

# Whitton

## Community Development Action Plan



August 2025

# Foreword



Whitton has always been a place where community spirit thrives, where neighbours look out for one another and where progress is only achieved through collective efforts. Our Community Developed Action Plan is no exception; it has been developed by the community, for the community and is a testament to the power of collaboration.

The voices of our residents, businesspeople, community groups and local leaders have been at the forefront of this process. Through extensive engagement and consultation, we

have harnessed the wisdom and creativity of our community members, ensuring that this plan truly reflects the aspirations and desires of those who call Whitton home.

Together, we have crafted a roadmap towards an exciting journey of transformation. With our unique heritage and warm community spirit, we hold an essence we hope to evolve. Let us embrace the opportunities that lie before us and inclusively nurture Whitton's economic growth, social well-being, and cultural enrichment.

# Our Story

Our community of Whitton centres around our historic railway village within the Shire of Leeton. It is located in south-western New South Wales, 145km west of Wagga Wagga. Positioned in the heart of the Riverina region, Whitton village is deeply connected to the area's agricultural heritage, being the oldest in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. Whitton has flourished as a community with a strong focus on the pastoral industry, dry area grain production, irrigation farming with mixed agriculture, and our close-knit community spirit.

Whitton's development was shaped from 1881 by the South Western Line Railway and the trade and people that brought business and social groups to our village. The locality saw increased settlement in the late 19th century, with families drawn to the opportunity of farming in the rich Riverina soils. Small irrigation farms started south and east of Whitton in the early 20th century, while large-scale pastoral practices remained in the other areas.

Additional small, family-owned irrigation farms were developed north of the village as part of the soldier settlement after WWII. This growing rural population in Whitton's district has always been well-connected with the village residents to make a cohesive, resilient and collaborative community.

From the colonial era, Whitton's strong spirit for fundraising and volunteering helped many institutions, facilities and social groups to thrive. Churches, a Turf Club and a Cricket Team featured in our early years. Later, Tennis, Cycling, Aussie Rules, Rugby League, Cricket and Hockey clubs were long running successes. Gymkhanas, the Whitton RSL, the Sunshine Club, the School of Arts Committee, Community Halls, the Red Cross branch, the CWA branch, and craft groups all flourished due to community efforts.

Other huge achievements were the funding of the Memorial Gates and Swimming Pool, the operation of the Museum, the Whitton Tidy Town Project, and the Bowling Club. Dances and Balls were regularly held as community events and for fundraising to support the many social groups and institutions over the years, as were Working Bees.

Local families have long supported a range of community initiatives, from the Whitton Farmers' and Settlers' Association and the Whitton Carrier's Union to modern small-scale agricultural cooperatives and rural fire services. The resilience of Whitton is evident in its ability to adapt to economic shifts, technological changes and environmental challenges, ensuring the locality's sustainability.

Whitton's economy remains driven by family-run farms, with crops including rice, citrus, grapes, cotton, wheat, barley, and canola, alongside sheep and cattle grazing. More recently, innovative farming methods and diversification have led to niche agricultural markets that have created new economic opportunities, allowing Whitton to modernise. Most recently, the establishment of the Southern Cotton Gin, Voyager Craft Malt and Whitton Malt House has provided a massive opportunity for local tourism and job creation, and enabled the village to be more than a 'dot on the map'.

As Whitton looks to the future, maintaining its agricultural strength while exploring new economic opportunities will be key to its continued success. Whether through sustainable farming innovations, rural tourism or community-driven initiatives, Whitton's strong identity and rural charm will ensure it remains a proud and resilient community for generations to come.



# Our Vision

A Vision Statement is a vivid description of what our community aspires to become, without its current barriers, but tied to what we value as a community.

The statement below is our intended outcome:

A welcoming, safe and family-friendly community embracing our heritage and new opportunities and being a place for all generations to live, work, play and age well.

# Our Guiding Values

Guiding values are the fundamental moral and ethical beliefs that we share as a community. They represent core principles and capture what our community considers important. They help foster trust, respect, collaboration, and unity.

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

- **Community Pride and Connection:** Ensuring all our residents experience community connection, inclusion and a sense of pride in our heritage, traditions, uniqueness, achievements, organisations and future possibilities.
- **Village Lifestyle and Charm:** Retaining our sense of the country way of life, neighbouring connections and rural landscapes.
- **Safety:** Maintaining high levels of community safety with low rates of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- **Active Citizenship:** Fostering attitudes and behaviours that encourage greater community engagement and high levels of volunteerism.
- **Positive Mindset:** Encouraging community attitudes that embrace change, pro-active 'can-do' behaviours, optimism, hopefulness and tolerance.



# Our Goals

**Community goals are broad statements of intent that direct our efforts towards accomplishing our vision in line with our guiding principles.**

Below are the eight community goals which guide our community aspirations, namely -

- To preserve and strengthen our heritage and cultural assets
- To create an environment where our children and young people feel involved, supported and empowered, and will consider staying in or returning to our community for work, business, family and lifestyle opportunities
- To actively promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience, and reside, especially through our attractive and welcoming town centre
- To maintain, develop and encourage greater use of our key community assets including our school, pool, parks, Club, museum and businesses
- To support our local town and farming businesses to thrive
- To encourage and celebrate active community participation and volunteerism
- To retain strong sporting and cultural clubs, events, facilities, and traditions
- To encourage greater use of our parks, open spaces, museum and pool



# Our Challenges

**Like many small inland rural communities, our community needs to respond creatively to a series of demographic, social, economic and environmental challenges. These issues include:**

- Lack of housing options including rental accommodation
- Volunteer fatigue and declining numbers and dependence on a few pro-active community members
- A lack of knowledge and enthusiasm for accurate details of Whitton's history
- No current playgroup or out-of-school care
- Cost of living challenges
- Maintaining and increasing our school numbers
- The temporary closure of our museum due to safety issues
- Lack of children's services and programs
- Limited community awareness of what is happening and engagement in existing town communication
- Limited public transport
- Limited recreational options
- Underutilisation of public pool
- Decline in number of community gatherings and special events
- Attraction and retention of suitably qualified staff/workforce
- Underutilisation of the connection and proximity to Whitton Malt House
- Town appearance
- Poor town signage
- Lack of police presence





# Our Assets

## People

- Population of 523 residents, 126 families
- WMPS staff and students (34)
- Sense of safety
- Wiradjuri Elders, WMPS Aboriginal Education Officer
- Our Post Mistress and local businesspeople
- Committees, dedicated locals, Fire Brigade volunteers, local Councillors and MPs
- Museum volunteers, history researcher
- Farming community
- Professional staff at Whitton Malt House
- Facebook sites
- Increasing number of 25-40-year-olds
- Community Noticeboard
- Ham Raffles in the Park in December
- WMPS Breakfast Club
- LSC support
- Sporting history
- Bowling community, retirees
- Former residents still interested in the town.

## Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

- Oldest town in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area
- Whitton Courthouse and Historical Museum
- Narrungdera Wiradjuri people
- Lyrics, Landscapes & Lintels Public Art Trail
- Murrumbidgee Trail
- Old shopfront murals, 'Charred Memories' (Carla Gottgens)
- Water tower 'Tribute to the ANZACs' Sculpture
- Rail heritage, irrigation heritage, teamster/trucking heritage
- Kooba Ag, Tubbo Estate
- Horse sculpture – Tobias Bennett
- Art deco buildings & trail
- ANZAC Day march
- Art in the Park
- Christmas decorations
- Power poles with local related artwork
- History trail interpretation signs
- All the events held in the Hall e.g. balls, dances and concerts

## Institutions

- Leeton Shire Council
- Whitton Murrumbidgee Public School (WMPS)
- Riverina Tourism
- NSW Destination Tourism
- RDA Riverina
- Leeton High School
- Visiting services – Boys To The Bush
- Leeton Connect
- Leeton Rotary
- DPIRD
- Murrumbidgee Landcare
- Transport for NSW
- Leeton Visitors Information Centre
- Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists

# Our Assets

## Physical

- Central regional location
- Village atmosphere
- Rural landscapes
- Village Common
- Memorial Park
- Public School buildings, grounds and nature park
- Heritage structures: Museum complex, Post Office, Churches, 1920s water tank, Bank
- CBD buildings, including empty shops
- Recreational infrastructure: Community Hall, Bowling & Recreational Club and greens, skate park, basketball and tennis courts, potential bike trails, sports ground, swimming pool, Memorial Park complex, Whitton Malt House including Hulong Lake with aqua golf and tag & release fishing
- Access to river system
- Cemetery
- Waste transfer station
- Railway line
- Grain silos, rice sheds
- WMPS Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden

## Social Networks

- Whitton Rural Bush Fire Brigade
- Drum Net Social Club
- Darts competitions
- Whitton Bowling and Recreation Club – Bowls groups, 100 members
- Playgroup (currently in recess)
- WMPS P&C Committee
- Whitton Town Improvement Committee
- Music jam sessions at the WBRC
- Active Farmers Fitness in the Hall
- Hall Management Committee
- Common Management Committee
- WC&HM Committee
- WMPS Newsletter and community inclusion

## Economic

- Main street businesses: Post Office, Convenience Store, Hulong House, Hotel, Club
- Whitton Malt House: services, accommodation, events, employment
- Southern Cotton
- Voyager Craft Malt
- Hotel accommodation
- CountryLink Bus service
- Gogeldrie Weir Campground
- Whitton's 'Big Garage Sale Day'
- Murray Cod Farms
- Rice farms
- Rice sheds
- Cotton farms
- Horticulture











# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme One

## Maintaining a Safer & More Connected Community

### ACTIONS

# 1

1. Instigate a **calendar of events that foster family-friendly community social occasions** e.g. Whitton Fun Day, Good Neighbour Day, street parties, movie nights at the pool, Christmas event in mainstreet etc.  
**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**
2. Design, implement and maintain a **community asset map** that identifies the skills and passions of residents of the Whitton community. Use this map to invite resident involvement in community initiatives around their gifts.  
**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**
3. Form a 'Welcome to Whitton' Task Team of WTIC who compile and distribute a **'Welcome Kit'** and coordinate **'Welcome to Whitton' events**.  
**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**
4. Re-establish the **Playgroup**.  
**Timeframe: Immediate to Short-Term**
5. Identify a volunteer to coordinate the regular **promotion of positive messages** of the Whitton community through radio, print and social media.  
**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

### LEAD GROUPS

WTIC

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

WRBFB  
WMPS  
WBRC  
LSC





# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Two

## Enhancing Our Town Appeal

### ACTIONS

# 2

1. Instigate a Mainstreet Beautification Project.
  - a. Undertake an audit of existing street presentation and public art.
  - b. Seek ideas and suggestions from Whitton residents and local businesses.
  - c. Identify prioritised beautification and upgrade options.
  - d. Seek support/implement opportunities.
  - e. Continually celebrate.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

2. Instigate a solar lighting system to highlight the 'Tribute to the ANZACs' Sculpture at night. Enhance sculpture with a story board.

**Timeframe: Short Term**

3. Undertake a Signage Audit and implement improvements, including out-of-town advertising, town entry statements and directional signage.
  - a. Form Signage Task Team.
  - b. Develop assessment tool.
  - c. Undertake audit.
  - d. Review and determine recommendations for improvement.
  - e. Share impressions and suggestions with LSC and the wider Whitton community.

**Timeframe: Short-Term**

4. Advocate for reduced traffic speeds in townsite and instigation of a crosswalk in main street.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

### LEAD GROUPS

**WTIC  
LSC**

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Whitton business community  
Local artists  
WBRC  
WMPS**

**RA  
BOI  
FRRR  
RDA Riverina**



# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Three

### Developing Our Community Recreational Facilities & Activities

#### ACTIONS

3

1. Identify, advocate and seek funding for the improvement of public **space facilities and options** including:

- Regular family barbecues/movie nights at the pool.
- Shade sails over the skate park.
- Upgrading of the basketball court.
- Safe walking trail around the townsite.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

2. Establish a Trails Task Team to develop and implement a **Cycling Trail Action Plan** from Whitton townsite to the Whitton Malt House.

**Timeframe: Immediate to Long-Term**

3. Establish a Task Team to develop a proposal for a **BMX/Pump Track**.

**Timeframe: Short-Term**

#### LEAD GROUPS

WTIC  
LSC

#### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Whitton Malt House  
Whitton business community  
Local artists  
WMPS  
LVIC  
NPWS

RA  
DBIRD - NSW SCP  
BBRF  
Riverina Tourism  
NSW Destination Tourism  
FRRR





# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Four

## Strengthening Our Tourism Potential

### ACTIONS



1. Develop a **Whitton Tourism Strategy** through the formation of a Tourism Strategy Task Team of WTIC that:
  - a. Audits current tourism attractions, facilities, events, trails and initiatives.
  - b. Identifies ideas to enhance existing products and offerings.
  - c. Prioritises opportunities to create new tourism products.
  - d. Recommends actions to enhance marketing, customer service, community storytelling operator networking and stronger connections between town tourism and the Whitton Malt House.

**Timeframe: Immediate to Medium-Term**

2. **Support the refurbishment plan for the Whitton Museum as proposed in the current LSC Draft Financial Strategy document.**

**Timeframe: Immediate**

3. Support the Whitton Bowling and Recreational Club to design and implement a **free caravan and camping area** adjacent to the Club.

**Timeframe: Immediate to Medium-Term**

4. Develop a range of **tour itineraries** to target and attract car, motorbike and caravan clubs.

**Timeframe: Long-Term**

### LEAD GROUPS

**WTIC  
LSC – LVIC  
WBRC**

**WC&HM  
Whitton Malt House**

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Whitton business community  
Local artists  
WC&HM  
DBIRD – NSW SCP**

**BBRF  
NPWS  
Riverina Tourism  
NSW Destination Tourism**









# Abbreviations

<b>BOI</b>	Bank of I.D.E.A.S.
<b>BBRF</b>	Building Better Regions Fund of the Australian Government
<b>CWA</b>	Country Womens' Association
<b>DPIRD</b>	NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
<b>FRRR</b>	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
<b>LDLALC</b>	Leeton and District Local Aboriginal Land Council
<b>LSC</b>	Leeton Shire Council
<b>LVIC</b>	Leeton Visitors Information Centre
<b>MIA</b>	Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area
<b>NPWS</b>	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
<b>NSW</b>	New South Wales
<b>NSW SCP</b>	NSW Sustainability Community Program
<b>P&amp;C</b>	Parents and Citizens Committee
<b>RA</b>	Rural Aid
<b>RDA</b>	Regional Development Australia - Riverina
<b>RSL</b>	Returned Services League
<b>WBRC</b>	Whitton Bowling and Recreational Club
<b>WC&amp;HM</b>	Whitton Courthouse and Historical Museum
<b>WMPS</b>	Whitton Murrumbidgee Public School
<b>WRBFB</b>	Whitton Rural Bush Fire Brigade
<b>WTIC</b>	Whitton Town Improvement Committee

# Acknowledgements

The formulation of this 'Community Development Action Plan' was initiated and coordinated by the Leeton Shire Council and the Whitton Town Improvement Committee and supported by Rural Aid as part of their commitment to supporting Australia's small rural towns. The formulation of the Plan was undertaken by Peter Kenyon from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. assisted by Steph Walsh (Rural Aid) and Brent Lawrence (Leeton Shire Council). Special thanks to so many passionate community members who gave so generously of their time, wisdom and experiences, especially Tracy Catlin, Lorraine Kefford and Margaret Strong. The enthusiastic contributions of opinions and ideas by students at Whitton Murrumbidgee Public School were greatly valued.

We respectfully acknowledge the Wiradjuri People as the traditional owners and First People of the lands which comprise the township of Whitton and its districts. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of the Wiradjuri People.



# Whitton

NEW SOUTH WALES

