

Yanco

Community Development Action Plan



August 2025

Foreword



Welcome to the Yanco Community Action Plan — a shared vision for the future of our village, proudly the “Gateway to the MIA” (Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area).

Nestled within the Leeton Shire in the heart of south-western New South Wales, Yanco, though small in size, is rich in spirit and ambition. Our community is shaped by its diversity — from our two thriving schools that nurture the next generation, to our passionate sporting clubs, and the tireless efforts of local service organisations who give so much back.

This Plan has been developed with one goal in mind: to help Yanco not only grow, but flourish. Like many small towns, we face evolving challenges — from changes in population and economy, to ensuring that our community remains a vibrant, inclusive place to live, work, and visit. But these challenges also bring opportunities.

This document is more than just a roadmap — it is a reflection of who we are and who

we aspire to be. A community with heart, purpose, and a clear direction forward.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Rural Aid and Leeton Shire Council for their generosity, and to Peter Kenyon for your time listening, encouraging and facilitating our community workshop along with the small group gatherings.

The voices and ideas of our residents, students, businesses, community groups and local leaders have come together to produce this document.

We invite all who call Yanco home — and those yet to discover our special corner of the MIA — to walk this journey with us.

Together, we will continue to make Yanco a place we are all proud of.

Written by members of YTIC (Yanco Town Improvement Committee)

Our Story

Yanco is a unique and historically rich locality within the Shire of Leeton, in south-western New South Wales. Situated along the banks of the Murrumbidgee River in the Riverina region, Yanco holds a proud legacy as the pioneering hub of irrigation, agriculture, and community-driven development. Today, it continues to be a vibrant centre that blends its historical significance with contemporary growth, maintaining a strong sense of identity and local pride.

The traditional custodians of the Yanco area are the Wiradjuri people, whose deep cultural connections to the land and waterways have shaped the region for thousands of years. The name “Yanco” itself is believed to have Indigenous origins, reflecting the area’s enduring Aboriginal heritage. The Wiradjuri people’s knowledge of the environment, including sustainable land and water management, continues to influence conservation and agricultural practices in the region today.

European settlement in Yanco began in the mid-19th century, with the establishment of large pastoral stations. One of the most significant milestones in Yanco’s history came with the development of irrigation schemes in the early 20th century, spearheaded by Sir Samuel McCaughey. His pioneering irrigation system transformed the region into a highly productive agricultural zone, setting the foundation for Yanco’s continued prosperity. The construction of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) in the 1910s cemented Yanco’s role as an essential centre for farming and water management in New South Wales.

The arrival of the railway further accelerated growth, linking Yanco to the broader state network and enabling the expansion of industries such as citrus farming, viticulture, and rice production. The Yanco Agricultural Institute, founded in 1908 as the Yanco Experimental Farm, has had many purposes throughout its history including a major centre for agricultural research and education, but also functioned as a prisoner of war camp in WWII. The establishment of

Yanco Agricultural High School in 1922 was another pivotal development, reinforcing the locality’s reputation for agricultural education and innovation. The school remains a key institution, nurturing future generations of farmers, agribusiness professionals, and community leaders.

Over the years, Yanco has maintained a close-knit community spirit, evident in its many clubs, organisations, and volunteer groups. The Yanco CWA and Yanco All Servicemen’s Club are greatly valued institutions with proud histories. The Yanco Powerhouse Museum, housed in an historic hydroelectric station, stands as a testament to the town’s industrial heritage and commitment to preserving local history. Cultural and sporting groups, including equestrian, cricket, and football clubs, contribute to the region’s strong community identity and social cohesion.

Yanco’s natural environment is another source of local pride. The Murrumbidgee River provides not only essential irrigation, but also recreational opportunities, with fishing, boating, and nature walks attracting both residents and visitors. The nearby Fivebough Wetlands, an internationally recognised Ramsar-listed site, showcases the region’s rich biodiversity and supports conservation efforts for migratory bird species.

Economically, Yanco continues to thrive through its diverse agricultural base, including citrus, rice, grapes, and livestock production. Emerging opportunities in agritourism, eco-tourism, and value-added agricultural enterprises are further strengthening the local and district economy. As sustainability and climate resilience become increasingly important, Yanco’s innovative farming community is adapting new technologies and practices to ensure long-term viability.

Moving forward, Yanco aims to build on its rich heritage while embracing new opportunities for sustainable growth, ensuring 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:

To retain our small-town appeal and can-do community spirit through building strong community engagement and collaboration, and utilising our unique heritage, environmental, educational and agricultural assets.

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

- **Respect for our Heritage:** Appreciating our unique heritage, stories and traditions and their importance in community and economic development.
- **Respect for our Environment:** Valuing and protecting our beautiful natural environment, its diverse and prolific wildlife and our productive farmlands.
- **Resilience:** Ensuring positive and can-do attitudes and behaviours to deal with adversity and change.
- **Our Small-Town Lifestyle & Charm:** Retaining our unique sense of small-town way of life, neighbour connections and rural landscapes.
- **Sense of Community:** Ensuring all our community members experience a deep sense of connection, inclusion, and contribution.
- **Embracing New Opportunities:** Building upon our local assets, capacities and creativity; and facilitating opportunities that enable all our residents to see and experience their community as a place of opportunity.
- **Pride:** Encouraging pride and times of celebration relating to our heritage, uniqueness and achievements.



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 six community goals which guide our community aspirations, namely:

- To promote and showcase Yanco as a great place to stop, stay, experience, and reside, especially through a vibrant and welcoming town centre
- To support and encourage active community engagement and volunteerism
- To promote Yanco as the “Gateway to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA)”
- To create an environment where our 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 retain our strong sporting and cultural clubs, events, facilities and traditions
- To preserve, maintain and strengthen our community assets and heritage, including our local educational and agricultural institutions

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:

- An ageing population
- Volunteer fatigue and declining numbers, and dependence on a few proactive community members – declining community engagement
- Loss of Lions Club
- Loss of staff and functions at the Yanco Agricultural Institute
- Tourism challenges, especially seasonal nature and limited tourist product
- Tired signage
- Business loss and gaps
- Lack of rental accommodation
- Declining recreational options
- Lack of early childhood services and childcare
- Cost of living challenges
- Proximity to Leeton
- Lack of town identity separate from Leeton
- Main street appearance
- Decline in community gatherings and special events
- High freight costs
- Poor connectivity
- Water recovery measures
- Limited public transport options



Our Assets

People

- 744 residents, 143 families
- Safe, connected community
- Community volunteers, free town gardener, committees, dedicated locals, local Councillors and MPs
- Public school students, YAHS students, teenagers, young migrant workers, retirees
- Staff of YAHS and YAI
- Board, staff and Ladies Auxiliary of YASC
- YPS Chaplain, YPS Breakfast Program
- YAHS Alumni, Old Yanconians
- Narrungadera Wiradjuri People
- Mulga the Artist
- Professionals – researchers, teachers, priest
- Farmers, local business owners, tradespeople
- Former residents still interested the town
- Fundraising raffles

Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

- Narrungadera Wiradjuri culture
- Story of Samuel McCaughey
- Historical Sites: Samuel McCaughey Monument, Cudgel Creek (first irrigation water), water trough, McCaughey Mansion, former POW (Prisoner of War) campsite, old shop fronts, art deco buildings, YAI Hall, duck pond bridge, mile pegs
- Agricultural heritage, Irrigation heritage
- POW stories, Italian heritage, Catholic Church heritage
- Powerhouse Museum, Miniature Railway, trainspotting
- Birdlife
- Lyrics, Landscapes & Lintels Public Art Trail, Compass Stature
- Art Deco Way
- Legacy of Yanco Lions and Yanco CWA
- Separate identity to Leeton

Institutions

- Yanco Agricultural High School
- Yanco Public School
- Yanco Agricultural Institute – DPIRD Tocal College Yanco Campus
- Rural Fire Service
- NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
- Eventide Homes
- Leeton & District Local Aboriginal Land Council
- RDA Riverina
- WaterNSW
- Leeton Connect, Leeton Rotary
- DPIRD
- Murrumbidgee Landcare
- Transport for NSW
- Leeton Visitors Information Centre
- Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists
- Leeton High School
- Visiting services: Australian Unity, Kurrajong, MyPlan Connect, Community Transport, Meals on Wheels

Our Assets

Physical

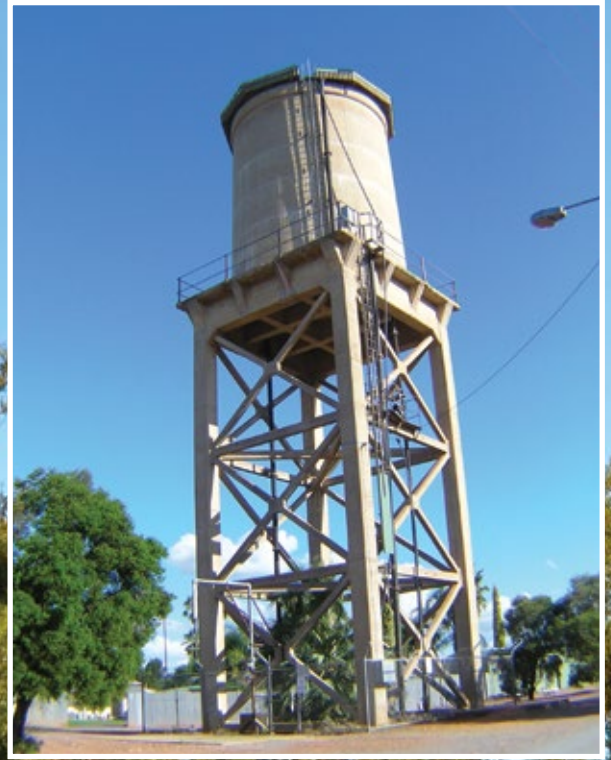
- Gateway to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area
- 199 private dwellings
- Parks & outdoor recreation: Bicentennial McCaughey Park, Waring Park, splash pad, football oval
- Natural Features: duck lake, mainstreet palm trees, wetlands, Murrumbidgee River, boat ramp, Middle Beach, ski beach, bike/walking track, Murrumbidgee Valley National Park (Billenbah, Euroley), dog park
- Infrastructure: Silos, disused railway line to Hay, water tower, train tracks, main canal, Euroley Bridge
- Burrinjack Dam, Turkey Flat
- Sculptures & statues
- Christmas decorations
- Yanco Hall, Yanco All Servicemen's Club
 - Mainstreet businesses
 - Proximity to Leeton
 - Affordable housing blocks

Social Networks

- Yanco Town Improvement Committee
- Yanco All-Servicemen's Club Ltd
- Yanco CWA
- Yanco Hall Committee, Yanco Powerhouse Museum Association Committee, YASC Ladies Auxiliary, Pride Committee
- Murrumbidgee Landcare
- Catholic Church
- Sporting Clubs: Yanco-Wamoon Hawks Football Club, Yanco/Leeton Swimming Club, Hawks Football Team, Pony Club, Shooting Club
- Bingo, Darts & Snooker Competitions
- Event Committees
- Facebook sites
- The Irrigator newspaper
- YPC Little Learners

Economic

- Businesses & Services: hotel, club, convenience store & post office, builder, painter, gardening services, Yanco Palace
- Events: Hall Markets, Twilight Markets, YAHS Gala Day
- Agriculture: Affordable Farms (citrus), Walnut Plantation, Almond Farms, JBS Feedlot, GrainCorp Silos
- YASC Recycling
- Trucking Route (Irrigation Road), Access to Sturt Hwy
- Sandy Beach campground, Middle Beach campground
- Tocal College – Yanco Campus, Amaroo Motel
 - Cudgel Creek Pit Mine





Our Strategies & Actions

Theme One

Family-Friendly Appeal

ACTIONS

1

1. Instigate a **calendar of events that foster family-friendly community social occasions** e.g. family fun day, beach sports carnival, outdoor movie nights, Easter egg hunt, Christmas in July etc.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

2. Advocate to the Leeton Shire Council for **priority family/youth recreational facility projects**, namely:
 - Construction of a skatepark/BMX track
 - Revitalisation of tennis courts
 - Completion of footpath around duck park
 - Improvements to Waring Park facilities
 - Better access to Middle Beach

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

YTIC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

LSC
YCWA
YPS
YASC
YPS P&C

YAHS
YPMA
LDLALC
Leeton Connect
Leeton Rotary

Theme Two

Town Entrances & Signage

ACTIONS

2

1. Undertake a **Signage Audit** and implement improvements, including out of town advertising, town entry statements and directional signage.
 - Form Signage Task Team.
 - Develop assessment tool.
 - Undertake audit.
 - Review and determine recommendations for improvement.
 - Share impressions and suggestions with LSC and Yanco community.

Timeframe: Short Term

2. Instigate a specific community dialogue and planning initiative to design and implement an **attractive town entrance sign** highlighting Yanco as the 'Gateway to MIA'.

Timeframe: Short to Medium Term

LEAD GROUPS

YTIC
LSC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Yanco business community
RA

BOI
YAHS students

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Three

Mainstreet Beautification

ACTIONS

3

1. Initiate a **Mainstreet Beautification Project**

- Establish a Mainstreet Beautification Task Team of YTIC.
- Undertake an audit of existing street presentation.
- Seek ideas and suggestions from Yanco residents, businesses and students.
- Create prioritised beautification options.
- Seek support and implement opportunities to continually celebrate achievements.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

2. Instigate a **Heritage Building Façade Facelift Project**

- Establish a Task Team of volunteers committed to improving the appearance of old buildings in the Mainstreet.
- Seek collaboration of owners of key old buildings in the mainstreet to allow a community project to paint and repair facades of their buildings.
- Identify and secure a grant to fund a paint and building materials budget.
- Advertise and convene a set of busy bee events to systematically upgrade façade appearances.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

3. Advocate to Leeton Shire Council regarding **improvements of footpaths in the Mainstreet.**

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

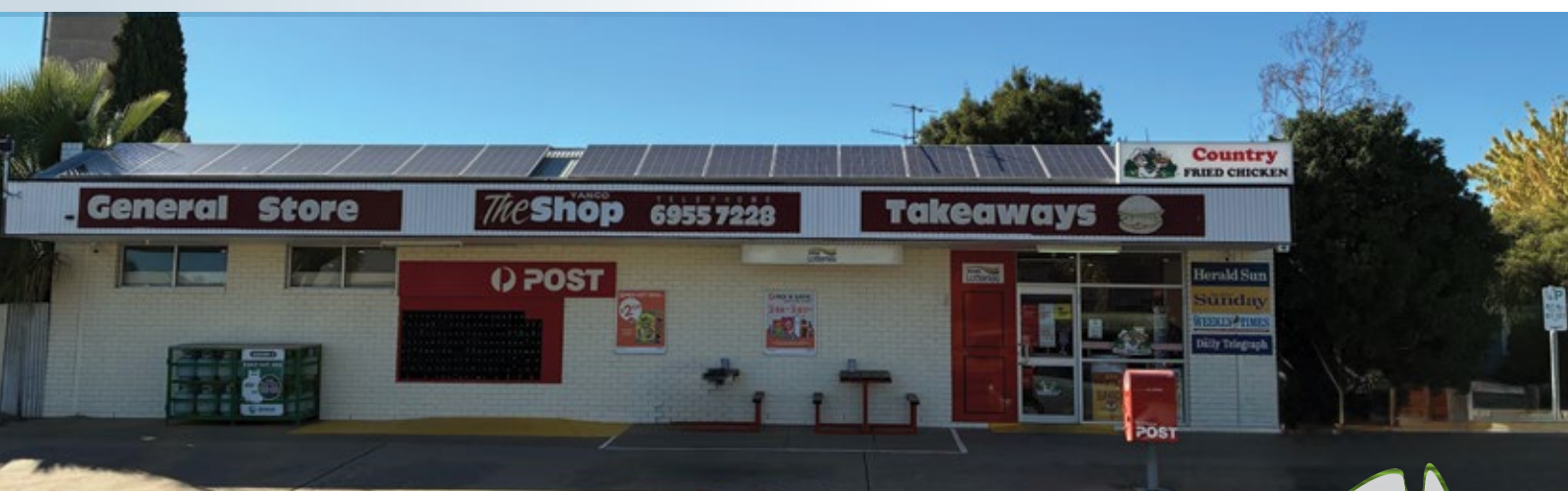
LEAD GROUPS

YTIC
LSC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Yanco business community
YASC
YAHS students
RA

RDA Riverina
NSW SCP
Leeton Rotary



Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Four

Community Building Initiatives

ACTIONS



1. Support the Yanco Public School and their P & C with fund raising activities to purchase a **school bus** to enable cost reduction for school excursions.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

2. Design, implement and maintain a **'Community Asset Map'** that identifies the skills and passions of residents of the Yanco community. Use this map to invite resident involvement in community initiatives and task teams based on their gifts.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

3. Establish a 'Welcome to Yanco' Task Team of YTIC who compile and distribute a **'Welcome Kit'** and coordinate an annual **'Welcome to Yanco' event**.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

4. Establish a Task Team to develop and implement a **Yanco Community Garden or community pocket gardens**.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

5. Instigate a **quarterly networking meeting of all Yanco community groups** to share future proposed actions, common issues, and opportunities and ways to strengthen collaboration on events.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

6. Initiate conversations with **Yanco Agricultural High School** regarding greater student engagement with Yanco community organisations, and ongoing student input to Yanco community developments.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

YTIC
LSC
YPS
YPS P&C

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

YASC
Yanco business community
YAHS and students
YCWA
YAI
LDLALC
Leeton Rotary
NSW SCP
RA
BOI

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Five

Expanding Tourism & Business Options

ACTIONS



1. Develop a specific **Yanco Tourism Strategy** through the formation of a Tourism Strategy Task Team that:
 - Audits current tourism attractions, facilities, events, trails and initiatives, and actions to enhance appeal and use.
 - Identifies opportunities to create new tourism products, especially related local heritage, educational agricultural and water assets.
 - Recommends ways to enhance marketing, customer service, community storytelling and operator networking.

Timeframe: Immediate to Medium Term

2. Instigate an **entrance sign highlighting Yanco's needs and opportunities for specific businesses**. Trial this initiative with a sign seeking a hairdresser.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

3. Support the **Yanco All-Servicemen's Club** with two projects to enhance greater use of the Club and their services, namely:
 - Fundraising for a Club lift to enhance access to the upper floor.
 - Planning for the creation of a free caravan site behind the Club.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

4. Establish a Task Team to promote, initiate and advocate for a **walking track between Ski and Middle Beaches**.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

5. Support the **Yanco Powerhouse Museum Association** to grow its volunteer base, exhibit spaces, visitor numbers, and range of visitor activities.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

6. Seek support from the Leeton Visitor Information Centre for a **QR code system** for Yanco tourism information.

Timeframe: Immediate

7. Support the continuation and expansion of the **Twilight and Hall Markets**.

Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

8. Initiate dialogue with **Yanco Agricultural Institute** regarding greater utilisation of their facilities, including kitchen, conference spaces and Amaroo Motel.

Timeframe: Short-Term and Ongoing

LEAD GROUP

YTIC
LSC
LVIC
YASC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Yanco business community
YPMA
LDLALC
YAHS
YAI
YCWA
LMAG
RDA Riverina

BBRF
NPWS
ML
NSW SCP
Riverina Tourism
NSW Destination Tourism
RA

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Six

Ageing in Place

ACTIONS

6

- 1. Explore and pursue options and funding possibilities to develop a Yanco model based on the **‘Staying in Place’ initiative**, similar to the Bell Cares model now being implemented in 60+ small towns nationwide.
Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing
- 2. Encourage and coordinate **services operating in the Leeton Shire Council to help seniors better navigate health and ageing options.**
Timeframe: Short-Term and Ongoing
- 3. Create a Task Team for the establishment of a **Community Shed (Men’s and Women’s)** in Yanco.
Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing
- 4. Advocate to health services in Leeton for **weekly doctors’ surgery visit** to Yanco.
Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing
- 5. Advocate for **improved transport options** to and from Leeton.
Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUP

LSC
YTIC
YCWA

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Bell Cares
Visiting service groups
Eventide Homes
AMSA

YPMA
YASC
FRRR



Abbreviations

AMSA	Australian Men's Shed Association
BOI	Bank of I.D.E.A.S.
BBRF	Building Better Regions Fund of the Australian Government
CWA	Country Women's Association
DPIRD	NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
FRRR	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
LDLALC	Leeton and District Local Aboriginal Land Council
LMAG	Leeton Museum and Art Gallery
LSC	Leeton Shire Council
LVIC	Leeton Visitors Information Centre
MIA	Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area
ML	Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc.
NPWS	NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
NSW	New South Wales
NSW SCP	NSW Sustainability Community Program
RA	Rural Aid
RDA	Riverina - Regional Development Australia Riverina
YAHS	Yanco Agricultural High School
YAI	Yanco Agricultural Institute
YASC	Yanco All-Servicemen's Club Ltd
YCWA	Yanco Country Women's Association
YPS	Yanco Public School
YPC P&C	Yanco Public School Parents and Citizens Committee
YPMA	Yanco Powerhouse Museum Association Inc.
YTIC	Yanco Town Improvement Committee

Acknowledgements

The formulation of this 'Community Development Action Plan' was initiated and coordinated by the Leeton Shire Council and the Yanco 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 Tracey Hamilton and Tessa Hamilton. The insights, opinions and ideas of students at Yanco Public School and Yanco Agricultural High 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 Yanco. 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.



Yanco

NEW SOUTH WALES

