



LEONGATHA KNIGHTS FOOTBALL CLUB

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 - 2030



Introduction

Leongatha Knights Football Club is a community based not-for-profit sporting organisation focused on providing interactive, fun, enthusiastic and encouraging soccer activities for participants, of all ages, genders and abilities.

Founded in 2004, the club is located in Leongatha, a small rural farming community in South Gippsland Shire. Its home ground is based at the Mary Mackillop Regional College, with which the club has a positive working relationship and through which the club maintains its facilities.

The Knights field teams in the Gippsland Soccer League (GSL) which incorporates nine member clubs across four local government areas – Bass Coast, Baw Baw, Cardinia and South Gippsland shires. The club and league are affiliated with Football Victoria (FV) and Football Australia (FA) and the Laws of the Game are governed by FIFA.

Leongatha Knights Football Club is run by a dedicated voluntary committee of management and is dependent upon the efforts of the committee and parents alike for fundraising and working bees to facilitate change to benefit the club and ultimately the local community.

The club is already performing at a high level in many respects, particularly in terms of diverse and inclusive programming. However, there remains significant opportunity for further growth for the Knights to become a leading grassroots sports club in the region.

Acknowledgments

Leongatha Knights Football Club acknowledges the support of the South Gippsland Shire Council in the development of this strategic plan through its Community Grants Program.

The LKFC committee would like to thank GippSport Community Solutions for coordinating the strategic planning process and club members who have contributed to the project, as well as staff at South Gippsland Shire Council, Football Victoria and other important stakeholders for providing background information and support.

LKFC recognises and acknowledges that our home ground is located on the Traditional Lands of the Bunurong People. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and extend those respects to other First Nations Peoples we meet whilst playing our great game.



Local Context

Gippsland is a geographically, socially and economically diverse region. At approximately 41,000 km², it is the largest region in Victoria and is home to more than 270,000 people.

With a population of 30,500 people, South Gippsland is the region's smallest Local Government Area and among the oldest in terms of median age at 49 years.

Leongatha is located 135 kilometers south-east of Melbourne in the foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges. With a population of just under 6000 people, Leongatha is the largest town in South Gippsland shire, with marginal growth over the past decade.

The town has a proud sporting history, with high levels of participation and the development of elite athletes across a range of sports.

Facilities

There is acknowledgment within the club and among many of its stakeholders that the Knights are outgrowing their facilities at Mary Mackillop College. However, a shortage of suitable parcels of land currently restricts South Gippsland Shire's capacity to fund the development of the necessary infrastructure to enable a move.

The most pragmatic method for the club to progress is to focus efforts on maximising the utilisation and usability of its existing site, with a view to investing in assets that can benefit the club now and through any transition to new opportunities that may materialise in the longer term. This may include transferrable items such as portable bench shelters and spectator seating.

Recent upgrades to the pitch drainage, surface and lighting demonstrate that opportunities to work with the Diocese and Council to improve facilities do exist and support the case for potential future upgrades.



Participation

Participation at LKFC has been steady and ranked third among GSL member clubs in season 2024. The club had 189 registered players, of which 50 were women or girls (26%) and fielded eight teams across the seven grades of GSL competition – senior men’s, reserve men’s, senior women’s, under-17 mixed, under-14 mixed, under-13 girls and under-12 mixed (2).

The club also offers a MiniRoos program for participants aged 4-11 years, with under-6, under-8 and under-10 teams forming part of the GSL’s South Gippsland hub, which in 2024 featured teams from Korumburra, Mirboo North and Trafalgar.

PLAYER AGE	0-11 years				12-17 years				18+ years			
GSL SEASON	2022	2023	2024	% ↑↓	2022	2023	2024	% ↑↓	2022	2023	2024	% ↑↓
Men/Boys	25	38	58	132%	31	47	45	45%	28	34	36	29%
Women/Girls	8	9	12	50%	16	11	15	-6%	17	14	23	35%
TOTAL	33	47	70	112%	47	58	60	28%	45	48	59	31%

GIPPSLAND SOCCER LEAGUE CLUB	Women/Girls				Men/Boys				TOTAL			
	2022	2023	2024	% ↑↓	2022	2023	2024	% ↑↓	2022	2023	2024	% ↑↓
Phillip Island	42	45	65	55%	151	205	214	42%	193	250	279	45%
Drouin	55	42	53	-4%	131	164	198	51%	186	206	251	35%
Leongatha	41	34	50	22%	84	119	139	65%	125	153	189	51%
Inverloch	49	39	45	-8%	123	135	113	-8%	172	174	158	-8%
Wonthaggi	37	36	37	0%	59	86	103	75%	96	122	140	46%
Korumburra	40	25	37	-8%	60	62	88	47%	100	87	125	25%
Trafalgar	13	7	23	77%	51	47	63	24%	64	54	86	34%
Lang Lang	16	21	22	38%	44	56	54	23%	60	77	76	27%
Mirboo North	26	37	29	12%	22	54	46	109%	48	91	75	56%

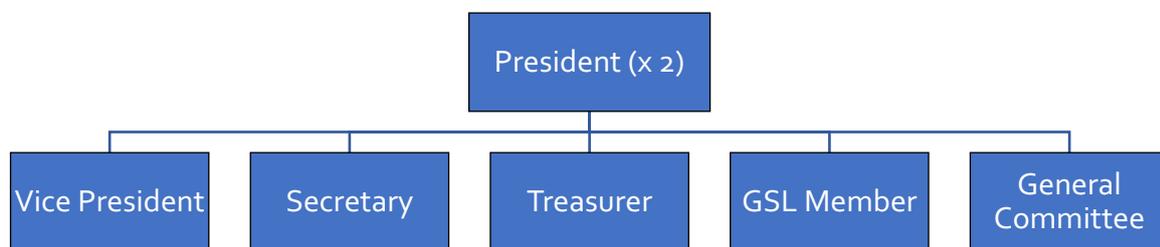
In addition to the traditional GSL competition offerings outlined above, LKFC has provided alternative participation opportunities in the form of the following programs:

- All-Abilities
- GO Girls
- GO Soccer Mums
- GO Fives (social off-season competition)
- School clinics



Organisational Structure

LKFC is an Incorporated Association affiliated with Football Victoria as its peak body. Under its constitution, the club's volunteer committee comprises a three-person executive consisting of a president, secretary and treasurer, and up to seven directors (general committee members). The chart below represents the club's current structure, which features co-presidents, a vice-president and a league representative (GSL Member), all of which are voted positions.



The general committee features the following roles:

- Communications & Marketing Coordinator
- Sponsorship & Fundraising Coordinator
- Canteen Coordinator
- Events Coordinator
- Club Safety Officer
- Registrar Officer
- Uniform/Merchandise Officer
- Equipment Coordinator is responsible for coordinating club equipment
- Grounds Committee



SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was developed in consultation with members of the LKFC committee following a review of the survey results and stakeholder feedback.

- Culture and reputation of inclusion and respect
- Participation numbers (teams in every age group)
- Alternative programming (all-abilities, GoFives, school clinics, etc.)
- On-field success of senior teams
- Coaching standards and opportunities
- Gender equality
- Experienced and engaged committee and leadership
- Child safe compliance
- Facility limitations (incl. development opportunities)
- Limited social activities
- Community presence/visibility in a competitive sporting landscape
- Links between senior and junior programs
- Coach education
- Internal and external communications
- Outdated canteen facilities





Strategic Plan

Vision:

"To be the sporting club of choice in Leongatha and a source of pride for the local community."

Club Values:

- **Passion** – for our club, community and the game
- **Leadership** – is a responsibility we embrace and value
- **Diversity** – makes us stronger
- **Opportunity** – for everyone to grow on and off the pitch
- **Innovation** – always looking for ways to move forward

Goals:

1. Sustainable financial performance underpinned by stable governance and documentation
2. Provide an inclusive and welcoming environment to all, supported by a diverse range of participation, development and engagement opportunities
3. Foster partnerships and community links to ensure we can promote, advocate for and grow our club, league and sport, including volunteers
4. Strive to provide facilities that are reflective of the passion and endeavours of our members and the club

Implementation Plan

The following is a series of actions that have been developed in line with the club's objectives and values, to be implemented over the coming five 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.

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



Goal 1: Sustainable financial performance underpinned by stable governance and documentation

#	Action	Priority
1.1	Conduct regular committee meetings with good meeting procedures to ensure accountable decision making, including financial management and time management and focus	Ongoing
1.2	Review the club's constitution to ensure it fairly and accurately reflects the current iteration of the club and complies with the most recent standards and requirements	High
1.3	Routinely review club policies and procedures. Identify and fill gaps and update existing documentation where needed. Prioritise child safety requirements given the club's home base is on school grounds	Ongoing
1.4	Require coaches to sign the club's code of conduct and comply with relevant club policies	High
1.5	Create and maintain a roster for parents and players with volunteer tasks to spread the load across the whole club and build community/club connection	High
1.6	Develop and provide written role descriptions for volunteer positions to assist with role clarity and manage concerns regarding commitment and workload required	High
1.7	Diversify the club's revenue streams, including sponsorship. Explore partnership models involving on and off-field attire, development projects and programming/events	High
1.8	Implement a succession plan for key roles, particularly executive committee members and coaches	High
1.9	Further develop the club's organisation structure to account and plan for growth. Include player-coach and team-referee ratios to help identify need	High



Goal 2: Provide an inclusive and welcoming environment to all, supported by a diverse range of participation, development and engagement opportunities

#	Action	Priority
2.1	Explore ways to better link the club’s junior and senior programs – e.g. more overlap of training sessions, whole of club social activities, matchday mascot opportunities, buddy days, etc.	High
2.2	Increased communication of club activities to all club members – i.e. promotion of game times for all age groups to increase awareness and encourage more attendance/support	Ongoing
2.3	Ensure club promotional materials and information is easy to read and reflects a broad demographic. Use multiple communication platforms	Medium
2.4	Regularly survey members to obtain feedback on what can be done better, with a focus on area such as program offerings, events and culture	Medium
2.5	Provide an updated welcome pack featuring information about the club, its people and activities and the various participation/engagement opportunities it offers, including volunteer roles	Ongoing
2.6	Establish and support past player and other social groups to maintain long term involvement in, and connection to, the club	Low
2.7	Continue to explore the delivery of non-traditional programs and activities to help the club appeal to a broader demographic and support inclusion/participation, e.g. All Abilities and GO Football offerings, including Go Girls and Go Soccer Mums	High
2.8	Actively engage with Football Victoria/Football Australia programs and initiatives – such as Club Changer – to help develop the club	High
2.9	Develop and adopt a Fair Access Policy to ensure gender equitable access to, and use of, the club’s facilities for women and girls	Medium
2.10	Strive for gender balance across the club (players, coaches and volunteers) in line with Football Victoria’s FOOTBALLHERWAY strategy which seeks to reach 50/50 gender balance by 2027	Low



Goal 3: Foster partnerships and community links to ensure we can advocate for, promote and grow our club, league and sport, including volunteers

#	Action	Priority
3.1	Contribute meaningfully to all league meetings and working groups (e.g. women and girls sub-committee) and ensure effective two-way communication to support football development	Ongoing
3.2	Continue to explore models of paid administration/program delivery to reduce the volunteer burden and increase the quality of output in key areas. Consider partnering with other clubs (soccer and beyond) on shared service models	Medium
3.3	Investigate and offer development opportunities for committee members and volunteers i.e. governance training, sports training, coaching courses, etc. Advocate for and offer to host relevant sessions for members from across the league and community as needed	High
3.4	Encourage and support coaches to attend relevant training courses and ensure they are thoroughly supported in personal development, to enable a tiered, consistent and interlinked coaching cohort across all age groups	High
3.5	Tap into resources offered by Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Gippsland to build the club's volunteering capacity through online management and community engagement tools	Low
3.6	Develop a marketing plan to increase visibility of the club in the community, encompassing physical signage (static and digital) and storytelling	High
3.7	Support important community/health promotion campaigns and initiatives e.g. Pride Cup, Orange Round, Gippy Girls Can, Love The Game and Play Well	Medium
3.8	Build partnerships with local businesses and community groups to tap into interest generated by national and international football events to help local football fans make the link to local engagement/participation opportunities and grow the club e.g. watch parties, junior clinics, social tournaments (mini world cup)	Low
3.9	Encourage and support members to embrace alternative participation programs, such as futsal. This could include entering teams under the LKFC badge to increase links and visibility	Medium



Goal 4: Strive to provide facilities that are reflective of the passion and endeavours of our members and the club

#	Action	Priority
4.1	Monitor and engage with industry and Council policies, programs, procedures, strategies and plans that provide opportunities for the Club and implement where possible to strengthen club operations	High
4.2	Provide input to the Football Victoria Facilities Strategy 2025-2035 to ensure LKFC's facility needs are identified and documented	Very High
4.3	Maintain a strong ongoing partnership with South Gippsland Shire Council and State Government (DEECA/SRV) concerning recreation facilities planning, including exploring opportunities to source a parcel of land for the development of future facilities for the club	High
4.4	Provide input into all MMC facility master planning/community consultation projects; maintain regular and frequent engagement with MMC Facilities Management	High
4.5	Ensure effective communication of participation/engagement growth and maximisation of facility access/usage with key stakeholders (such as Victorian State Government) to strengthen any case for future facility development	Medium
4.6	Reconfigure and better utilise the club's social rooms to encourage more social engagement among members and visitors during soccer times.	High
4.7	Explore opportunities to invest in portable infrastructure to increase the safety and comfort of players on home matchdays e.g. portable bench shelters	Medium
4.8	Consider investing in portable spectator shelters/seating. Consider branding/signage opportunities for club and sponsors	Medium
4.9	Continue to work with MMC and the Diocese of Sale to develop facilities, with a focus on accessibility – e.g. a sealed path to the main pitch – that can benefit the school and the club	High
4.10	Upgrade the canteen facilities utilised by the club to ensure they meet health standards and can accommodate the provision of a wider range of hot foods	High



Appendix

- Summarised Survey Results

Disclaimer of liability

The information contained in this report is intended for the specific use of the key stakeholders that have provided input into this planning project. All recommendations by GippSport are based on information provided by or on behalf of the committee, stakeholders and Council and it has relied upon such information being correct at the time this report has been prepared.

Readers should note this report might include implicit projections about the future, which by their nature, are uncertain and cannot be relied upon. They are dependent on potential events or technical assessments, which have not yet occurred.

References

The following references have been used in the development of this report:

- Government websites – Planning scheme data and maps, grant information.
- South Gippsland Shire Council website and relevant planning documents.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics – Population data.
- Football Victoria resources
- Other Recreation studies and strategies as identified in the document



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