

Brewarrina

Community Development Plan



May 2021

Foreword

Brewarrina is a town in north-west New South Wales, on the banks of the Barwon River in the Brewarrina Shire Local Government Area. The name Brewarrina originates from 'burru waranha', a Weilwan name for a species of Acacia, Cassia tree, "Acacia clumps", "a native standing" or "place where wild gooseberry grows". The township was established in 1863, however Aboriginal history has extended and evolved since the Dreamtime.

Brewarrina was one of the great inter-tribal meeting places of eastern Australia for First Nations people. Brewarrina is home to the Creator's Fish Traps (Baiaime's Ngunnhu) and is a site of significant cultural and spiritual meaning for the Ngemba people.

The participation of Brewarrina in the Rural Aid Stronger Futures Our Towns makeover initiative provides a wonderful opportunity to continue to develop our community resources, support community volunteers and peak groups, and ensure our town remains viable for the young people of our community to call home. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate and work with Rural Aid to foster community spirit and rebuild pride in our town.

Acknowledgements



The formulation of this Community Development Plan was initiated and funded by Rural Aid as part of their 'Ten Towns' Makeover Initiative, of which Brewarrina was a winner. Facilitation of the community engagement process and preparation of the plan was undertaken by Peter Kenyon from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. and assisted by Jen Curnow-Trotter and Grant Miskimmin from Rural Aid and coordinated by Heather Finlayson, Claire Priestley, Vivian Slack-Smith, John George, Kathryn Hertslet, Donna Jeffries, Lili Shearer, Aroha Groves and Heather McMullen.

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Special thanks to volunteers of the Brewarrina Historical Society and the many passionate Brewarrina community members who so generously gave their time, knowledge and experiences.

Finally, this Action Plan acknowledges the Traditional Custodians, the Ngemba People, and Nations of the country within the Brewarrina Local Government Area including the Murrawarri, Wailwan, Gomeroi, Baranbinja, Kooma (Koamu), Kula and Yuwaalaraay Peoples.

Our Story



Our community of Brewarrina, known locally as “Bre”, is located in the outback region of NSW on the banks of the Barwon/Darling River. It is the shire headquarters for the Brewarrina LGA which covers an area of 19,000 square kilometers and extends to the Queensland border.

The current town population is 1150 people. The town is located within the traditional lands of the Ngemba people, however other Nations of people that gathered at the Ngunnhu with strong kinship to Bre include Murrawarri, Wailwan, Gomerioi, Baranbinja, Kooma (Koamu), Kula and Yuwaalaraay Peoples. Brewarrina has major historical significance, as the site was one of the great inter-tribal meeting places of eastern Australia, often involving up to 5,000 people. Some archaeologists believe the traps are 40,000 years old and thus the oldest surviving human-made structure in the world. These elaborate stone constructions in the riverbed were utilised to feed large numbers of people during the significant ceremonial gatherings. In 1859, a riverboat called Gemini, reached the township. This opened the possibility of the township as a port, and by the early 1860s Brewarrina was recognised as the furthest navigable point on the Barwon/Darling River. Brewarrina became a port for shipping wool to Adelaide via the Ba-wun, Darling and Murray Rivers. The “town of Brewarrina” became established in 1861 with the first land sale in 1862. Due to the number of Cobb & Co coach services passing through the town, commercial life boomed in the 1870’s.

The unique Barwon Bridge opened in 1888 with the impetus for its construction being the capturing of the NSW wool trade from the river paddle steamers and directing it away from Melbourne and Adelaide to Sydney. The bridge is only one of two surviving examples of the first series of lift bridges in New South Wales. Today Brewarrina acts as a service town for a strong agricultural sector which is a significant producer of wool, livestock, cotton and grain crops. Cultural tourism is a small, but growing and important economic sector.

The history of Brewarrina reflects the national pain experienced by Indigenous people due to colonisation in Australia. The Hospital Creek massacre and removal of people to the Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission are two examples of this. This was the largest formally established Mission in NSW, opened as early as 1887 and managed by the Aboriginal Welfare/Protection Board through forced relocation, to assimilate Aboriginal people through segregation.

Today there is a genuine commitment in the community to build a vibrant and positive town future, physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and economically, for all Brewarrina community members.

Our Vision

Our vision is to be a united and inspired community, valuing country and heritage, working together for the future of our people and lands.

Our Goals

Our vision is to be a united and inspired community, valuing country and heritage, working together for the future of our people and lands.

Below are the nine community goals which guide our community aspirations:

- To provide a safe and attractive living and working environment that will attract skilled people and families and to help grow our population base.
- To maintain and continually expand our lifestyle, training and employment options and opportunities.
- To actively pursue new economic and entrepreneurial opportunities that will strengthen and diversify our local economy and business life, especially related to agriculture, service industries and tourism.
- To improve the presentation and interpretation of the Aboriginal Fish Traps and adjoining reserve to a standard that reflects its international significance.
- To develop and promote our community as a desirable place to stop, stay, invest, experience, and reside.
- To create an environment where our young people feel included, supported and empowered and will consider returning to our community for work, with access to enterprise development, family and lifestyle opportunities.
- To preserve, maintain and strengthen our significant Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage, cultural, sporting and infrastructure assets.
- To achieve enhanced recognition of Brewarrina for its rich Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture and heritage, its natural assets, and its position as the start of the Darling River Run.
- To promote and support active citizenship and community leadership.



Our Guiding Principles

The following six guiding values and attitudes provide the context for our community's identified actions and initiatives:

Sense of community – ensuring all our community members experience a deep sense of connection, inclusion, safety, contribution, and pride relating to our rich heritage, uniqueness, achievements, and opportunities.

Embracing new opportunities – building upon local assets, capacities, and creativity; and facilitating opportunities and experiences that enable all our residents to see and experience their community as a place of opportunity.

Collaboration – committing to a high level of community and stakeholder involvement, cooperation, partnership, and networking.

Respect for environment – valuing and protecting our river, natural environment, and its diverse and prolific wildlife.

Respect for heritage – appreciating our unique heritage, stories and traditions and their importance in community and economic development.

Our Challenges

Like many small inland rural communities, our community faces and needs to respond creatively to a series of demographic, social, economic, and environmental issues. The town has experienced decline in population, lifestyle options and business life over the last 20 years. The recent seven year drought period exasperated this trend and fostered a diverse range of community challenges, which include:

- Difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled and professional staff willing to reside in a community with limited housing options.
- A high local unemployment rate compounded by a lack of local employment opportunities with limited employment pathways for young people, especially young women.
- Low incomes - 42% of residents receive a government allowance or pension.
- Intergenerational poverty and trauma experienced by some community members.
- Considerable loss of First Peoples heritage and artifacts, especially the Fish Traps site.
- Sad state of heritage assets.
- Lack of water efficiency.
- Limited visitor attractions and accommodation – currently viewed by many as a lunch stop between Lightning Ridge and Bourke
- A tired main street appearance.
- No local Enterprise Facilitator, community action development groups or chamber of commerce.
- Limited on-line presence.
- Decline in number of community gatherings or special events.
- Volunteer fatigue and declining civic engagement.
- Cultural, stakeholder and factional divisions within the community.
- Business loss and gaps.
- Online shopping and lack of support for local businesses.
- Lack of east-west bus service between Bourke, Brewarrina, and Walgett.
- High freight costs. • Declining school numbers.
- Absentee landowners



Our Assets

Social Networks

- CWA.
- Sporting life and clubs – bowling, tennis, rugby union and league, golf, touch football, swimming, water skiing, volleyball, basketball, clay target, fishing, Bre Fit gym.
- Outlying Community Clubs.
- Churches – Anglican, Catholic, Brethren, Seven Day Adventist.
- Brewarrina RSL Club – key social meeting space with 600 members.
- Brewarrina Show and Rodeo Society and Brewarrina Jockey Club.
- Brewarrina Historical Society.
- Friday night youth group.
- Saturday morning Mens Group

People

- Brewarrina Circus initiative.
- Youthfulness of population- 25% of population is 0-14 year old.
- Brewarrina Central School- 150 students.
- St Patrick's Catholic School- 40 students.
- Council youth worker.
- Significant cultural artists.
- Free swimming pool entry.
- Reputation as a welcoming friendly community

Physical

- Location - Kamilaroi Highway Route. Also, the shortest route from Adelaide to Brisbane is through Brewarrina.
- River location- its heritage importance, scenic views, a bird 'hot spot' and fishing opportunities.
- Four Mile and Boat Ramp riverside reserves.
- Imminent sealing of the Hebel (Qld border) to Brewarrina via Goodooga creating an alternative and quicker inland route.
- Other Shire villages- Goodooga, Weilmoringle, Angledod, Goongolgon.
- Facilities - oval, tennis courts, netball/ basketball courts, racecourse/ showgrounds, community centre, 18-hole golf course, olympic size pool and canteen.
- Narran Lakes.
- Culgoa National Park.
- Local parks- Weir Park., Memorial Park, Old Park.
- Licensed Aerodrome – sealed runway, pilot activated lights.

Our Assets

Institutions

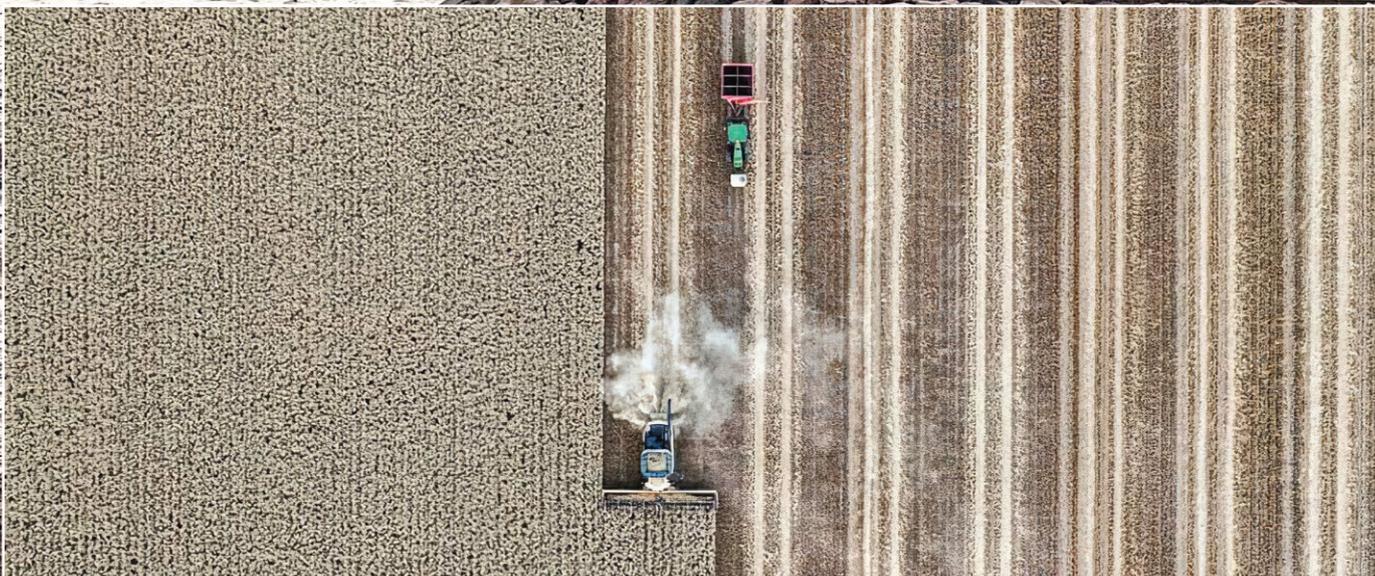
- Part of the Brewarrina Shire Council - local office and staff.
- Interagency meetings.
- Mission Australia Women's and Men's Safe Houses.
- Brewarrina Aboriginal Child & Family Centre.
- Medical Services, including the Hospital, Aboriginal Medical Service and the Ochre Medical Centre.
- Orana Haven Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre.

Economic

- Diversity of retail businesses-2 supermarkets, post office, pharmacy, butcher, bank, farm supplies, restaurant, petrol station, coffee shop.
- Full range of tradies.
- Services- dentist,
- Businesses - hotel, caravan parks, cabins, motel and accommodation.
- Merriman Shearing School.
- Strong agricultural Sector.
- Emerging tourism sector.
- Bus service 4 times a week between Dubbo and Brewarrina
- Streetscape Masterplan.
- Brewarrina Destination Management Plan 2019-22.
- Brewarrina Shire Community Strategic Plan 2026.

Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

- So many 'firsts' in terms of human development including internationally significant Aboriginal Fish Traps.
- Connection to, and contributions of the Ngemba, Murrawarri, Wailwan, Gomeroi, Baranbinja, Kooma (Koamu), Kula and Yuwaalaraay Peoples.
- Authentic Aboriginal culture and heritage- central to the Dreamtime creation stories relating to the formation of the inland river systems.
- Concentration of Aboriginal attractions and sites in and around Brewarrina: Fish Traps, ochre beds, Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum, Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission site, stone quarry and Hospital Creek massacre site- each with stories to share.
- Connection with various movie makers, authors and local celebrities.
- Events- Agricultural Field Day, Barwon River Rodeo, Bre Big Fish Competition, Brewarrina Races, NAIDOC celebrations, Biaini's Ngunnhu Festival.
- State Heritage listed infrastructure - Old Barwon Bridge, Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission.
- Eastern end of the Darling River Run.
- Ngunnhu Fish Traps
- High quality murals capturing local heritage.



Our Strategies & Actions

Theme One

Revitalisation of the main street

ACTIONS

1

- 1. Revisit, update and implement the 'Streetscape Master Plan', to enhance the town's first impressions as a vibrant, interesting, and safe destination that is worthy of a stop and exploration.**

Recommended actions include-

- Planting of extensive shade trees- consider coral gums.
- Painting of empty shops and utilising shop windows.
- Covering up graffiti and installing more bins.
- Repairing and leveling of footpaths.
- Refreshing signage.
- Removing mesh from windows.
- Incorporating connections to the river/fish identity.
- Renewing existing and creating more seating.
- Rejuvenating garden beds.
- Installing directional signage.
- Erecting bunting and banners.
- Encouraging heritage restoration and displaying of heritage photo information story boards throughout CBD to create a 'Walk of History'.
- Creating outdoor gathering spaces including new healing ground/garden.
- Upgrading of playground/park for locals and visitors, including installation of barbecues.
- Instigating attractive solar evening lighting.
- Developing effective street cleaning processes.
- Standardising of fencing around buildings.
- Replacement of SES building fence and regular lawn cutting.
- Creating an interesting mainstreet 'Selfie Spot'.
- Strengthening the visual and physical link between the VIC / Aboriginal Cultural Museum and the Fish Traps.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

- 2. Utilise local artists to design, develop and implement a public arts strategy to expand the number and impact of current mural and sculpture installations. Begin with a street mural on the historical shop fronts and the blank wall of the old bank building capturing main street in its heyday.**

Timeframe: Immediate

- 3. Construct and upgrade public toilets in the Brewarrina town area.**

Timeframe: Short term

- 4. Instigate a program of community workshops utilising local artists/tradespeople to develop unique street furniture and features through upcycling metal and wooden pallets.**

Timeframe: Immediate

- 5. Identify and support strategic tasks that could be undertaken by the Rural Aid Volunteer team Orana Haven Drug and Rehabilitation Centre and R.E.D.I programs in terms of mainstreet beautification and enhancement.**

Timeframe: Immediate

Theme One

Revitalisation of the Mainstreet

ACTIONS

1

6. Foster greater 'streetlife feel' through -

- Urging more business and community activity on pavements.
- Fostering alfresco dining.
- Introducing more mainstreet community events like markets and music events.
- Encouraging coffee and food shops to stay open longer and more regularly.
- Improving and coordinating business opening hours, especially after 2pm.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

LEAD GROUP

**Brewarrina Council
Rural Aid Committee**

OTHER PARTNERS

**Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum
Visitor Information and Exhibition Museum
Brewarrina Local Land Council
Business Community
Outback Arts
RSL Club**

Theme Two

Development of Tourism Potential

ACTIONS

2

1. Implement key recommendations of the 'Brewarrina Shire Destination Management Plan 2019-22' as relates to the townsite of Brewarrina, including the following priorities-

- Building an identity with tourism opportunities related to the Barwon River and the start of the 'Darling River Run' - with emphasis on access to superb river frontage and fishing with free riverside camping areas.
- Developing the walkway along the river proposal.
- Offering quality Aboriginal tourism attractions and experiences (see Theme 7 below).
- Enhancing Brewarrina town appearance and beautification.
- Developing the VIC into a tourist attraction in its own right.
- Evolving the former railway land as a recreation precinct.
- Identifying and developing new tourism attractions, experiences, and activities.
- Improving external promotion, especially via social media.
- Enhancing marketing, customer service, town storytelling and operator networking.
- Participating in regional touring route marketing initiatives.
- Increasing number and diversity of accommodation options including the following possibilities- a new motel, boutique riverside accommodation, glamping, more self-contained cabins and upgrading the historic hotels in Brewarrina.
- Creating strategic bird watching infrastructure.
- Improving interpretive signage at all tourist spot locations, including the inclusion of an interactive App system.

Timeframe: Immediate to medium term

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Two

Development of Tourism Potential

ACTIONS

2. Investigate, purchase, and reinvent the old, un-used heritage buildings to create a new space for the Historical Society and community use.

Timeframe: Immediate

3. Undertake a town and regional signage audit and implement improvements including out of town advertising, town entry statements and directional signage.

Timeframe: Immediate to short term

4. Reactivate a calendar of special events including show, rodeo, races, music events and the Surf Boat Race.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

LEAD GROUP

Brewarrina Shire Council
Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum
Visitor Information and Exhibition Museum
Brewarrina Aboriginal Local Land Council
Rural Aid
Brewarrina Historical Society

OTHER PARTNERS

Orana Regional Development Australia
Brewarrina Show and Rodeo Society
RSL Club
Destination NSW
Destination Network Country and Outback
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service /
Office of Environment and Heritage
Kamilaroi Highway Marketing Group
Darling River Run Marketing Group
Outback Arts

Theme Three

Restoration of the Aboriginal Fish Traps Site & Development of River Facilities

ACTIONS

1. Convene gatherings of relevant local, state, and federal stakeholders to agree on an action plan and timetable for the restoration, promotion, and public access to the Fish Traps site and adjoining reserve to a standard that reflects its international significance.

Timeframe: Immediate

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Three

Restoration of the Aboriginal Fish Traps Site and Development of River Facilities

ACTIONS



2. Implement an action plan for the Fish Traps site based on recommendations of 'Brewarrina Shire Destination Management Plan 2019-22' namely

- Improving the quality of the presentation of the area. It needs to reflect the international significance of the site.
- Providing quality interpretation of the Fish Traps and other points of interest within the precinct.
- Developing visitor facilities – picnic facilities, viewing area/s and walking tracks.
- Utilising the reserve for events and activities such as the Baiame's Ngunnhu Festival by providing power and water to the site and identifying locations for portable stages, portable amenities, food vans etc. on or adjoining the Reserve.
- Creating pedestrian linkages between the Brewarrina VIC, the Fish Traps, Ochre Beds, and the Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum.
- Enabling access for people with mobility issues.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

3. Lobby for the inclusion of the Fish Traps on the World Heritage List.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

4. Design and create the River Walkway as a priority project - a looped interpretative and sculpture walk along the levee around the ephemeral lagoons in the area bounded by Doyle and Young Streets to the east of the Fish Traps, a viewing deck overlooking the Weir and interpretative information on the natural environment, the Weir and fish way, Fish Traps and the wreck of the Wandering Jew.

Timeframe: Short to medium term

5. Implement improvements at the Barwon Historic Bridge and Boat Ramp Reserve – picnic facilities, fixed seating, primitive camping, boat ramp, jetty and new toilet block. Four Mile Reserve - better access, facility upgrades, barbecues, night lighting, primitive camping, boat ramp and jetty, picnic facilities, fire pit, fixed seating, network of tracks and interpretative signage.

Timeframe: Immediate to medium term

6. Promote river tourism opportunities including river cruises, canoe/boat /stand-up paddleboard hire and cultural kayaking on the river to 'tell the stories'.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

LEAD GROUP

**Brewarrina Shire Council.
Brewarrina Local Aboriginal Land Council.
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service /
Office of Environment and Heritage**

OTHER PARTNERS

**Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum
Visitor Information and Exhibition Museum
Relevant State Government authorities.
Rural Aid.**

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Four

Development of Youth Opportunities

ACTIONS



- 1. Formulate and implement a plan to enhance opportunities for young women in Brewarrina, including the attraction of the 'Shooting Stars' program, (the female equivalent of Clontarf) and the 'Girls on Fire' initiative of NSW Rural Fire Service.**

<http://shootingstars.com.au/>
<https://www.girlsonfire.com.au/>

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

- 2. Create and support a Youth Action Council.**

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

- 3. Introduce activities through the schools that build active citizenship and leadership development opportunities for Brewarrina young people to identify and implement what they care about, drawing upon programs that have been utilised in other small towns; namely-**

- 'RuMAD?' - Are You Making a Difference? (Bank of I.D.E.A.S.)
- 'Community Minded Kids' (Community Minds)
- 'Dream Seeds' (Youthrive)

Timeframe: Short term

- Investigate and instigate action that enhances youth recreation space options especially related to greater use of the pool (waterpark facilities, diving board, barbecues, more events etc.), parks, and the skate park (including more shade, and in-ground bowl). In addition, develop an action plan for turning the former railway land along Arthur Hall VC Way / Naveena Street into parkland including the construction of a BMX / MTB pump track.

Timeframe: Immediate to medium term

- 4. Generate community interest and support for the development of more junior sports activities and options like soccer and squash.**

Timeframe: Short term and ongoing

LEAD GROUP

Brewarrina Shire Council

OTHER PARTNERS

**NSW Rural Fire Service
Local Schools**



Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Five

Retention and Expansion of Business and Local Job Opportunities

ACTIONS



1. Create and support a position for a local entrepreneurial development support eco-system, including employment of an Enterprise Facilitator (EF) that can assist with local enterprise ideas and opportunities to become reality through connection to mentoring, workspace, information, networks, and finance.

Timeframe: Immediate

2. Engage the Enterprise Facilitator (EF) to identify and promote business opportunity gaps. Ideas include improved road signage and advertisements in key newsletters especially targeting the return of a newsagency and attraction of a tyre service, taxi service, bakery, vet service, clothing shop and additional food/restaurant outlets.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

3. Create a Task Team to develop and lobby for positive outcomes related to water efficiency and Land Care initiatives for local farmers.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

4. Assist local businesses to develop a stronger and more effective on-line presence.

Timeframe: Short term

5. Council to adapt local policies and practices to ensure ongoing maximum recruitment of local people for funded positions and contracts.

Timeframe: Immediate

6. Instigate regular community/farmer markets.

Timeframe: Short term

LEAD GROUPS

Brewarrina Council
Brewarrina Local Lands Council
Business Community
Brewarrina Aboriginal Local Lands Council

OTHER PARTNERS

Orana Regional Development Australia

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Six

Implementation of Key Community Development Initiatives

ACTIONS

6

1. Through the EF, undertake a 'Community Skill and Passion' Audit' of local residents. **Timeframe: Short term and ongoing**
2. Explore the feasibility of the creation of a BRE Development Group in partnership with the EF to provide a focus for resident and business engagement. **Timeframe: Short term**
3. Assist the Brewarrina Local Land Council to establish a Support Hub for local people within main street facility. **Timeframe: In Progress**
4. Lobby for improved social housing options in the townsite of Brewarrina. **Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing**
5. Continually upgrade local parks and river access points as key green spaces for the community to gather and enjoy and add to the visitor appeal of the town - equipment, trails, seating, yarning spaces, outdoor gym, coffee van, child safety fencing, community gardening **Timeframe: Short Term and ongoing**
6. Instigate a 'Pride Campaign' including the promotion internally and externally of positive stories and the organisation of community clean-up days. **Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing**
7. Reactivate more community events and gatherings like community markets, film nights and family fun days. **Timeframe: Short term and ongoing**
8. Identify a shed space for the Men's Group. **Timeframe: Short term**
9. Establish and develop a Community Garden in Bathurst St. **Timeframe: Short term and ongoing**
10. Clean up and preserve the site of the Brewarrina Mission for community and tourism uses. **Timeframe: In progress and ongoing**
11. Form a Task Team to explore establishment of a local community power initiative. **Timeframe: Short term**

LEAD GROUP

Brewarrina Shire Council.
Brewarrina Local Land Council.
RSL Club

Brewarrina Aboriginal
Local Land Council
Private Enterprise

OTHER PARTNERS

Orana Regional Development Australia
Visitor Information Centre and Museum
Sporting Clubs



Brewarrina

NEW SOUTH WALES

