



Strategic Plan

FOSTER WAR MEMORIAL ARTS CENTRE

2024



CONTENTS

Strategic plan 2024-2034

Introduction	2
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	2
History	3
Demographics	3
Organisational Structure	3
Strategic Support	2
SWOT Analysis	3
Strategic Plan	4
<i>Statement of Purpose</i>	4
<i>Vision</i>	4
<i>Strategic Goals</i>	4
Implementation Plan	4



Community consultation for the development of the Strategic Plan



Introduction

The Foster War Memorial Arts Centre (the Centre) is a vibrant hub for creative arts and community events in the heart of the Foster Central Business District. The facility features the large auditorium which is the only hall in Foster. It hosts everything from funerals to weddings, meetings for many groups, and performances.

The facility has a large commercial kitchen and supper area to support major functions and has meeting rooms adjacent to the main hall and is widely utilised by other community groups such as the University of the Third Age (U3A), Returned Services League (RSL), Foster Farmers Market and the Foster Arts Music and Drama Association (FAMDA). The facility is owned by South Gippsland Shire Council and delegates management to the Community Asset Committee (the Committee), which oversees its operation. There is a part time bookings officer and caretaker, but otherwise the facility is managed by community volunteers.

As the Centre is as an important Memorial Facility, the Foster RSL sub-branch supports ongoing preservation of the building and the link to future commemorative services. The RSL aim is to ensure communities share the stories and history of those who have served, and commemorate, pay respect and keep the ANZAC spirit alive¹.

The development of this Strategic Plan involved detailed consultation with the Committee, User Groups and the broader community to enable a clear vision and priorities for the future. It was evident that the FWMAC also known as “the Hall” is highly valued by the community and services a broad range of activities and functions.

Key principals that have been identified to guide the Strategic Plan including facility maintenance and upgrades, affordable hire fees, good governance and involving more volunteers, building community connection through regular communication and increasing utilisation of the whole facility.

Acknowledgements

The Foster War Memorial Arts Centre Committee of Management would like to acknowledge GippSport Community Solutions for coordinating this strategic planning process and members who have supported the project.

The committee also acknowledges the staff at South Gippsland Shire Council and other important stakeholders for providing background information and support for this planning project and the Centre. Also, to South Gippsland Shire Council for providing funding through the Community Grants Program to complete this planning project.

¹ Foster RSL Sub-Branch website, accessed July 2024



History

The Foster War Memorial Arts Centre (the Centre) was erected by the citizens of Foster and District as a memorial to those who died serving their country in war. It was opened by His Excellency the Governor of Victoria Major-General Sir Rohan Delacombe K.C.M.G., K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., K.St.J and dedicated by Brigadier W. H. Hall, C.B.E., D.S.O. E.D. on November 12th, 1966.

The Centre, which is also known as the Hall to many community members, was built after the previous building (the Foster Mechanics Institute) burned down. Over half a century later it still serves as the gathering place for weddings, celebrations, concerts, theatrical, music and dance performances, funerals, meetings, sporting events and much more.

The Centre is located on Council owned land and is zoned - Public Use Local Government with no overlays.

Demographics

South Gippsland Shire was formed in 1994 from the amalgamation of four municipalities. It has an area of 3,300 square kilometres with substantial coastal frontage. South Gippsland Shire is in south-eastern Victoria, about 100 kilometres south-east of the Melbourne CBD. Its major towns are Leongatha, Korumburra, Mirboo North and Foster. Other significant townships include Dumbalk, Fish Creek, Loch, Meeniyan, Nyora, Poowong, Port Welshpool, Sandy Point, Tarwin Lower, Toora, Venus Bay and Welshpool and many other small communities.

According to the 2021 Census, Usual Resident Population of South Gippsland Shire is 30,577, with an Estimated Resident Population for 2022 of 30,680.

Foster is a dairying and grazing town 174 kilometres (108 mi) south-east of Melbourne on the South Gippsland Highway in Victoria, Australia. At the 2021 census Foster had a population of 2,044 with a median age of 49. It is about 20 kilometres (12 mi) north of the Gippsland coastline which includes Shallow Inlet, Corner Inlet, Waratah Bay, Yanakie and Wilsons Promontory. Recent population forecast does not predict significant growth in the short term however local infrastructure projects may result in some population movement to the local area while construction is underway.

There is a local Secondary College and Primary School which service the region.

The town may have a smaller population, but its role as a central hub for shopping and services means that the community programs and activities extend much further.

Foster hosts several community facilities that complement the offerings at the Centre, such as meeting rooms and volunteer-run organisations. However, the Centre stands out as the largest facility, with retractable seating and stage areas that make it the only venue suited for hosting performances.



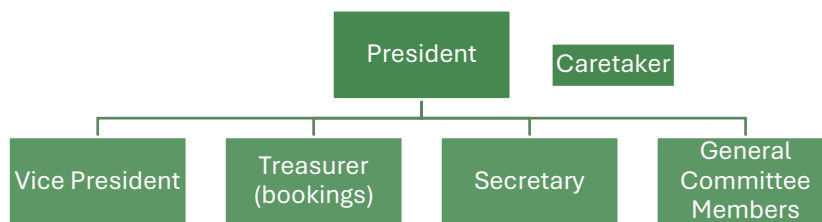
An update of the Foster Structure Plan is being completed at the time of this report. The supporting Economic Assessment November 2022 identifies that the town centre will have some difficulty in accommodating future commercial growth as there is currently a lack of vacant land or premises. However, there are a series of underdeveloped sites, often with uses that would be better suited to the industrial or mixed-use precincts. The location of the Centre and other local community facilities may be considered as part of how the CBD is developed over time.

The update to the Foster Structure Plan is being carried out concurrently with this report. The supporting Economic Assessment from November 2022 highlights that the town centre may face challenges in accommodating future commercial growth due to a shortage of available land or premises. However, there are several underdeveloped sites, some of which may be more appropriately utilised for industrial or mixed-use purposes. The placement of the Centre and other local community facilities may also be factored into the future development of the CBD.

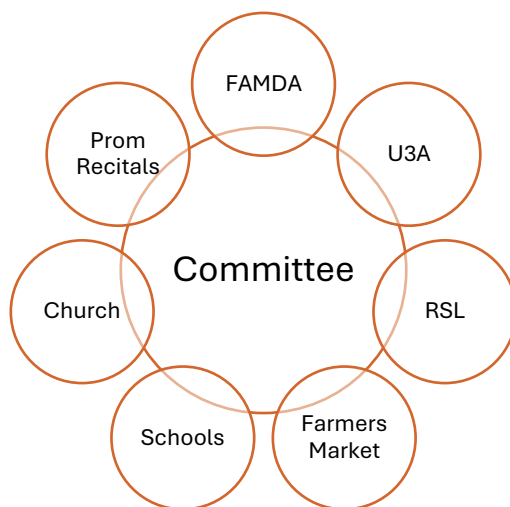


Organisational Structure

As a Council appointed Community Asset Committee, the Committee is formed from representatives from each user group and the broader community for a period of 3 years. The committee is empowered to elect office bearers including a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer from the appointed members of the Community Asset Committee and notify council immediately after these appointments are made.



The regular user groups of FWMAC include.



Other Users Include:

- Funerals
- Elections
- Parties and functions
- DECCA/ Parks Vic/ South Gippsland Water/ Hospital Meetings
- RSL Services
- Library Services
- Council consultation sessions/meetings
- School presentations/ performances
- Dance Concerts/ practices
- Book Sale (twice per year)
- General meetings
- Live music



Strategic Alignment

To inform the 2024-2034 Strategic Plan it is critical to align its development with the following documents:

- SG Council Plan 2022-2026
- Economic Study Nov 2022
- Foster Structure Plan Update (coming 2024)
- Foster Community Infrastructure Plan 2016
- FWMAC 10-year Capital Works Plan
- SG Arts, Culture & Creative Industries Strategy (2022)

Of note in the Arts, Culture & Creative Industry Strategy was the Vision – “This Strategy presents a vision for South Gippsland’s creative community that is vibrant, engaged, geographically diverse, and full of opportunity. With respect for the past and a passion for our future, our arts, culture, creative industries and heritage create a unique identity, for visitors and residents alike, generating economic benefit and community connection across the region”

There is great interest in a performing space in South Gippsland. The Shire is surrounded by a variety of Performing Arts Centres (PACs) in Warragul, Traralgon, Sale, Wonthaggi and the Cultural Centre in Cowes, and stakeholders spoke of South Gippsland ‘missing out’ by not having a centralised PAC. Leongatha Memorial Hall is recognised as the most appropriate site for development into a performance space, the only one of scale and functionality. Most of the discussions around a performance space focused on two functions, the role of a performance space and an arts or creative hub.

The most common view from community was for the development of the Leongatha Memorial Hall (the Memorial Hall) to include a professional, flexible 400 seat performance space with adequate dressing/green rooms and smaller rehearsal/studio spaces. The space must be multifunctional to meet community needs.

Local performing groups have recognised that the Memorial Hall is the most suitable site. While that has been recognised, the perception may also exist in other townships that one large, centralised venue could over-shadow the investment in other suitable, albeit smaller, performance venues in the Shire.

It was also noted that online Promotion of events in the halls across the shire through the different social media platforms needs to be coordinated and that several halls need refurbishment, and others are close to needing replacement. Some stakeholders suggested that a part-time Halls coordinator could be supported to organise bookings support the marketing through Council communications channels and oversee the maintenance and development of the venues.



Many stakeholders have strong loyalty to the small halls, especially community artists. The halls are valued for low-cost hire rates, and accessibility. There is broad agreement that the small halls are a showcase for the decentralised arts and culture model in South Gippsland. Tour promoters see the small halls as vital infrastructure for smaller touring acts.

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was developed in consultation with the FWMAC after review of the user group survey results and stakeholder feedback. These are some of the key points.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Ownership • Experienced and locally led committee • Large and a range of multipurpose facilities • Range of user groups and activities already being offered • RSL Memorial Facility • Central Location/ Place to meet for the whole community • Affordable hire rates • Council's commitment to Creative Arts and Community facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some facility limitations improvements needed to improve functionality & aesthetic • Shortage of volunteers to run activities/ events • There is a need to create a simple online booking process • Also to create an online presence for marketing & promotion and improve community connection • Car parking challenges
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve facilities incrementally over time • Increase the number of members/ volunteers overall to spread the workload • Open more often to public and make it simple and easy for the community to book • Develop / increase revenue streams • Passing on skills/ knowledge to new committee members through shared documents • Create a priority list (This Plan) • Develop a handbook/ operating manual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer burnout/ inability to implement action of this plan • Stagnation in facility development / maintenance over time which makes it less attractive for user groups • Loss of key personnel / user groups (committee members, volunteers) without succession planning in place. • Current external funding landscape in Victoria. • Number of community facilities doing similar activities in the local area.



Strategic Plan

FWMAC Community Asset Committee Statement of Purpose

To exercise Council's functions and powers and to perform Council's duties in relation to the management of the Centre.

Vision

The Foster War Memorial Arts Centre is the central meeting place for the Foster & District communities where performing arts, events, commemoration and local groups are supported to have the ideal experience, and the facility is sustainably managed and enhanced over time.

Strategic Goals

1. Strengthen the committee capacity, develop systems and efficient processes to be proactive
2. Create new opportunities to increased utilisation and enhanced performing arts
3. Advocate for sustainable facility development and ongoing upgrades to improve function and aesthetic appeal
4. Build community connection, partnerships and improve communication

Implementation Plan

Following is a series of actions that have been developed in line with the Committee's Vision and goals, to be implemented over the coming ten years.

Actions have been given a priority ranking scale using Very High, High, Medium or Low. In some instances, ongoing has been allocated as these tasks are required on a regular basis.

Scale	When
Very High	2025
High	2026 to 2027
Medium	2028 to 2030
Low	2031 plus

A separate monitoring document has been developed to read in conjunction with this plan that allocates responsibility for tasks and progress made.



1. Strengthen the committee capacity, develop systems and efficient processes proactive

#	GOAL	PRIORITY
1.1	Further develop the organisational structure and document with role descriptions. Consider forming additional sub committees that can focus on new initiatives and Strategic Plan priorities	High
1.2	Ensure the Committee is investing in training and upskilling for committee members and volunteers and participate in the SG Halls Network & Creative Arts Groups.	High
1.3	Consider increasing paid resources to take on new administrative tasks by the end of 2026 to reduce volunteer workload and reliance on the caretaker	Medium
1.4	Provide written documentation to Council including annual reports in line with Councils Instrument of delegation	Very High
1.5	Utilise or ensure that user groups have current insurance as well policies and procedures to include Code of Conduct & Child Safety to ensure everyone is safe and any issues are dealt with promptly and with clear and documented processes	High
1.6	Develop an operations manual for the facility to ensure key knowledge is passed on through committee transition.	Medium
1.7	Develop a succession plan for long standing volunteers and create assistant roles to help the transition from general committee to executive roles	Medium
1.8	Utilise a shared online drive for committee documents, passwords and other important information	High
1.9	Ensure that all user group feedback is listened to, responded to and actioned in a timely fashion.	Very High





2. Create new opportunities to increased utilisation and enhanced performing arts

#	GOAL	PRIORITY
2.1	Consider the improved use of technology platforms to improve booking and communication between the committee, user groups and new bookings.	Very High
2.2	Provide support to new community activities or initiatives by providing easy to understand information, advice, affordable fees and marketing support.	Very High
2.3	Explore the possibility of creating a Booking Officer role that can better link with Councils Creative Arts & Events team to proactively attract new performers and activities to the facility.	Medium
2.4	Consider how data regarding usage and casual visits can be better collected, tracked and reported against	High
2.5	Host an annual facility open day/community event to engage broader Foster community to attract people to the centre that may not be aware of what is on offer	Medium
2.6	Develop a stakeholder engagement to include various strategies to obtain feedback on what can be improved. Use the Strategic Plan survey results to create new programs that were raised as new opportunities.	Medium
2.7	Consult with young people about social events and programs that may improve engagement in performing arts or community events. Look to recruit a young person to the FWMAC committee or subcommittee.	Medium
2.8	Develop marketing material and an online presence to seek new events and live music to Foster. Promoting the size and facilities unique to FWMAC.	High





3. Advocate for sustainable facility development and ongoing upgrades to improve function and aesthetic appeal

#	GOAL	PRIORITY
3.1	Investigate funding and investment opportunities or strategies to improve facilities in partnership with Council, including providing an annual report on committee priorities. Contribute to the Council asset maintenance and lifecycle plan for building renewals.	High
3.2	Provide input into all Council Foster Structure Planning/community consultation projects with justification to help advocate for FWMAC and protection of land around the centre for future expansion and to increase the car parking.	Very High
3.3	Apply for community grants/ other external funding to help undertake minor facility improvements.	Very High
3.4	Develop formal user agreements for all FWMAC user groups, events, performers and use of facilities.	High
3.5	Undertake a monthly facility inspection to identify risks/ areas for improved maintenance so that minor issues are resolved quickly.	High
3.6	Create a budget, long-term financial plan and capital fund for future facility upgrades	High
3.7	Create a better cleaners cupboard/ cleaning facilities to make it easier and safer to maintain facilities.	High
3.8	Regularly benchmark fees and charges for hall hire fees and charges, to ensure appropriate levels of income as well as ease of payment	High



4. Build community connection, partnerships and improve communication

#	GOAL	PRIORITY
4.1	Undertake a review of the Centre's name, branding and logo in preparation for an increased online presence.	Very High
4.2	Create more contemporary, fit for purpose spaces, including storage, for user groups to make it easier to run programs & events.	Medium
4.3	Ensure the Centre's promotional materials and information are easy to read and reflect a broad range of users including diverse images. Engage a photographer to take a broad range of photos of the facilities for marketing purposes.	High
4.4	Consult with the RSL on how to better incorporate/ reflect commemorative signage on the front of the building.	Medium
4.5	Improve the amenity/aesthetic appeal of the facility foyer, add couches/ ticket areas to make it more welcoming and inviting.	High
4.6	Create a communication plan that regularly updates the Foster Community on FWMAC developments, opportunities and utilise community noticeboard/Facebook groups for new promotion.	Medium
4.7	Investigate new internal and external signage to help people find and access FWMAC and to find the facilities once they arrive.	High
4.8	Explore ways to display static art through a partnership with Council or local Artists.	Low
4.9	Develop a relationship with a catering/ hire equipment company that can be offered as a package to make it easier for facility hire.	High



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

We extend our gratitude to all stakeholders, community members, and partners who contributed to this strategic plan.

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.



At GippSport Community Solutions, we focus on strengthening our community through strategic and innovative planning. As a part of Gippsland, we understand the region's needs and have a deep connection with our community. By partnering with local organisations, we create and implement plans that drive positive change and support community development.

w| gippsportcs.com.au

e| communitysolutions@gippsport.com.au