

Omeo Region Community Plan 2012 – 2017

Incorporating Omeo, Benambra, Swifts Creek,
Ensley and surrounding areas

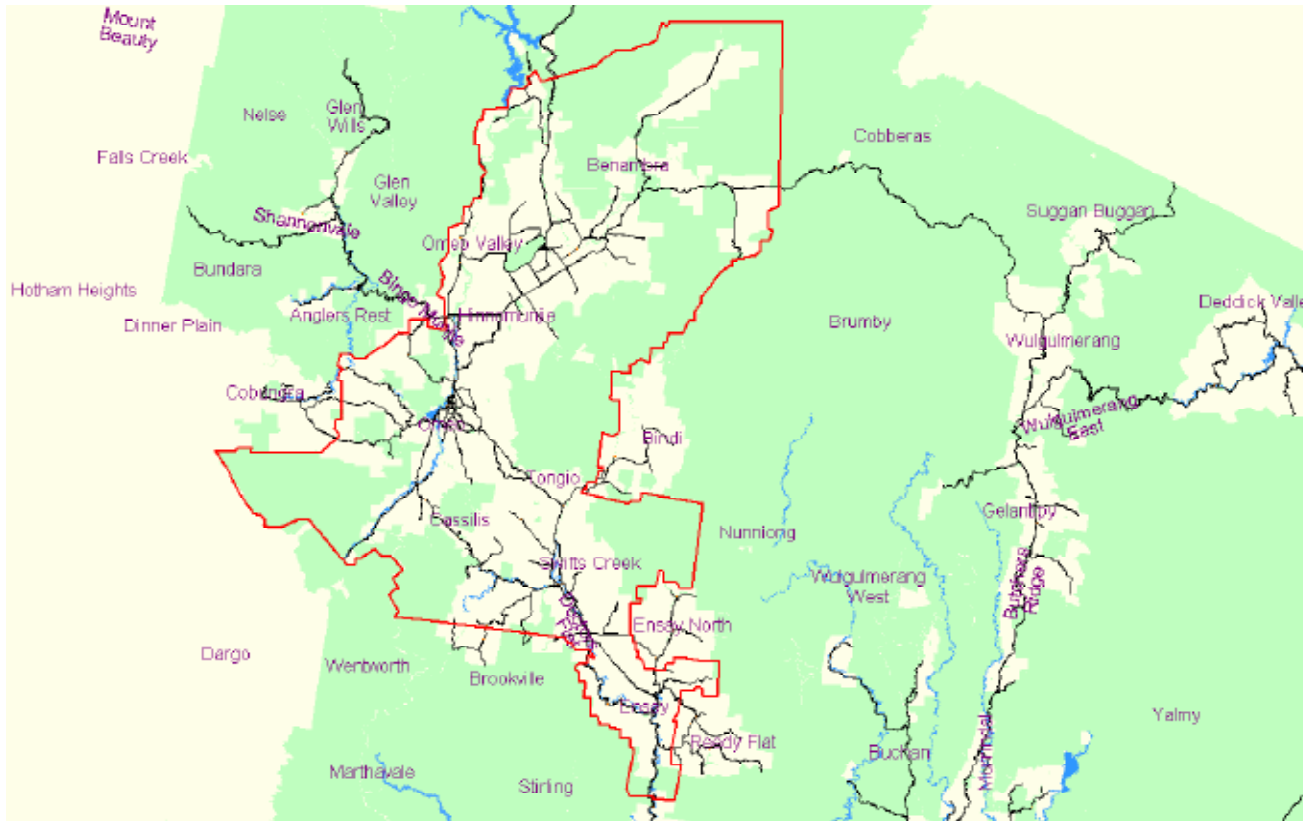




Table of Contents

Our Place	1
Our Plan	2
What is in this plan for our district?.....	2
Consulting with the community	3
What do we hope to achieve?.....	3
Our Future	3
Liveability.....	4
Sustainability	6
Productivity.....	7
Governance.....	8
Acknowledgements	9
Getting Involved	9

Omeo Region



The Omeo Region is made up of four townships: Omeo, Benambra, Swifts Creek and Ensley. The first inhabitants of the Omeo region were the Aboriginal people of the Kurnai Nation.

White settlement of the region began in 1835, for the purposes of agriculture. In 1851, the discovery of gold brought a large multi-cultural population to the area, followed by several mining booms that provided short-term financial stability to the region. The gold rush had reached its peak by the 1880s.

The timber mills in Swifts Creek, Cassilis, Brookville, Omeo, Ensley and Benambra have historically been a major employer for the district's residents. Only one timber mill continues to operate in this area today.

These days the region is sustained by a mix of farming, tourism, timber and to a small degree, mining. Omeo's high country is also renowned for its natural beauty and the iconic High Country Cattlemen and Horsemen who cleared and developed this area in the early days.

Our Plan

What is in this plan for our District?

This document contains information about planning for change in our community. This process is an ongoing commitment between East Gippsland Shire Council and the communities of the Omeo Region. Having a community plan in place will help Council to prioritise what you have told us matters most.

Information in this plan has been collected through community consultation and a volunteer planning group, who have worked with Council to give a voice to our region. The consultation process has provided an opportunity to identify projects and opportunities for Omeo and surrounding townships and to learn about future impacts on the region.

The Omeo Region has been working in partnership with the Council for some time and some projects have already been completed, with others in development. These include:

- Bitumen sealing of the Omeo Highway.
- Lookout facilities on Great Alpine Road.
- Recreational Vehicle (RV) camping and dump point facilities.
- Tourism promotion through East Gippsland Marketing Inc. and Visitor Information Centres.
- Upgrades to toilet blocks at the Omeo Caravan Park and Omeo Recreation Reserve.
- Local Incident Management Plans for each township either completed or in draft.
- Alpine Bus Service trial – Council is in contact with the Department of Transport (DoT) to lobby for a permanent service to support local and tourist transport access.
- Ensley Streetscape improvements planned.
- Omeo Zoning Review commenced.
- National Broadband Network (NBN) – Advocating for potential pilot program in the region.
- Review of Visitor Information Centres.
- Employment of local maintenance crews.
- Support for a range of annual events.
- Swifts Creek Caravan Park Management review.
- A new Waste Management Strategy is being developed with opportunities for community input.

Consulting with the community

A draft community plan was sent out to all residents in the District in October for a four-week period of consultation. Over 80 submissions were received. The content of these informed this final version. Thanks to all the people who contributed their ideas and views.

What do we hope to achieve?

The people of the Omeo Region have a strong sense of ‘community spirit’ and ‘place’ and are passionate about the environment in which they live. This was evident at two East Gippsland Shire Council forums recently held in Omeo, where participants had the opportunity to express their aspirations, visions and concerns going forward.

- Omeo Region Business Forum – 2 March 2011
- Omeo Region Scenario Planning Workshop – 11 April 2011

Our Future

The People of the Omeo Region want;

- **A place which provides opportunities to raise families and live well.** We will prioritise seeking improvements to health services, access to quality early childhood services, help for older people to stay in their homes and farming families to stay on their land.
- **A friendly, welcoming place that encourages and promotes tourism and event opportunities.** We will build partnerships with East Gippsland Shire Council, Alpine Shire Council, tourism agencies and providers to maximise the tourism potential of our region.
- **A place that values both traditional and contemporary interests.** We will prioritise the preservation of our historic precincts and advocate for sensitive and responsible future development.
- **Partnership between community and businesses through working collaboratively.** We will encourage partnerships with new and traditional industries, enhanced by new opportunities for employment to ensure economic and environmental sustainability.

Liveability

The following table outlines the projects listed for consideration by the community.

Priority table as determined by the Omeo Region Planning Partnership Group
1 – High 2 – Medium High 3 – Medium 4 – Medium Low 5 - Low

Objectives	Strategies and Actions
To provide improved access to a diverse range of recreational and active pursuits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend Livingstone Park playground facilities and repair existing swimming pool infrastructure. 1• Design and construct a walking path in Livingstone Park from the bridge to the rotunda.1• Seek Council support to source funding for reconstruction of the Swifts Creek Netball/Tennis Courts to comply with Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) standards. 1• Reach an agreement between the Department of Education, East Gippsland Shire Council and the community on the management and operation of the Swifts Creek Swimming Pool for public use. 1• Design and seek funding for walking tracks in and around Swifts Creek to promote ‘active transport’, including the completion of ‘Poets Walk’ and link routes around Swifts Creek. 2• Develop a concept design for a walking/cycling/horse riding track around the Benambra township. 2• Implement the walking/cycling path proposal along McFarlane Street Benambra. 1• Investigate and improve the safety and vehicle priority at the McFarlane Street/Gibbo Street intersection in Benambra. 1• Investigate options for transport linkages to sport and recreational opportunities, locally and regionally. 4• Advocate for development of ‘huts’ accommodation to support eco-tourism and promote adventure tourism. 5• Identify options for improvements to the Benambra Tennis/Netball courts to comply with OH&S. 5• Investigate the existing plan for seven aged care units in Ensay next to the Bush Nursing Centre. 5• Replace old benches near the Omeo Pool. 2• Identify and seek funding for improvements to the Swifts Creek football/netball amenities, particularly upgrades to the hot water system and showers.1• Explore opportunities for a footbridge to be located on the walk to the caravan park with the existing track maintained. 2• Work with relevant agencies to maintain and upgrade the walk from Livingstone Park to the Oriental Claims. 1• Investigate options for the access track to Oriental Claims to be improved. 2• Develop strategies to attract more adventure-based activities such as mountain biking, focusing on the natural environment.3

Objectives	Strategies and Actions
To provide improved access to a diverse range of recreational and active pursuits cont....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the High Country Physical Activity Reference Group to support implementation of the Omeo District Physical Activity Plan. 2 Investigate and prioritise improvements to the Swifts Creek Skate Park - bubble taps, join footpath to the park, spray art, shade/weather covering and install a half pipe. 1 Investigate improving access to the Tambo River swimming holes; provide seating, tables, diving board and swings. 3 Connect transport to Lakes Entrance over the summer months. 2 Investigate the development of a motocross track in the region. 3 Explore opportunities around developing greater access to existing public facilities for young people and the possible development of a youth space. 2
To foster a healthy and safe community engaged in arts, cultural and social activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to increase the arts and culture presence in the region and showcase local artists, stonemasons, craft activities and promote local materials. 2 Look for opportunities to provide for independent living aged-care units in Swifts Creek. 1 Explore the possibility of getting toilet amenities in Day Street Omeo upgraded to cater for people of all abilities and provide a baby change facility. 1 Investigate possibilities of putting a shade sail over the Swifts Creek Playground and providing seating for parents. 2 Seek ways to improve the safety and overall appeal of the Play-ground in the Omeo gardens. 3 Support and acknowledge those who volunteer and work tirelessly in the community in keeping facilities and services operational. 2 Explore ways of providing more entertainment for the over 65s in the community. 5 Assist formation of a working party to develop old equipment stored at Dormit Mill as a historic area. 5 Investigate fixing sewerage problems in the main street of Swifts Creek. 3 Investigate opportunities to install more portable picnic tables and seating at the Omeo Recreation Reserve. 3 Explore options of creating disabled access toilets in Benambra and appropriate pathway linkages. 2 Investigate ways of upgrading the kitchen facilities at the Benambra Recreation Reserve, especially in times of emergency. 2 Assist charities and organisations to source and apply for grants to keep them going. 3

Sustainability

A sustainable, healthy and diverse natural environment.

Objectives	Strategies and Actions
To protect, value and utilise the natural environment and to encourage responsible tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to advocate to VicRoads regarding sealing the Benambra-Corryong Road. 1 Investigate ways to expand and re-brand eco-tourism opportunities and link in with all stakeholders including Alpine Shire Council to develop and resource the appeal and reach. 2 Develop a strategic and targeted marketing campaign of the Omeo Region and work in partnership with stakeholders to provide tourism linkages. 2 Explore the possibility of a feasibility study around the development of an Alpine Sanctuary within the National Park, with the objective of creating a Native Wildlife Sanctuary. 5 Beautify the entrances to Omeo by planting trees. 1 Beautify and regularly maintain nature strips around Omeo and install feature gardens around the Council building. 1 Liaise with relevant agencies to investigate options to install better directional signage to places such as Moscow Villa loop drive, Ensay Doctors Flat Road, Victoria Falls Road, etc. 3 Work with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) on noxious weed compliance on private land. 3
To maintain a built environment that is both proactive and sensitive to the Region's natural attributes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of and information on sources of alternative energy, such as wind turbines, solar and bio-fuels. 4 Explore funding opportunities to revamp and renovate the Omeo Recreation Reserve building to better meet user needs. 1 Continue to advocate to VicRoads on behalf of the community to maintain and upgrade the Great Alpine Road (GAR). 1 Promote alpine roads as iconic touring routes, which link the driving experience with the pristine and beautiful scenery. 1 Investigate levelling out of area around Ensay War Memorial for ease of mowing and maintenance. 3 Explore ways to better promote High Country Huts access and educate tourists about use and respect of such places. 3 Work with Parks Victoria to improve access from the Tablelands into the Dartmouth Dam area. 2 Work with lead agencies to develop and implement a consistent approach to blackberry eradication along roadsides in the region. 3 Improve tourist attraction to McMillans Lookout, by removing and pruning wattles, etc. 5 Investigate ongoing ways of reducing road vegetation in relation to fire prevention. 3

Productivity

A progressive community that encourages business and agriculture to thrive and develop sustainably

Objectives	Strategies and Actions
To have sustainable and viable farming, timber and tourism industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore opportunities to develop new industries based on our competitive strengths and local expertise, e.g. fine-furniture production. 3● Explore possibilities around diversified agricultural pursuits suited to the Omeo Region, e.g. Omeo gum, eucalyptus oil and dandelion. 3● Explore opportunities to create local fresh food markets. 2● Identify and support ways to address the lack of opportunity for farmers to socialise and support each other, particularly in times of adversity, e.g. droughts, floods, fire and addressing social disconnection and isolation. 2● Work with Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to identify firewood resources from clearing activities and the potential for public firewood collection at designated locations. 3● Explore commercial opportunities for hardwood firewood such as fast-growing black wattle, found in abundance in the region. 3● Investigate rezoning around Omeo and Swifts Creek townships to support new business and rural ownership. 1● Explore setting up a Beef Producers Cluster to promote High Country beef. 2● Investigate parking for large vehicles in Swifts Creek, e.g. buses and RVs. 2● Pursue educational opportunities to up-skill local people for work in the mining industry. 1● Link tourism and farming ventures to develop new experiences for visitors to the area. 3● Advocate to the relevant authorities for increased funding to control wild dogs in the region. 2● Implement RV parking in Omeo. 1● Explore opportunities to upgrade facilities at the Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve to accommodate RV parking. 3
To provide the opportunity for community and businesses to grow and expand to meet the <i>tourism demand</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore ways to build retail capability and capacity in service provision to meet the needs of local and tourism markets. 3● Utilise the proposed Stockman Mine investment to assist traditional industries. 1● Work with the Stockman Mine Project to support this investment, generating social and economic benefits locally. These might include providing training and employment for local people, providing opportunities for off-farm employment, supporting local providers, agreements to minimise disruption, setting up a community fund and supporting local voluntary groups. 1● Actively manage the impacts of mining activity in the region to maximise the community benefits and minimise negative impacts. 1● Look at creative ideas for using vacant shop spaces. 2● Investigate the possibility of creating an annual event unique to Omeo. 2● Look at ways of trying to connect local businesses to work more collaboratively to achieve shared success for the region. 1● Seek funding to upgrade the Omeo Justice Precinct area. 2● Explore opportunities to target tour-bus companies to stop in Omeo and establish what is required to support them. 1● Complete Stage 3 of the Urban Design Framework (UDF) in the Omeo and Swifts Creek townships. 1

Objectives	Strategies and Actions
To provide the opportunity for community and businesses to grow and expand to meet the <i>tourism demand cont...</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore options to develop and promote the Cassilis Historic Heritage area. 3● Investigate a central booking service for tourism packages in the region. 1● Investigate feasibility and funding options for a Hall of Fame to showcase the region's history and characters. 1● Improve promotion and booking arrangements for the Swifts Creek Camp Park. 2● Prioritise and seek funding to implement improvements to the Swifts Creek Camp Park, including resolution of sewerage issues. 2● Explore opportunities to integrate transport links to increase non self-drive tourism, e.g. train to bus. 1● Work with appropriate bodies to promote access to the snow via Omeo and network with Dinner Plain and Mt Hotham on tourism and employment. 2● Assess banking services to determine if they are meeting the current needs of the region. 1● Advocate for improvements to technology in the region including broadband, internet, digital TV and greater mobile phone coverage. 1● Advocate to power providers to upgrade power lines from Bairnsdale to the region. 5● Create a truck/RV/caravan parking area at Wattle Circle, which could also be used in times of emergency for helicopter landing to attend accidents on the Great Alpine Road. 2● Look at ways to promote iconic High Country drives such as the Falls Creek to Mt Hotham loop. 3● Work with Council's planners to place a covenant on shop fronts in Omeo to retain the character of the town. Encourage painting in heritage colours, etc. 3● Investigate rubbish collection for Cobungra residents. 2● Look at ways to accommodate remote placement of Council employees and their families to the region. 3● Look at ways to develop and promote employment and educational opportunities to aid youth retention and school transition. 1

Governance

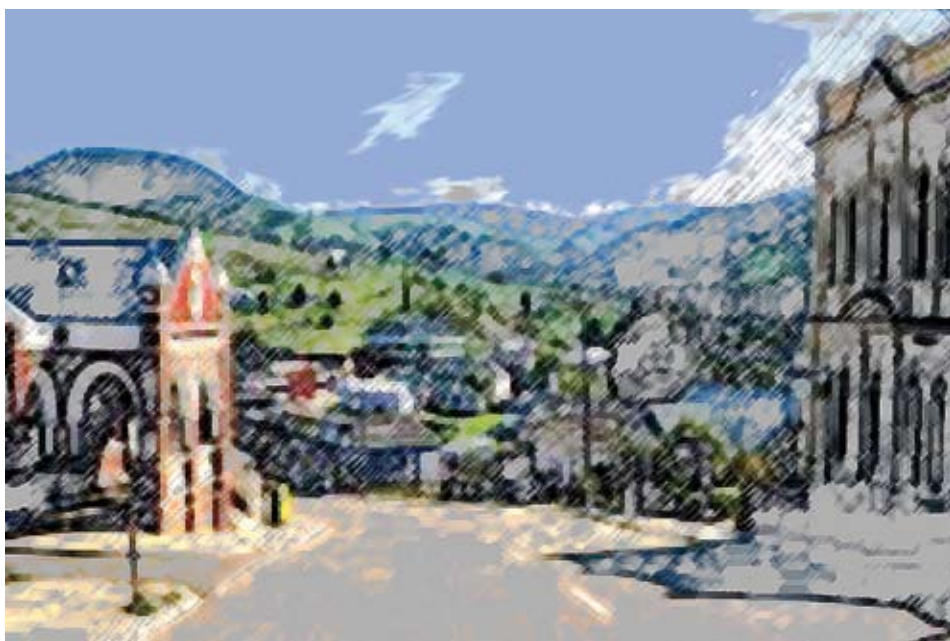
An open and accountable system of governance

Objectives	Strategies and Actions
To have strong leadership and prudent management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Build a responsible organisation that actively works with the community, providing strong leadership and advocacy. 1● Provide opportunities for community involvement in decisions affecting the future development of the region and explore formal mechanisms for ongoing consultation. 1

Acknowledgements

The Omeo District Planning Partnership Group members are:

Di Pendergast – Community Representative
Graham Symons – Community Representative
Maureen Webb – Community Representative
Gavin Murphy – Victoria Police
Don Shaw – Department of Primary Industries
David Hill - Elders
Rod O'Connell – O'Connells Omeo Bus Services
Marijs Last – Omeo District Health
David Foster – Parks Victoria
Roslyn Smith – East Gippsland TAFE
Rosemary Fitzgerald – Benambra Neighbourhood House



Getting Involved:

In the coming months, we will be developing projects to fulfil the aspirations of our Community Plan. If you feel inspired and want to participate, please contact Michelle Shaw, Community Planning Facilitator on **5153 9500** or email **feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au**