for Nowa Nowa is 908 (compared to East Gippsland's 958 and Wider Gippsland's 972). A higher score is better.

Most people in Nowa Nowa own their own home (53.8%) or have a mortgage (32.7%) and the remaining in rental-type accommodation (17.3%).

More recently, as part of the 2010 LTAT Master Plan, plans are being made to establish on-country aged and end-of-life housing for elderly Aboriginal People who live at Bung Yarnda. This would mean that elderly residents could stay on-country while receiving the medical attention they require.

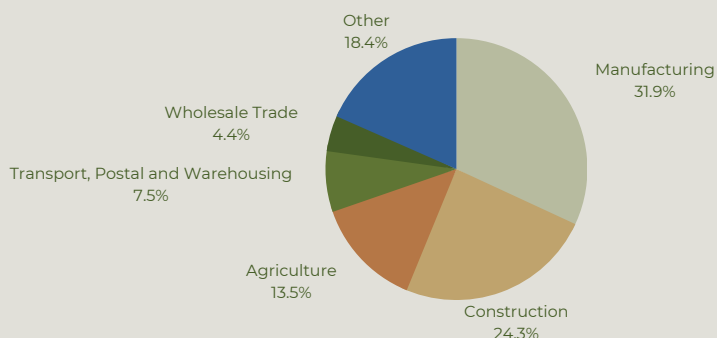
Nowa Nowa has a strong passion for it's community, with the Community Development Group, Recreation Reserve Committee, Men's Shed and Wairewa Hall Committee all showing strong volunteer support. In particular, the Nowa Nowa Community Development Group has a minimum of 10 people to each committee meeting each month, plus extra for further volunteering needs.

EMPLOYMENT

Nowa Nowa has a low employment rate, with 45.9% people within Nowa Nowa being employed. This compares to 48.4% within East Gippsland and 62.4% in Victoria. The majority of those people are employed in the Manufacturing, Agriculture and Construction sectors.

Note, the data used is from 2021, prior to the sawmill closing.

Nowa Nowa Wages and Salaries by Industry %



Industry Sector	Nowa Nowa Region (2022 Release 1)	
	Jobs	%
Saw Mill, Wood & Paper Product Manufacturing	39	24.07%
Livestock, Grains & Other Agriculture	38	23.46%
Construction	12	7.41%
Construction Services	11	6.79%
Transport	9	5.56%
Heritage, Creative & Performing Arts	9	5.56%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing Support Services	7	4.32%
Accommodation & Food Services	6	3.70%
Food Product Manufacturing	5	3.09%
Health Care Services	5	3.09%
Wholesale Trade	4	2.47%
Administrative & Support Services	4	2.47%
Information Media & Telecommunications	3	1.85%
Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	2	1.23%
Personal Services	2	1.23%
Retail Trade	2	1.23%
Public Administration, Regulatory Services, Order & Safety	2	1.23%
Repair, Maintenance & Other Services	1	0.62%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	1	0.62%
Aquaculture	0	0.00%
Manufacturing	0	0.00%
Printing (including the reproduction of recorded media)	0	0.00%
Transport Support Services & Storage	0	0.00%
Sports, Recreation & Gambling	0	0.00%
Residential Care & Social Assistance Services	0	0.00%
Defence	0	0.00%
Mining	0	0.00%
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	0	0.00%
Financial & Insurance Services	0	0.00%
Property Services	0	0.00%
Education & Training	0	0.00%
Total	162	100.00%

INDUSTRY

The key industries that contribute to economic activity in the district are:

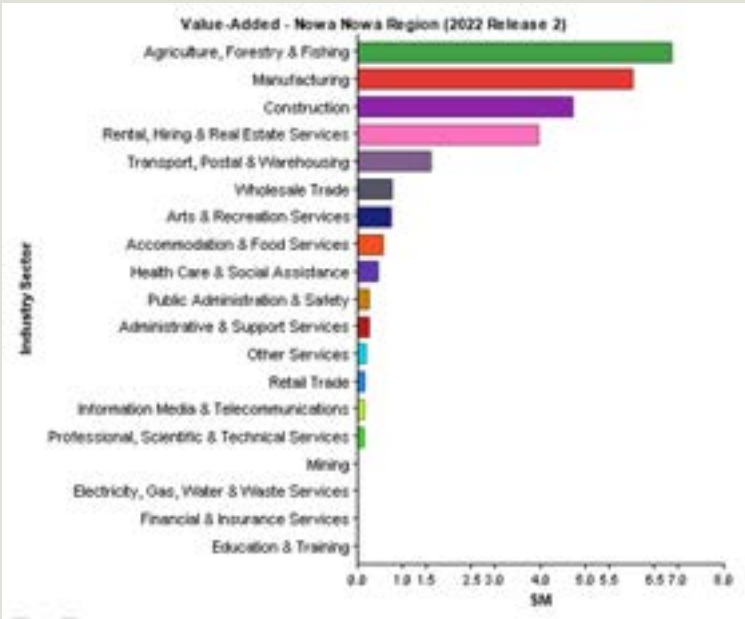
- Livestock, Grains & Other Agriculture
- Construction
- Saw Mill, Wood & Paper Product Manufacturing
- Transport

Key industries are determined by an industry's regional exports, employment, value-add, and backward linkages (industry sectors which spend the most on locally sourced intermediate goods and services per dollar of output).

Industries that add the most value are Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Manufacturing, Construction and Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services. Value-Added Industries can be calculated by subtracting local expenditure and expenditure on regional imports from the output generated by an industry sector, or alternatively, by adding the Wages & Salaries paid to local employees, the gross operating surplus and taxes on products and production. Value-Added by industry sector is the major element in the calculation of Gross Regional Product / Gross State Product / Gross Domestic Product.

While Mining does not contribute any value to Nowa Nowa at the moment, there is a proposed Iron Ore and Mineral Sands mine at Wairewa. The mine is due to begin its Environment Impact Statement in 2023.

Tourism was noted as an important industry in the Nowa Nowa area from the majority of interviews, particularly within the accommodation, food services and house hiring markets (airbnb etc). However, specific tourism data from Remplan was not available due to the size of the market.



Industries with the most output in Nowa Nowa are:

- Manufacturing
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Construction
- Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services.

When broken down, the output for Manufacturing comprises Sawmill Product Manufacturing (33.4% or \$22.5M), Agriculture comprises Sheep, Grains and Dairy Cattle (12.2% or \$8.237M), Other Agriculture (4.7% or \$3.246M), Poultry (2.5% or \$1.662M), Agriculture support services (2.5% or \$1.669M) and Forestry (1.5% or \$0.991M); Construction comprises Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction (12.9% or \$8.715M) and Construction services (5.6% or \$3.777M) and Real Estate comprises Ownership or dwellings (7.3% or \$4.927M)

Note, the data used is from 2021, prior to the sawmill closing.

Would be good to have a choice for somewhere to go at night.

ENVIRONMENT

The surrounding bushland, Boggy Creek, Lake Tyers and proximity to coast from Nowa Nowa is intertwined with the history of local businesses and the community.

The township of Nowa Nowa sits just above sea level at the far northern end of (saline) Lake Tyers where it meets with the fresh water flow of Boggy Creek (hence the Gunaikurnai translation of the name: Mingling of the Waters). The town is surrounded by low hill country, dissected with creeks that flow into Lake Tyers.

Lake Tyers is part of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar wetland site. The Ramsar Convention of Wetlands of International Importance encourages the designation of sites containing representative, rare or unique wetlands, or wetlands that are important for conserving biological diversity. During the interview process, several people noted the pristine nature of the wetland for research and study purposes. The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Ecological Character Description also noted: Lake Tyers in particular provides a useful reference site for measuring water quality at a regional scale given its predominantly undeveloped catchment and near-pristine water quality conditions. The advantage of having a Ramsar site so close by to Nowa Nowa is that many people want to learn, see and experience this site through bird-watching, research, caving, frogging etc.

Further to the north, the Snowy River Volcanics dominate the landscape, with significant limestones in the Buchan area, and scattered granite. Significant geological features include the iron ore body (located towards Wairewa) - 'Five Mile Deposit' - which is layered beneath other surface rock types, and is located seven km north of Nowa Nowa and currently under development for iron ore mining. At time of printing, the mine planned to begin its Environmental Impact Statement process in 2023.

A small limestone deposit near Hospital Creek has given rise to a limestone quarry. Some fossils have been found there, similar in nature to those found at Buchan.

The Nowa Nowa area is part of the East Gippsland Lowlands bioregion. The vegetation is dominated by Lowland Forest with Damp Forest and Shrubby Dry Forest ecosystems interspersed throughout the foothills. The native forest areas surrounding Nowa Nowa have yielded quantities of southern mahogany (*Eucalyptus botryoides*), iron bark (*E. sideroxylon*) and silvertop ash (*E. sieberi*) amongst other species.

Nowa Nowa Futures

The more fertile quaternary deposits on the valley floors of Hospital Creek (Wairewa and Tostaree) and to a less extent Wombat Creek have supported the main agricultural activities of the region.

Some of the native mammals that are more regularly seen around the Nowa Nowa region are: eastern grey kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, bandicoots, sugar gliders, koala, short-beaked echidna and brushtail possum. Feral animals are a problem for these native animals and have an impact on the ecological value of the area. Some of the common feral species found in Nowa Nowa are deer (sambar, other), wild dog, red fox and feral cat.

Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)-listed Ecological Communities were recorded at Nowa Nowa riverside. However, Nowa Nowa also has one of the highest recorded number of threatened flora species which would benefit from management interventions.

Nowa Nowa has Estuarine Wetland to the south and Eucalypt Forest to the North, East and West. Some of the endangered and rare plant species that can be found in the area are: Comb Wheat-grass, Wallaby-bush, Showy Boronia, Boggy Creek Bottlebrush, Coast Grey-box, Twin-flower Tea-tree and Sandfly Zieria.

Because of it's proximity to the wetland, ocean and bushland, Nowa Nowa has a lot of birdlife, which includes many endangered species such as: Grey Goshawk, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Grey Falcon, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Little Eagle, Powerful Owl and Masked Owl. In addition. Lake Tyers supports breeding of significant numbers of little tern (*Sternula albifrons*) and fairy tern (*Sternula nereis nereis*).

There are intermittent records for two threatened frog species from the nearby Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site; the green and golden bell frog (*Litoria aurea*) and growling grass frog (*Litoria raniformis*).

In October 2010, the Gunaikurnai were granted Native Title over nine national parks and one reserve in the Gippsland region, with joint management overseen by the Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB). This includes a number that are wholly or partly within the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site.

CULTURE

Bung Yarnda and Nowa Nowa have long been linked. While there were Aboriginal people forced off their homeland to live at Bung Yarnda, many also lived at Nowa Nowa, working at the timber mills and attending school. This has meant the small communities are very tightly woven.

Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust) was an important meeting place for Gunaikurnai groups throughout the area. It was a neutral place that was rich in food and materials. It is the place the Gunaikurnai lived when they were forcibly removed from their homelands by European settlers. Currently, there are 160 people living at the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (LTAT, Bung Yarnda).

Lake Tyers State Park and the Lake Tyers Trust land together form one of the most significant cultural and historic places in Victoria for Aboriginal people. The Mission site was chosen in part because it was known as a traditional Gunaikurnai gathering place, and it remains one of only two mission locations where Aboriginal people continue to live in the present.



Gunaikurnai ancestors often passed through this bushland to get to and from Bung Yarnda, as they continue to do today. The area is where a lot of Gunaikurnai lived, camped and fished. It is an abundant place providing the groups with food all year round. There are many recorded sites — scar trees, artefact scatters, birthing places and burial sites (www.gunaikurnai.org Joint Management / Lake Tyers State Park).

Where Boggy Creek meets Lake Tyers is also important to the local Aboriginal culture, with the fresh water meeting salt. This forms part of a songline that can be traced along the east coast.

Many interviewees expressed acknowledgement and deep respect for the culture in and around Nowa Nowa. Some of this stems from a history of young Aboriginal people from LTAT attending Nowa Nowa Primary School until its closure and adults working together at the timber mills and on the railway lines.

Creative Arts

For the past 15 to 20 years, Nowa Nowa has been unconsciously building its reputation as an artistic community. There is a concentration of creative knowledge within the small community which seems to be growing.

Quirky and interesting events that attract both visitors and the creative community are what Nowa Nowa does well. The annual Nowa Nowa Nudes event began over 25 years ago, supported by the Nudes Sculpture Walk. The annual Yarnfest event also began around 25 years ago. Nowa Nowa then got the addition of the Nowa Nowa Arthouse (no longer operating) and exhibition space. These original events are not running anymore and the spaces have changed, but the long-term effect remains.

More recently, Nowa Nowa has seen the addition of a memorial digger sculpture near the Health Centre and the mural on the underpass of the highway by Alice Pepper and David "Meggs" Hooke. Cultural interpretation sculptures were also added along the Boggy Creek Trail by Gunaikurnai Parks Rangers.

The Nowa Nowa area is host to residents with artistic abilities ranging from different styles of music to mosaic art to textiles to working with jewellery and watercolour. Some of these residents are hobbyists and some earn income from the arts (see Industry page). Within the community interviews, there was strong support for the cultural history of the area, the artistic events and Sculpture Walk.

While there is no specific data on "arts tourists" for Nowa Nowa, or East Gippsland, across the country we can see that "arts tourism" grew between 2014 and 2018, before the 19/20 fires. In 2018, Australians took 12.3 million daytrips and 13.4 million overnight trips within Australia that included arts activities. Since 2014, there have been increases in the total numbers of tourists engaging with arts activities on both daytrips (+14%) and overnight trips (+20%).

PEOPLE, ACTIVITIES & ASPIRATIONS

From February to July 2023, Hayley Hardy - Project Manager, spoke with 90 people, made up of Nowa Nowa (and surrounding area) community members, Government representatives, education/research representatives and local business operators.

These conversations were critical to the project team being able to explore a wide variety of innovation opportunities in the Nowa Nowa area. Overwhelmingly, the conversations held were positive, regardless of interest in the area.

Government

Participants from various Government agencies and from East Gippsland Shire Council contributed to the context analysis. These included roles in areas related to the forests, forest and waterway management, land management and economic development.

VicForests and DEECA are alert to the consequences of the end of logging for the issue of maintaining forest roads, particularly to support firefighting operations and tourism. Both require specialised equipment and specific skills for safe management. More generally, forest management will be an issue.

Government policy is that there will be no logging in the forests, but the management of fuel accumulation and trail management will continue to be required. The management of the forests in general and in particular trail, cultural and recreation management will be a significant issue and will involve detailed planning to ensure that all aspects are maintained in the absence of a logging industry.

A number of Government agencies (East Gippsland Coastal Management Association - EGCMA, Greening Australia and DEECA) highlighted the unique nature of the Nowa Nowa area as being part of a RAMSAR-listed wetland and therefore a biodiversity hotspot. In particular, there is an endangered frog (the green and golden bell frog) that is located in the area. It is therefore important that the waterways and wetland be maintained. Currently, there are citizen-science programs in place to monitor the frogs and other species.

From both the Gunaikurnai Land And Waters Aboriginal Co-operative (GLAWAC) and the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), it was also highlighted that the area has an important cultural history which is tied strongly to both the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust and the Timber Mills.

The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust EGSC Endorsed Master Plan has identified key community priority area (such as agriculture and recreation) and potential commercial opportunities relevant to the community (such as a native plant nursery).



Education and Research

All education and research interviewees recognised the challenges for education in Nowa Nowa, including personal opportunities and workforce capacity.

For all students, whether it be pre-primary, primary, secondary or those who go on to further education, transport and access is an issue—for example, there are students who commute to Federation University, which is costly and time consuming.

During COVID closures, secondary schools in East Gippsland accelerated their use of online delivery. That experience suggests that there is a possible opportunity to enable students to gain access to a wider range of subjects, and for teachers to participate in professional development.

Unfortunately, without a physical presence in the district, TAFE is not seen to be a reliable local provider. TAFE Gippsland recognise the challenges of providing for post-school formal learning in the Nowa Nowa district, and see an important role in Nowa Nowa's future. This could be facilitated by more flexible forms of learning support, as they become available.

Digital literacy is a barrier to education in the district. There are people who are functionally illiterate and at risk of slipping out of education and training, or being set up for failure if they go on to TAFE.

The 'Learn Local' program based at the Orbost Education Centre and Bruthen Neighbourhood House currently offers pre-qualification training in term-long courses, run throughout the year. The programs are designed to help with life skills and employment skills. Course attendance also counts towards Centrelink mutual obligations. Some courses are run in partnership with TAFE Gippsland, however this has not been overly successful. Popular courses (currently not run in Nowa Nowa) include gardening, hospitality, trades for women, and hairdressing. These are largely based on community demand. There is not much engagement with the Aboriginal community in course development and training opportunities. The timing and locations of courses can be difficult, particularly for young parents when there is also a lack of childcare in the district, or for people with caring responsibilities for elderly relatives. Some people also doubt the usefulness of courses: they are pessimistic about the possibility of getting a job at the end or cannot realistically see a suitable pathway. There is the possibility of running the Learn Local programs out of Nowa Nowa with minimum numbers. Residents could also be trained to become teachers to run specific courses.



Federation University welcome students from East Gippsland in its programs and have supported actively the Country Universities' Centre in Bairnsdale. However, distance clearly continues to be an issue for many potential students. There is the opportunity to develop micro-credentials at Federation University specific to areas of need in Nowa Nowa, such as tourism.

Federation University currently hosts environmental-science courses in Nowa Nowa to look at the RAMSAR-listed wetland and pristine environment. There is opportunity to expand this into other areas, such as Outdoor Education, however accommodation within Nowa Nowa is limited.

Envite, a funded arm of Workways, runs a school-based trainee program aimed at getting young people (primarily disengaged and disadvantaged youth) into the bush and involved with forest restoration and maintenance. There are a number of youth from LTAT already involved in the programme but no school at Nowa Nowa to run the programme from.

There is a desire from within LTAT to be self-sufficient (there is a current reliance on outside contractors such as a mechanic, handyman). There is also a knowledge gap within the community to achieve this. The above education suppliers see this gap as a potential opportunity, but are currently unable to meet the need.

Business

The majority of businesses in the Nowa Nowa area are very small, employing only 1-2 people or operating as a sole trader. While this comes with a number of challenges, it also has a number of opportunities.

There are pockets of industry across the Nowa Nowa area, as identified earlier - Agriculture (predominantly in the Wairewa valley), Manufacturing (timber processing in Nowa Nowa, now ceased), Construction and Real Estate Services are the top four. Other industries that were identified through speaking with small business included retail, tourism, arts, home-office based and animal welfare.

AGRICULTURE / PRIMARY INDUSTRY

The agriculture businesses mostly identified similar challenges to operations, particularly in a post-COVID environment. Those were: water security, transport and packing of goods (employment challenges along with cold storage).

Some standout challenges within the agricultural and growing industries included pest management (deer, wild dogs), soil borne disease, varroa mite and moths (eating plants).

Out of the agriculture businesses, the main businesses are: growers, dairy, apiary, beef, lamb and primary agriculture. There is also emerging or new agriculture businesses as well. All agriculture businesses are family-run, with several employing multiple external employees or contractors. Some agriculture businesses identified key growth inhibitors (such as those challenges identified above), and several others were in a stage of winding down towards retirement, with no (communicated) succession plan in place.

A reasonable number of seasonal workers are employed in the agricultural sector (between 50-70 at the start of the season in 2023). Majority of them are employed in agricultural enterprises as pickers. Most workers are currently housed in Wairewa in dedicated housing. Nowa Nowa township, moreover, could position itself to benefit more strongly from seasonal workers' participation in the community and economy.

In the agricultural sector, there is some research and collaboration with industry groups such as Gippsland Agricultural Group, Food and Fibre Gippsland, Department of Agriculture, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Landcare and Local Government. Within the agriculture sector, collaboration is minimal, however some businesses actively spoke about their desire to work closely with others. Other industries (apiary) spoke about the unspoken respect and boundary each business gives the other, both in retail and knowledge sharing.

One interesting collaboration was between landowners and wombat rescue and mange management. Due to the nature of wombats (mostly underground during the day but territorial) and the sheer size of the Nowa Nowa area, the local wombat rescue organisation taught landowners how to drench the mange-effected wombats themselves with a process similar to drenching sheep. This is much more time-efficient and effective.

CONSTRUCTION

In construction and related business, there were a variety of businesses in operation that were interviewed. This included the "handyman" style operations, earthmoving and traditional construction businesses. Most of these businesses conduct the majority of their services outside of the Nowa Nowa area, between Orbost and Bairnsdale due to the number of residents and businesses within the area.



Nowa Nowa is one of most beautiful spots in the state.

Business Cont.

VISITOR ECONOMY

All tourism-based businesses highlighted the incredible tourism benefits Nowa Nowa had - the location (on the highway, between Bruthen, Orbost and Lakes Entrance), on the tip of Lake Tyers, with great environmental assets to keep visitors busy during the day. However, they also commented on the challenges Nowa Nowa posed for tourism - lack of diversity of accommodation and the lack of night-time economy.

Key visitors from each tourism business were predominantly bike riders using the East Gippsland Rail Trail. Businesses noted that bike riders were aged mostly between 35-70 and had generous spending habits for local businesses. One business also had noticed an increase in same sex couples, while two others had regularly hosted environmental scientists. All businesses had noted visitors interest and enjoyment in Nowa Nowa's history and the surrounding environment.

Over the years, Nowa Nowa has also been an accommodation hub for school and bike riding groups due to its central location. Due to changes in business ownership there is local concern that these groups may not return. Bike events, such as the Great East Rail Trail Ride and the Great Victorian Bike Ride have also used Nowa Nowa as a rest site in the past. With no night time dinner option (and food options, generally, are limited) and accommodation options limited, Nowa Nowa is not as practical as it was.

CREATIVE ARTS AND EVENTS

Nowa Nowa has traditionally been a place for interesting events and creative arts. The majority of these ceased over the COVID lockdowns, but some are now resurfacing.

After the Black Summer Bushfires, the Lemon Hill Art Gallery was established in Wairewa by local residents and artists and more recently, a mural was created by Aboriginal artist, Alice Pepper alongside David "Meggs" Hooke in the Rail Trail Tunnel. Both have been well-marketed across Victoria and continue to bring visitors.



Also since the fires, other smaller events have sprung up, including several music events hosted by the Community Development Group, a Trivia Night, an East Gippsland Winter Festival event and Farmer's Market.

A number of creative people reside in the area (see page 13). There is, however, a dearth of professional expertise in arts administration and marketing in the existing governance groups for the key activities. These groups are largely run on a volunteer basis, with limited capacity to develop the arts and entertainment sector.

HOME-BASED BUSINESS

Home-based businesses all identified space as a challenge (or opportunity), either for working space (for arts-based businesses) or for meeting space. Additionally, phone and internet connectivity was often difficult. At the time of publishing, Telstra had communicated that an upgrade to a nearby phone tower would be taking place within 12 months.

Community

Participants were interviewed from across the Nowa Nowa community spectrum. Interviewees were located across all parts of the district, with some having lived in the area for multiple generations and some for only a few months. Participants also covered a wide range of age, with some aged above 75 and others below 30.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Without exception, the most common response to the question of Nowa Nowa's assets was the natural environment which provides the district with its natural beauty, visitor attractions and is the main reason residents reside there. Some of the examples given, included Lake Tyers, Bogggy Creek Gorge, Pettman's Beach and The Glasshouse. In addition, the location of the Nowa Nowa wetland within a RAMSAR listed site, the presence of endangered species, such as the green and golden bell frog, several bird species and many different flora species, present opportunities for tourism and research.

TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC

A common frustration from people in community and business was the difficulties with transport in the local area. There is limited public transport to travel within or beyond Nowa Nowa, so anyone without a car and license was at a disadvantage. It made it difficult (especially for young people) to travel elsewhere for work, further education, or activities.

Additionally, there are two halves of Nowa Nowa township that are disconnected from each other due to the highway running through it. Interviewees spoke of the frustration of speeding drivers, dangerous traffic incidents and drivers completely unaware they were driving through a town. Some opportunities suggested to overcome this traffic challenge (and due to the location of the town), included more creative and more consistent signage, traffic management solutions to encourage drivers to slow down and enjoy Nowa Nowa and using the cutting to promote the town.

HEALTH, WELLNESS AND AGING

Health, wellness and supporting ageing well was a popular topic. Some seniors were concerned about maintaining social connections to reduce isolation and maintain physical and mental wellbeing. The range of activities and community organisations in Nowa Nowa, are seen as both a strength of the town and as an opportunity as they are very active but somewhat limited. A number of people also talked about the number of people in the community who currently or have previously worked within the health industry and how this knowledge could benefit the wider community.

Local services and support was also discussed regularly. While Nowa Nowa and the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust both have a health centre, they each offer very limited GP and allied health services. For seniors to access retail and banking, transport is needed to nearby Lakes Entrance, Orbost or Bairnsdale, or the ability to access digital technology.

Nowa Nowa was seen as a potential wellness 'hub'. A number of people live in the area for its peace and quiet. Others commented on the thermal waters across from the Nowa Nowa Boat Ramp and raised the possibility of visitors using the area as a place to relax, reinvigorate and restore their mental wellbeing.

CONNECTIVITY

Access to reliable telecommunications and digital connectivity services and the ability to navigate new technologies are also a key concern for many members of the community. Depending on where a person is located in the Nowa Nowa area, phone and internet connectivity can be 'patchy', non-existent or great.

Community Cont.

NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY & ACCOMMODATION

Many residents reflected that with the Nowa Nowa Hotel closing, they have become more socially isolated. Without a night time dining venue in the town centre, people's participation in the community is limited and likely inhibits visitor spending at local businesses. Establishing such a space would have potential commercial, social and wellbeing benefits for the Nowa Nowa community.

Tourism businesses particularly, also reflected on the loss of the Hotel. These businesses also felt the loss of a third accommodation option as an issue.

PUBLIC SITE USAGE

Many people spoke passionately of the history of the town and the closure of the school and mills (the sites are still empty). While the School site is still managed by the Department of Education, it is Native Title land. The Adams Mill site is DEECA land. Many interviewees felt both are underutilised, are an eyesore (in the case of the mill site) and would like to see them be functional once more.

As the mill site is quite large and on the highway, many people felt strongly that it should be used for an event space. Others felt it should reflect its timber history in some way, perhaps supporting education as well. All felt that it should support the town.

The Nowa Nowa Community Development Group has recently taken on a three year lease of the school.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Several outdoor enthusiasts believe the surrounding area is ripe for promotion as an eco-tourism and/or adventure destination using existing assets such as Boggy Creek, Lake Tyers and the MTB Trails. There are a number of supporting projects already in existence or in motion that supports this idea: The East Gippsland Rail Trail runs through Nowa Nowa township and the Nowa Nowa MTB tracks to the north of the town. Additionally Destination Gippsland has developed a investment prospectus for an East Gippsland Aquatic Trail, with Nowa Nowa as the starting point. This has potential to positively impact tourism businesses.

Some thoughts included kayak tours from Nowa Nowa towards Lake Tyers and promoting Boggy Creek Gorge as a place to explore, similar to gorges in Northern Australia.

ABORIGINAL CULTURE

Residents from the across the age, demographic and location spectrum spoke respectfully of the link between Nowa Nowa, Lake Tyers and its Aboriginal history and culture. Older residents had often gone to school or work together.

Some spoke of the possibility of visitor economy possibilities (tours etc). Most spoke about a shared history, love of country and the possibility of sharing knowledge with future generations. This could potentially lead to economic benefit to the community through training, education and retail options.

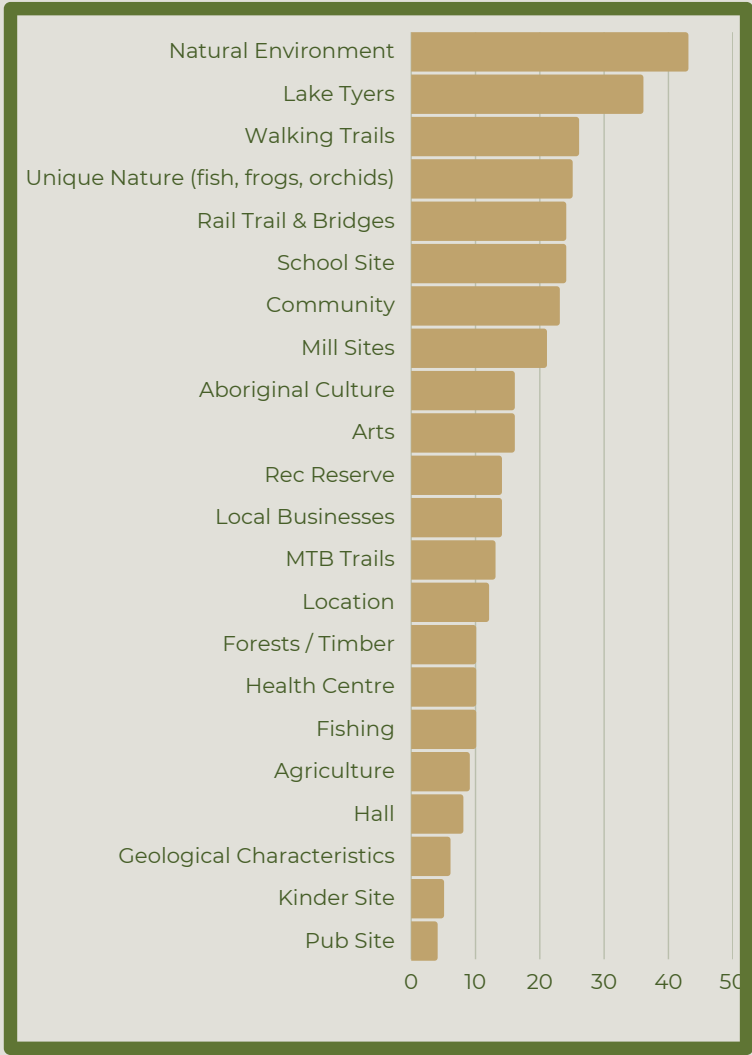
FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION

The upcoming fire season is understandably a concern for many residents. During the Black Summer fires eleven houses were lost in Wairewa. Currently, there is a CFA located at Wairewa and LTAT, with an additional CFA truck proposed for Nowa Nowa. Nowa Nowa itself cannot have a 'place of last resort' due to the nature of the surroundings (too many trees, not enough clearance), however Wairewa has the Community Hall and LTAT will have a relief centre (in design stage).

Many residents spoke of their concern of being able to exit the area due to the trees overhanging the highway, should fire get too close. Other residents spoke of the nature of burn-offs and their thoughts around the necessity or style used. There is an opportunity to be more inclusive of cultural practises and supportive of education.

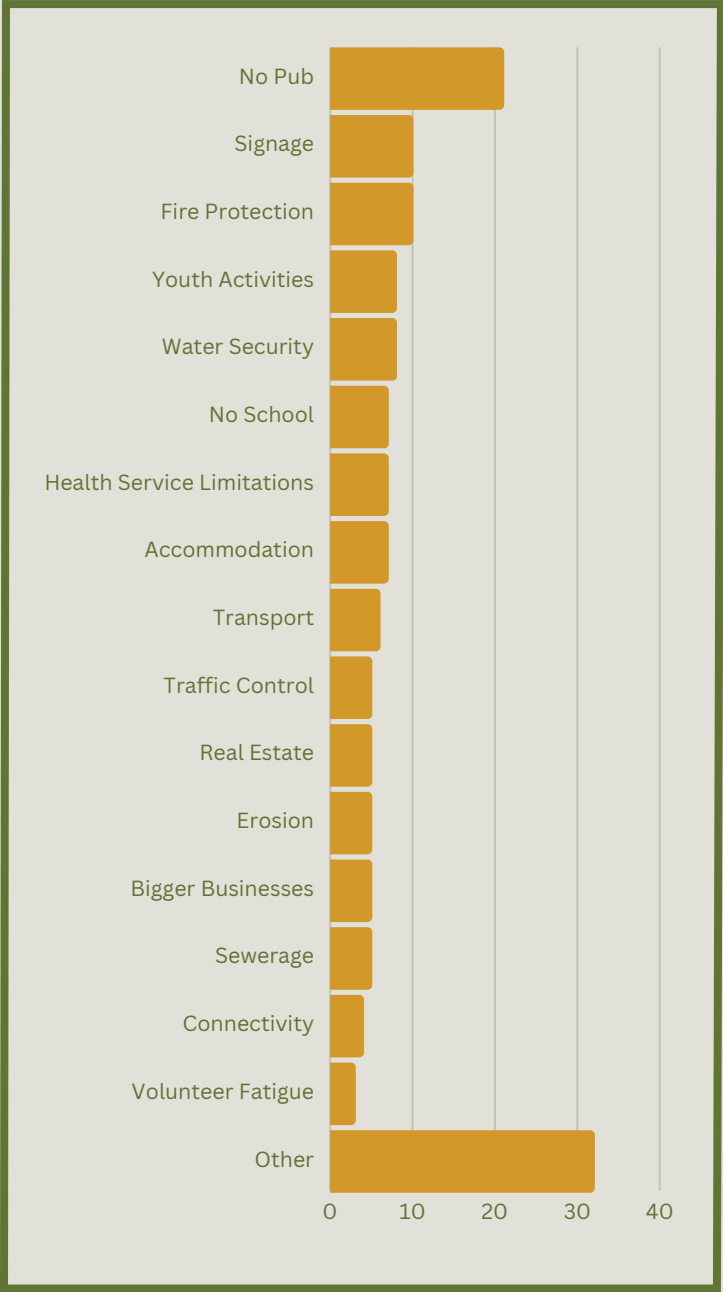
I love the wilderness and remoteness around Nowa Nowa. You can stay here for days and not see anyone.

Identified Assets



What are the assets? The bush, the farm, the climate, the ocean, the variety of nature experiences, in a nutshell - the lifestyle

Identified Challenges



PREVIOUS POLICIES, REPORTS & PLANS

There are very few community reports produced specifically for Nowa Nowa, although East Gippsland and Gippsland-related plans include topics ranging from tourism to health to agriculture and highlight potential strategic directions for Nowa Nowa and East Gippsland more broadly.

Nowa Nowa's economic, social and environmental activities are linked closely with the East Gippsland Shire Council and its activities.

The East Gippsland documents reviewed have included (in published date order):

East Gippsland Shire Council: Ageing Well in East Gippsland 2017-2030. East Gippsland aims to develop East Gippsland as an Age-Friendly community, investing in infrastructure upgrades and developing an East Gippsland Age-Friendly Network. The key elements of this plan are: transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health service and outdoor spaces and buildings and economic opportunities

East Gippsland Shire Council: East Gippsland Rail Trail Strategic Business Case 2019. This was research completed a number of years ago. It conservatively calculates the value of the East Gippsland rail trail visitors prior to surface and bridge works, strengths and weaknesses of the rail trail and suggested opportunities.

East Gippsland Shire Council: East Gippsland Community Vision 2020-2040, a long-term vision for the Shire, which encompasses several key messages that are shown in subsequent EGSC Strategies. The six strategic themes identified are: Community, Natural Environment, Local Economy, Land Use and Built Environment and Infrastructure and Governance.

East Gippsland Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032, which builds on the Community Vision 2040. It has nine focus areas:

1. Fostering business
2. High value and sustainable food and fibre sector
3. A unique and compelling tourist destination
4. An economy for young and future generations
5. Digital skills and connections
6. Arts, culture and heritage
7. Attractive place to live
8. Climate action leaders and;
9. A circular economy

East Gippsland Shire Natural Values Report June 2022. Assessment of East Gippsland Shire managed land for their ecological values, recommendation and tools for future management.

PREVIOUS POLICIES, REPORTS & PLANS cont.

Rural Land Use Strategy 2023. Developed with the vision: East Gippsland's rural land is integral to the economy, identity and social fabric of the Shire. A unique mix of natural resources, wilderness, lakes and coasts supports diverse rural industries, unparalleled rural lifestyle and visitor destinations and experiences. It has seven key principles:

1. Protect and enhance productive farmland and farmland of strategic significance to support food and fibre production
2. Facilitate innovation and growth of the agricultural sector to leverage competitive advantages and strengthen the economy
3. Encourage rural and nature based tourism to augment and diversify the Shire's agricultural and environmental values
4. Protect and enhance environmental values including biodiversity, landscapes and water quality
5. Respond to the challenges and threats associated with a changing climate and natural hazards.
6. Challenge the legacy of dwelling development and fragmentation of land in productive farming areas.
7. Support population retention for a sustainable and prosperous future in isolated rural communities.

Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2033. There are eight strategies that have been identified as key to delivering on the overall Strategy:

1. Identify pathways for professional development
2. Create new presentation opportunities
3. Foster a new generation of organisers and producers
4. Explore ways to provide access to required resources
5. Engage with the cultural life of the region and make it visible
6. Capture, preserve and share our diverse cultures
7. Identify opportunities across Council's activities, and
8. Optimise use of Council's resources.

Gippsland Lakes Complete Health: Strategic Plan 2023-2027. Priorities for the organisation include:

1. Enhanced access and experience.
2. Engaged and supported workforce
3. To Partnership and Influence
- and 4. Sustainability



PREVIOUS POLICIES, REPORTS & PLANS cont.

The Gippsland and Victorian documents reviewed include:

Destination Gippsland: Gippsland Tracks and Trails Feasibility Study September 2019. This study was conducted across the whole of Gippsland as a way to connect walking tracks, rail trails and water "trails". There were three different types of trail identified in the study - Signature, Regional and Local, of which Nowa Nowa features in all three.

Gippsland Regional Partnerships: Roadmap 2019. The main outcomes this roadmap outlines are:

- a. Skills and Education - increased aspiration and improved infrastructure for participation and success in education at all levels.
- b. Family and Community Wellbeing - a healthy and well community that live in safe, stimulating and supportive environments.
- c. Connectivity - the transport network and digital technologies are current and well-functioning.
- d. New Jobs and Industry - Gippsland has a strong economy with diverse local job opportunities.
- e. Food and Fibre- a global leader in production, innovation and technology. The sector is open for new investment.
- f. Energy and Resources - sustainable, secure and affordable energy and resources and considers new and emerging technologies.
- g. Visitor Economy and Tourism - Gippsland's tourism industry is vibrant, thriving and delivers outstanding visitor experiences.

Strong, Innovative, Sustainable: Strategy for Agriculture in Victoria 2020-2030. There are five themes to achieve this in the strategy: Recover (from the impacts of recent natural disasters and the pandemic), Grow (value and output), Modernise (through modernisation, investment and skills), Protect (in response to climate change, disease, weeds and scarcity of resource) and Promote (build confidence in sector both locally and internationally).

Regional Economic Development Strategy 2022. The REDS contribute to DJPR's vision for regional Victoria to be a resilient and thriving place to live, work and do business. Gippsland's strategic directions include:

1. To maximise the role of food and fibre in the local economy
2. To accelerate the role of advanced manufacturing capabilities in the region
3. To pursue opportunities emerging from the energy industry transition, including in clean and renewable energy and earth resources
4. To support growth and diversification in the visitor economy
5. To enhance regional specialisation in health care and social assistance.

Destination Gippsland Towards 2030- Gippsland Destination Management Plan (update) 2022 - 2030. The plan was revised from the 2019 plan and has the vision for continuing the drive towards a revitalised and resilient visitor economy. Priority projects are:

6. To create a World Class Natural Sanctuary, with several hero and emerging experiences across the region including those in Buchan, Cape Conran and the Dark Skies experience
7. To create a Lakes, Rivers and Coastal Paradise with hero and emerging experiences including recreational fishing and boating in the Gippsland Lakes and Marine Eco Tours in the Gippsland Lakes.
8. To support Paddock and Ocean Produce, with hero and emerging experiences including the brewery cluster in East Gippsland, Food and Drink strategy, trusted provenance brand, events and destination restaurants
9. To support Inspired Adventure with hero and emerging experiences including the Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail (which begins at Nowa Nowa), Gippsland Odyssey Trail, Traditional Owner- led experiences and Niche adventures.
10. To support and promote Vibrant Local Communities with hero and emerging experiences including public art development, activations of towns on 'hero' trails, performing arts, Sydney-Melbourne Touring Route, Village Clusters as drive journeys and night-time economy,

PREVIOUS POLICIES, REPORTS & PLANS cont.

Victorian Skills Plan for 2022 into 2023. The Skills Plan identifies eleven actions the Victorian Skills Authority will undertake to address priorities in skills provision. The actions are: 1. Start the VET journey at school, 2. Enable learners and workers to make informed skilling and career choices, 3. Expand opportunities and approaches for students to put theory into practice during their course, 4. Build foundation skills to enhance workforce participation, 5. Bridge the gender gap, 6. Build skills to support Victoria's clean economy intentions, 7. Create innovative solutions to support future skills development, 8. Align qualifications to new needs, 9. Build the VET workforce, 10. Expand reskilling and upskilling opportunities through skill sets, 11. Drive for higher skills and progression through education and training.

Gippsland Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2022. This is a 5 year strategy which covers the whole of Gippsland. The strategic directions and actions outlined have been divided into 10 focus areas.

- Natural Environment
- Water
- Cultural Heritage and Cultural Values
- Emergencies and Emergency Management
- Agriculture
- Health and Human Services
- Built Environment
- Community
- Knowledge
- Regional Economy

The Nowa Nowa district documents reviewed include:

Master Plan Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust 2010. The plan was put together on behalf of the LTAT community and is a formally adopted planning document, providing statutory direction. The plan identifies activities areas within LTAT (Community Precinct, Residential Precinct, Recreation Precinct, Heritage Conservation Precinct and Agricultural Precinct), potential commercial opportunities (native plant nursery, seed propagation, bush broker and cultural tourism) and infrastructure priorities (sewerage scheme, street signage, waste management, sustainable development and landscaping).

East Gippsland Shire: Nowa Nowa and District Community Plan 2012 - 2016. Put together by East Gippsland Shire, in conjunction with the Nowa Nowa community and external agencies such as CFA, DSE and Landcare. The top four priorities identified are: recreation activity support (such as transport and playground equipment upgrade), employment and learning support, natural environment protection and maintenance, and health and wellbeing advocacy and provision

East Gippsland Shire: Nowa Nowa Open Space Management Plan December 2015. This plan is an extension of the Nowa Nowa Community Plan. It relates specifically to the use of the public space areas within the Nowa Nowa district. Top five priorities identified are: Installation of jetty and carpark lighting, construction of a toilet on high ground, construction of a bbq on high ground, maintenance of carpark surface and signage to designate traffic flow at boat ramp

GLAWAC: Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan - Lake Tyers State Park 2018. This plan was put together jointly by the (locally-based) Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government.

Goals in the plan are:

- The land, water and cultural values of Lake Tyers State Park are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners. This includes protection, restoration, management, monitoring and conservation of the Park
- Gunaikurnai increase their connection with the area through management, operations and the opportunity to undertake cultural practices. Visitor and community enjoyment, experience and understanding of the park are enhanced by joint management
- Joint management of Lake Tyers State Park operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role. Community and stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the park.

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Visitor Economy and Tourism

There are significant natural, man-made visitor (rail trail, MTB park) and cultural assets around the Nowa Nowa area. Currently, there are limited abilities to access these assets, for visitors to spend money and stay within the area and discover the unique natural assets that the area holds.

Three Visitor Economy and Tourism Innovation Opportunities have been identified given the assets of the area, interview and quantitative data and challenges identified.

1. Nature Based Tourism

Basic Proposition

The natural and cultural assets of the Nowa Nowa area are outstanding. However, there is limited ability to access them as a whole (no connection between rail trail, lake and MTB Park) and no visitor economy centred around those natural assets.

While Nowa Nowa, in general, supports visitor immersion in nature, in practise, this is limited. This workshop should discover how to connect the visitor to the natural assets in and around the area.

Key Assets:

The Nowa Nowa area is located within a RAMSAR listed wetland and is surrounded by the Lake Tyers State Park, with Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust to the south.

The township itself lies beside Boggy Creek Gorge and at the top of Lake Tyers, with the East Gippsland Rail Trail running through the township and continuing on towards Orbost.

There is considerable cultural history and significance around the area, with Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (Bung Yarnda, LTAT) privately owned Aboriginal Land. There is support from the wider community for the LTAT community.

The Nowa Nowa area has some existing infrastructure that supports visitor immersion in nature, including: MTB trails, camping sites, two "glamping-style" caravan parks and walking and bike trails .

Nowa Nowa Futures

Strategic Competitive Advantages:

A nature-based tourism experience within and around Nowa Nowa is well-placed to take advantage of current assets and future planning.

Currently, Nowa Nowa sits at the beginning of the Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail and is part of the Gippsland Tracks and Trails and Dark Skies plans. It (particularly Lake Tyers/Bung Yarnda areas) also strongly features in GLAWAC planning documents.

What Are The Challenges?

There are limited visitor services (such as accommodation and food options) and public infrastructure (public toilets and bbqs) in the Nowa Nowa area to support visitor growth. In addition, while Nowa Nowa is surrounded by stunning bushland, it has been noted in many interviews that the campgrounds and access tracks are poorly maintained.

Workshop Design Principles:

The workshop needs to identify what nature-based tourism activity/ies could exist in the Nowa Nowa area and what could be developed. The type of infrastructure and support processes need to be identified, both from the surrounding businesses, existing tourism and Government bodies and local community.



2. Unique Nature

Basic Proposition

Nowa Nowa has some incredible natural assets but limited opportunities to access them for viewing, immersion, research and educating.

This opportunity is to provide a supporting platform to access some of the unique natural assets that the Nowa Nowa area has.

This workshop needs to build on the existing relationship that the science community has with the area.

Key Assets:

The RAMSAR wetland that includes Nowa Nowa attracts many endangered fauna species, including frogs, fish and birdlife.

Nowa Nowa also sits at the junction of freshwater Boggy Creek and saline Lake Tyers, attracting breeding fish that often live long healthy lives and attract fishers from across the country.

The Nowa Nowa area has interesting geology which in some parts is similar to Buchan (limestone) and others contain iron ore (Wairewa). This diversity has led to the discovery of fossils at Hospital Creek, thermal water at Nowa Nowa and jasper at Boggy Creek.

Strategic Advantages:

While there are other parts of East Gippsland that are RAMSAR listed, none provide specific opportunities for study, viewing as well as education.

Over the years, Nowa Nowa has attracted a small number of environmental education students observing its unique characteristics. It has also attracted birdwatchers, frog enthusiasts, cavers and those interested in cultural history

What Are The Challenges?

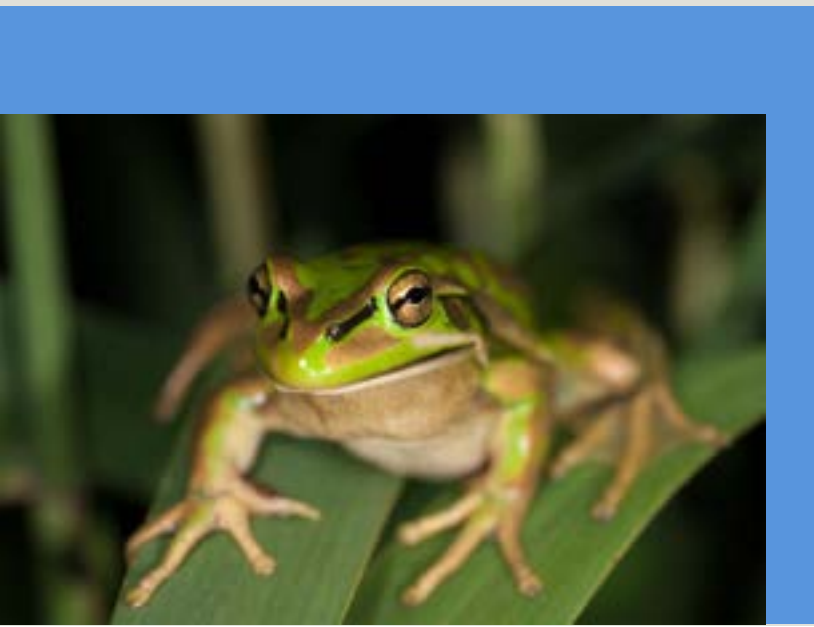
There is currently limited public infrastructure (public toilets, bbqs) in the Nowa Nowa area and limited visitor services (tours, accommodation, food options).

Workshop Design Principles:

This workshop revolves around the unique flora and fauna that the Nowa Nowa area has and how they can be visited, observed and maintained.

The workshop needs to consider education, tourism, wellness and cultural (and others) opportunities given the variety and breadth of natural assets.

The workshop will also need to consider current strategic advantages. These were highlighted a number of times during the interview process.



3. Visitor Economy

Basic Proposition

Provide existing and future visitors with a reason to prolong stay, book future stays and recommend the area to friends and family.

Build on the existing visitation of the area while showcasing the agriculture, history, culture and creativity that exists within the Nowa Nowa area. This will also provide local businesses, sole operators and individuals a hub to showcase new goods.

Key Assets:

Nowa Nowa is located 15 minutes east of Lakes Entrance and Bruthen and 20 minutes west of Orbost on the Princes Highway. It attracts visitors due to its location on the East Gippsland Rail Trail, its peace and quiet and its fishing and birdwatching.

Currently, there is a General Store which sells a variety of goods including fuel, a cafe, two 'glamping-style' caravan parks in the township, a boutique gallery in Wairewa and several airbnb-style accommodation around the area.

Strategic Advantages:

Nowa Nowa has an existing visitor demographic that currently needs to drive outside the area to access any night-time economy, retail options and any diverse accommodation options.

To keep these visitors staying and spending within the area, it is important that there is diversity of accommodation, retail and hospitality options. This could also showcase local agriculture, history, creativity, skills and training.

What Are The Challenges?

Nowa Nowa is limited in land and suitable building availability. Most of the land is either private land or public (Parks Vic or Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action). Most buildings are residential, rather than commercial. Additionally, training options are currently limited but could be pursued with various providers.

The highway in Nowa Nowa runs directly through the middle of town, creating a split in the centre. This is an ongoing issues for many businesses and residents due to the town being bypassed (lost income) and potential hazards.

Workshop Design Principles:

The workshop needs to revolve around the current visitors to the Nowa Nowa area, why they are visiting the area and how can they contribute to the economy of Nowa Nowa - what do they want and need. In addition, how can existing operators, artisans, creators and makers contribute their skills.

One additional consideration is around training and skill development and how these can be incorporated.



4. Alternative Education

There is a large demographic of the Nowa Nowa area who did not finish (secondary) school, are disengaged from school and/or are looking for alternatives to traditional teaching methods. All of these groups need an education platform so that they are self-reliant.

Basic Proposition

Currently, there are a large group of people in the Nowa Nowa area who are looking to learn new skills and who are at or above high school age but have disengaged from school.

The group does not fit usual education systems and has a need to be self-reliant, but does not need Certificates.

This opportunity is to provide these residents with the education platform to learn that is most appropriate for the wider community.

Key Assets:

Nowa Nowa Primary School, while closed and decommissioned, is on Native Title land and has been leased by the Nowa Nowa Community Development Group with a maintenance agreement in place.

The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (LTAT) community has shown interest in protecting and conserving cultural stories, language and history through storytelling and education. This is part of the 2010 Master Plan.

There are multiple people in the area who are directly involved in education or have also shown interest in sharing skills and knowledge.

Strategic Competitive Advantages:

Nowa Nowa is well-placed to offer an alternative to traditional schooling. Its location - in the middle of East Gippsland and outside of larger, more well-known towns and nearby Lake Tyers has meant many people (of many ages) have disengaged from traditional schooling.

In addition, during interviews, it was highlighted that there was a need for various skills within the community. An alternative education option would provide the community with the ability to learn the skills they need to be self-reliant.

What Are The Challenges?

While education in various forms is top of mind for the Nowa Nowa and LTAT community, there is a large demographic of the area who have been disengaged with schooling for a period of time for various reasons.

Workshop Design Principles:

The workshop needs to consider the age groups, demographics and skills of potential learners as well as the ability and willingness of some within the community to share knowledge.

The workshop needs to consider the various deliveries of education and which might be suitable for the community, given the past disengagement from education.

In addition, location/s needs to be carefully considered to ensure the community is supported.



5. Primary Industry

Some of the primary industries around the Nowa Nowa area include apiary, agriculture (including snow peas, zucchini and broccoli), agricultural lime and native plant growing.

This opportunity considers the location of the area, along with local businesses, the quantitative data (showing the agriculture adds the most value to the area) and some of the challenges identified by interviewees.

Basic Proposition

To establish a collaborative, supporting or partnering industry for the existing primary industry businesses within the Nowa Nowa areas.

The location of Nowa Nowa on the highway is a huge asset for the industry, in between Sydney and Melbourne. However, most packing and transport is completed in Lindenow - a key growing district in East Gippsland - or is understaffed.

Additionally, many businesses in the area spoke of their wishes to use no, or minimal sprays, to protect the wildlife and bees. Fertilizers were still used, but minimally.

Key Assets:

There are several key growers, micro-ag and supplementary-ag businesses in the Nowa Nowa and Wairewa area. Of these, most highlight the fertile soils, surrounding forests, location on the highway, and growing conditions in the Wairewa valley as important to their success.

All businesses are family-run enterprises, hiring contractors when necessary. Some businesses take or send produce to wholesale markets in Sydney and Melbourne, while others send as far as southern NSW. There are three who offer farm-gate retail and/or market selling

Strategic Advantages:

Rather than each of the businesses working individually on all parts of their businesses, providing a hub would provide the ability to support, collaborate and/or partner with the existing businesses. This would then allow them to grow at a sustainable rate.

What Are The Challenges?

There are various challenges that are highlighted by the agricultural businesses currently, including: varroa mite, soil-borne diseases, moths, staffing issues, succession planning and water security.

Other challenges that may be specific to this proposition include collaboration and partnership with other businesses, transport and packing.

Workshop Design Principles:

Explore the current growing, packing and transport considerations and challenges to see what, if any potential collaborations could occur.

Considerations would include current assets and challenges and location of farming in the area.





6. Culture and Creative Arts

There is a strong cultural and creative arts history within the Nowa Nowa community. The history of Bung Yarnda with its connection to Nowa Nowa along with the concentration of creative people in the area provide an interesting opportunity for the district.

Basic Proposition

This workshop aims to bring together the individuals who are currently employed within creative arts, hobbyists and those who are willing to share skills and knowledge.

The aim is to establish a platform and/or outlet for creative and cultural pursuits that can assist in driving the Nowa Nowa region economy.

Key Assets:

Over the years, Nowa Nowa has established itself as a cultural and creative arts hub. This has stemmed from not only the long-running events (Yarnfest, Nowa Nowa Nudes and various music events), local galleries and various identities associated with the town, but also the existing cultural (GunaiKurnai) knowledge.

More recently, the Lemon Hill Art Gallery was established, a mural in the tunnel, along with other music events, Stories of Influence and East Gippsland Winter Festival events. Alongside the events has seen the arrival of several creative individuals. Some of these individuals pursue art as an income and others as a hobby. Others see the township as a creative hub as a reason for moving to Nowa Nowa.

Strategic Advantages:

Nowa Nowa already has an identity as a cultural and creative area. This will support this proposition going forward.

Nowa Nowa's strong connection to not only it's history, but the surrounding country and the wider community is a strong advantage.

What Are The Challenges?

There are some recent creative pursuits in the Nowa Nowa area that have caused some community backlash. This will mean that any future plans will need to be carefully considered and potentially be economic drivers.

The highway in Nowa Nowa runs directly through the middle of town, creating a split in the centre. This is an ongoing issues for many businesses and residents due to the town being bypassed (lost income) and potential hazards.

Workshop Design Principles:

The workshop will need to consider how the platform and/or outlet drives the Nowa Nowa area economy, specifically interacting with the visitor economy.

Other considerations could be funding streams and longevity.

7. Health and Ageing Well

Nowa Nowa has an ageing population who is passionate about its community, including their wellbeing. Currently, most of the community must travel outside of the area for the majority of its GP appointments, allied health and aged care.

Basic Proposition

To look at the current, future and potential health services in the Nowa Nowa area.

Many residents spoke of the limited services that Nowa Nowa currently has a desire to access a variety of health services locally. Some residents also expressed a desire to stay at home, or around Nowa Nowa as they get older.

The opportunity is to provide a health system that is of greatest benefit to the entire community.

Key Assets:

Nowa Nowa has an ageing, but active community who are passionate about the wellbeing not only of their surrounding environment, but each other. This has led to various social and wellbeing groups, such as Men's Shed, walking groups, women's social groups and a textiles group. Additionally, within the community there are a number of individuals who have currently or have previously worked within the healthcare industry.

Both Nowa Nowa and Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust have a health centre with a GP for a half day every Wednesday and limited allied health every few weeks.

The Nowa Nowa health centre was original set-up by the community so there is a sense of community-ownership and passion towards healthcare.

Within the health centre, there are a number of patient-review rooms currently not being used that could be utilised.



Strategic Advantages:

With an ageing, but active community, Nowa Nowa already has people who are engaged and passionate about health.

A health system that operates well would not only keep older people within the area, it would attract younger people.

What Are The Challenges?

There is currently a health centre in Nowa Nowa, but it is underutilised, causing members of the community to travel to other towns for medical services. Some relationships with medical professionals will be long-term.

There are employment challenges specific to the health care industry which could mean that future plans need to be carefully considered.

Workshop Design Principles:

The workshop will need to consider current health care within the area, along with current and potential future assets and challenges.