



# **Gold Coast Amateur Radio Society**

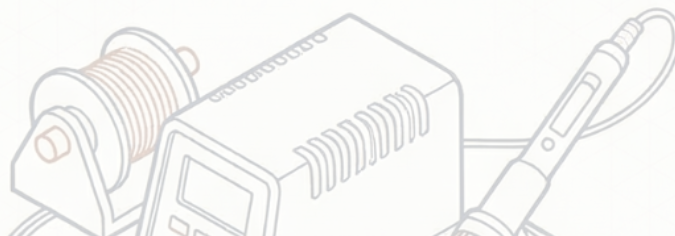


**Towards  
Tomorrow**

**2026-2030  
Strategic Plan**



**Approved for Release  
4 May 2026**



# Executive Summary

For over 50 years, the Gold Coast Amateur Radio Society (GCARS) has served as a vital hub for communications infrastructure and technical experimentation. Established in 1970, our Society has built and maintained an extensive, self-funded network of high-site repeaters and mobile assets, including our autonomous Community Communications Centre (CCC), which was constructed to provide critical resilience during community and emergencies.

However, the global technology landscape has shifted.

The traditional "hobbyist radio club" model—reliant on an ageing demographic and unsustainable \$50 annual membership fees—is facing an existential threat.

To secure our future, GCARS must execute a strategic evolution.

## Why does this matter ?

### Protecting Your Wallet:

The club's operational costs (insurance, repeater power bills) have skyrocketed. Instead of massively hiking your legacy membership fees to cover these costs, this strategy shifts the financial burden onto new, revenue streams.

### Securing Our Repeaters:

By bringing in government grant money and paying students, we guarantee that our core high-site repeater networks and amateur radio infrastructure remain 100% funded and operational.

### Zero Obligation:

You are not required to teach classes, learn coding, or participate in the new STEM programs. You get to keep playing radio in a newly renovated, fully-funded facility, while the new facility users foot the bill.

## The Evolution

We are transforming our Molendinar clubhouse from a closed social club into an **Open Community STEM and Innovation Facility**. We are repositioning RF engineering and amateur radio as the wireless backbone of modern electronics, robotics, and digital networking.

Led by a commercial executive team with proven experience in enterprise turnaround and scaling, this strategic plan outlines our transition to a multidisciplinary "Maker Space."

### Core Strategic Pillars:

#### 1. **Facility Modernisation:**

Executing a multi-phased capital works programme leveraging local and state grants (including targeted GCBF rounds). We will build a dedicated rapid-prototyping environment to enable guided and self-directed learning in electronics, robotics, telecommunications, and AI. This will include 3D fabrication equipment, electronic workspaces and, eventually, a full commercial floor and kitchen refit.

#### 2. **Paid Educational Pathways:**

Delivering structured, profitable STEM curricula tailored for children (introductory electronics/coding), youth (Cert II vocational pathways via high school partnerships), and seniors (intergenerational tech extension).

#### 3. **Commercial Event Services:**

Scaling our highly successful B2B communications division. By providing secure internet gateways and redundant radio fleets for major Gold Coast not-for-profit organisations that are organising and running major public events, we ensure robust, recurring operational revenue.

4. **Merit-Based Governance:**

Restructuring our membership to separate social access from facility usage. By implementing tiered access (up to 24/7 Key Holders) and 100% "sweat equity" rebates for active contributors, we ensure those who extract value from the facility fund its future, while rewarding those who build it.

GCARS is no longer just a place to operate radios.

We are a facility provider empowering Gold Coast residents to discover, learn, and build the technology of tomorrow.

# Context & Heritage

## A Legacy of Connectivity & Community Since 1970

For over 50 years, the Gold Coast Amateur Radio Society (GCARS) has stood as a pillar of technical experimentation and emergency resilience in South East Queensland. Operating from our long-established facility at 85 Harper St, Molendinar, GCARS has historically served as the premier hub for licensed amateur radio operators ("Hams") to collaborate, socialise, and build communications infrastructure.

Our greatest historical achievement is the extensive, self-funded RF infrastructure network we manage across the region. GCARS maintains and operates a highly sophisticated suite of high-site repeaters—most notably our installations at Wongawallen and Springbrook. This infrastructure provides critical VHF/UHF analog voice coverage, D-STAR digital networking, APRS data nodes, and CB repeaters for emergency use (Channel 5), ensuring reliable, off-grid communications during severe weather events when commercial cellular networks fail.

### Why does this matter ?

#### **Amateur Radio is Finally Protected:**

You might be surprised to learn that our current 1970s constitution's primary object is actually just the dissemination of "electronics" - and not amateur radio. This new strategic plan, and our proposed constitutional changes, will explicitly write "Amateur Radio" into our core legal purpose for the first time. This protects its place in the Club forever.

#### **Respecting Your Legacy:**

Our members are the original "Makers" long before the term existed. This strategy acknowledges that the infrastructure that has been built over the last 50 years - particularly the high-site repeaters - is the foundation of everything we are doing next. We aren't replacing the Club's history; we are building on top of it.

## **The Original "Maker" Movement**

Amateur radio operators were the original "Makers" and hardware hackers. Long before the invention of the internet or the popularisation of STEM education, GCARS members were designing circuits, building antennas from raw materials, and experimenting with radio wave propagation. The clubhouse served as an informal classroom where tribal knowledge of electronics, soldering, and RF engineering was passed down from generation to generation.

## **The Catalyst for Change**

Despite this proud history, the traditional "Amateur Radio Club" model is facing an existential threat globally. The ubiquity of the internet and smartphones has removed the novelty of simply "talking to someone on the other side of the world." and Amateur Radio no longer has the "vocational relevance" it used to. Consequently, the traditional entry pathways into the hobby have fractured.

Today, youth and young adults are drawn to technology through robotics, software programming, drones, the Internet of Things (IoT), and the burgeoning local space sector. While these modern pursuits rely heavily on the exact RF and electronics principles that GCARS masters, the club's traditional "social club" operating model has failed to bridge the gap.

We are facing an ageing demographic, with the vast majority of our membership aged 60 or older.

However, recent GCARS activities prove the demand for a new approach is already here. The overwhelming success of our recent Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) event, where local Girl Guides were taught soldering and electronic kit assembly alongside approaches from local aerospace startups seeking our collective expertise in satellite data drops, highlights a massive community need. To survive and thrive, GCARS must commercialise our knowledge, modernise our Molendinar facility, and open our doors to the broader Gold Coast tech community.

# Vision, Mission & Core Values

## From Social Club to Innovation Facility

GCARS is enacting a strategic pivot away from operating solely as a closed "hobbyist social club." Moving forward, we see ourselves as a Community Facility and Resource Provider. We are repositioning our Molendinar clubhouse from a simple meeting room into a dynamic, multi-disciplinary Applied STEM Hub.

We are not abandoning amateur radio; rather, we are elevating it. We are repositioning RF engineering as the wireless backbone of modern electronics, robotics, and digital networking.

### **Why does this matter ?**

#### **Why the "STEM" Pivot is Necessary:**

A "closed hobbyist social club" model simply does not qualify for major government grants or corporate sponsorships. To afford to keep the lights on, the clubhouse open, and the repeaters running without constantly material changes to membership fees we must operate as a broader community resource. "STEM" is the language the government uses to hand out funding.

#### **You Are Not Being Pushed Out:**

"Elevating" amateur radio means we are taking the skills you already have - RF engineering and electronics - and positioning them as the wireless backbone for modern robotics and digital networking. We aren't turning the clubhouse into a school you can't use; we are bringing in funding to modernise the facility you already enjoy.

#### **Community Resilience = Bulletproof Repeaters:**

Our core value of "Community Resilience" is a concrete promise to you: we are deeply committed to maintaining and funding the Wongawallen and Springbrook repeater networks so members always have reliable, off-grid communications when you want to play radio

## **Our New Vision**

*"To be the Gold Coast's premier community incubation facility for RF and other wireless technology, applied electronics, and STEM-based learning."*

## **Our New Mission**

*"To provide the infrastructure, mentorship, and educational pathways that empower Gold Coast residents—from youth to seniors—to discover, learn, and innovate in the fields of technology and communications."*

## Core Values

To guide our decision-making over the 2026-2030 period, GCARS adopts the following core values:

- **Meritocracy & Contribution:**

We value and reward "skin in the game." Influence within the facility is driven by active contribution (teaching, maintaining, and building) rather than mere tenure.

- **Accessible Education:**

We believe that access to high-end testing equipment, prototyping tools, and expert knowledge should not be limited by personal financial constraints. We provide the "Lab", so our community can provide the ingenuity.

- **Community Resilience:**

We remain committed to maintaining our high-site repeater network, evolving it to support modern data-mesh networks (such as LoRaWAN), and ensuring the Gold Coast has robust, off-grid communication capabilities.

- **Intergenerational Mentorship:**

We view the deep, practical knowledge of our senior members as our most valuable asset. We actively seek to bridge the generational divide by pairing the RF wisdom of the past with the coding and digital ambitions of the future.

# Situational (SWOT) Analysis

As of 2026, GCARS stands at a critical juncture. While we possess exceptional physical and intellectual assets, our traditional operating model is no longer fit for purpose. This SWOT analysis provides a transparent assessment of our current operational reality and the external environment we must navigate to successfully transition into a Community STEM Facility.

## **Why does this matter ?**

### **It's a Math Problem, Not a Member Problem:**

The SWOT analysis points out our "unsustainable" revenue model. This isn't your fault; it's just inflation. A \$50 annual fee from 15 years ago simply cannot cover the massive modern increases in insurance, electricity, and repeater maintenance. Instead of hiking your legacy fees to \$250+ to fix the math, we are identifying new opportunities to bridge the gap that seek to solve the current multi-faceted challenges.

### **Securing Our Clubhouse Lease:**

One of the biggest "Threats" identified is the loss of our tenure at the Molendinar facility. Local councils are increasingly demanding that community groups demonstrate broad public value to keep their cheap leases. Transitioning to an Applied STEM Hub proves our value to the council, permanently protecting the clubhouse.

### **Using Other People's Money:**

The "Opportunities" outlined here—like event communications and government grants—are entirely about bringing in outside cash. We are leveraging the "STEM boom" to get the government and corporate sponsors to pay for the building upgrades and repeater maintenance, keeping the financial burden off our current members.

### **Members' Knowledge is Our Biggest Strength:**

We explicitly list our members' "Deep Institutional Knowledge" as a core strength. Your ability to problem-solve and understand RF physics is something younger people simply don't learn - and in our view, desperately need, and it is the foundation we will use to build our new educational programs.

## Strengths

- **Physical Infrastructure:**

Exclusive access to our dedicated clubhouse facility at Molendinar, providing a physical anchor for our operations.

- **Mobile & Event Infrastructure:**

Ownership of a purpose-built, all-weather Community Communications Centre (CCC) designed for rapid deployment. This asset is fully autonomous, featuring a 1kVA solar array, lithium battery bank, and comprehensive multi-band radio capabilities.

- **High-Value Communications Assets:**

A self-funded, operational network of high-site repeaters across the Gold Coast (including Wongawallen and Springbrook), representing tens of thousands of dollars in capital investment and offering unparalleled RF coverage.

- **Deep Institutional Knowledge:**

A core membership base composed of technical volunteers who bring a problem-solving mindset to the field. Our operators don't just use equipment; they understand RF physics, mitigate interference, and can re-engineer on the fly.

## Weaknesses

- **Ageing Demographic:**

A severely skewed membership demographic (predominantly aged 60+), leading to a natural attrition rate that has historically outpaced new member acquisition.

- **Unsustainable Base Revenue Model:**

An over-reliance on a flat \$50/year membership fee. With approximately 75 current members, core revenue (approx. \$3,750 per annum) is barely sufficient to cover basic insurance and utilities, leaving zero capital for facility improvements.

- **Outdated Facility:**

The Molendinar clubhouse currently resembles a 1980s social club rather than a modern tech facility. The kitchen is outdated, the flooring is deteriorating, and the space lacks the OH&S compliance (such as active fume extraction) required to host formal, paid educational programmes.

- **Brand Perception:**

A pervasive, albeit unintentional, public perception of the Society as an "old men's club" creates friction in attracting youth, young professionals, and diverse demographics.

## Opportunities

- **Community Event Services:**

There is a proven, lucrative market for providing highly resilient, turnkey communication solutions at high-density community events. Mobile networks often fail under crowd saturation, making our secure Event Internet Gateways and commercial-grade radio fleets, with trained operators, valuable.

- **Expanding Current Commercial Successes:**

GCARS already has a strong track record of supporting complex logistics for events such as the Pacific Airshow Gold Coast, The Kokoda Challenge, and the Memory Walk & Jog. Expanding these partnerships – such as our recent proposals to provide communications for Experience Gold Coast festivals (Blues on Broadbeach, Cooly Rocks On, and Groundwater) provides significant financial upside.

- **The STEM & Maker Boom:**

There has been a recent surge in public interest in practical technology skills (robotics, coding, 3D printing, and IoT). Currently, there exists only one public-access "Maker Space" on the Gold Coast.

- **Major Grant Funding:**

Sourcing funding via government grants targeted at community resilience and STEM education. Programmes like the Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund (GCBF) and the Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) Community Grants are ideally suited to fund the \$30,000 plus facility upgrade required.

- **Educational Partnerships:**

The opportunity to collaborate with Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs) in local high schools to provide off-site, practical learning environments for students pursuing pathways in electrotechnology and telecommunications.

## Threats

- **Irrelevance and Atrophy:**

If the pivot is not executed, the Society will naturally age out of existence within the next decade.

- **Loss of Tenure:**

Government and Council landlords increasingly require community groups to demonstrate broad public value. Operating solely as a closed club risks the future security of our Molendinar clubhouse lease.

- **Internal Resistance to Change:**

The potential for a minority of members to resist the transition from a "social democracy" to a "meritocracy," stalling critical constitutional and fee-structure changes.

# Governance & Membership Restructure

To successfully transition GCARS into a self-sustaining community facility, our governance and financial models must reflect the realities of operating a modern social enterprise.

The traditional model of a flat \$50-per-year membership – where every member receives an equal vote regardless of their operational contribution – creates administrative friction and risks stalling strategic progress.

To be successful moving forward, GCARS must restructure its governance to operate as a “commercial-grade” community organisation, with modern governance standards guided by a merit-based membership system.

## **Why does this matter ?**

### **Historical Member Status & Voting Rights Are Permanently Protected:**

The absolute most important part of this restructure is the "Grandfathering" clause. If you are a current legacy member, your existing voting rights and low-cost membership are permanently locked in. You will not be forced onto the new, expensive tiers.

### **Making the "New Guys" Pay Their Fair Share:**

We are introducing the \$250 "Facility User" and \$450 "Key Holder" tiers specifically so that new people wanting 24/7 access to our shiny new gear pay the true commercial cost of running it. This stops you from subsidising someone else's increasingly expensive hobby with your membership fees.

### **Protecting Members From Massive Fee Hikes:**

To catch up with historical inflation, there will be a one-off 20% fee adjustment. However, going forward, this strategy legally caps any future increases to your grandfathered voting tier at a maximum of 5% (or CPI) per year. This strict cap protects you from sudden fee hikes, ensuring you will always pay a fraction of what the new users are charged.

### **Rewarding the Workers:**

The "Contributor" model (100% fee rebate for holding a job) is designed to reward the poor blokes actually doing the heavy lifting . By giving a free Keyholder pass to the guys fixing the repeaters and running the club, we guarantee the club's chores actually get done without burning out our volunteers.

### **Professional Management for Complex Times:**

Bringing in a leadership team with "commercial acumen" just means we have professionals handling the boring, complex legal compliance and grant writing . They do the heavy corporate lifting so you can just turn up and play radio

## Executive Leadership & Commercial Acumen

The execution of this strategic transformation is underpinned by a committee possessing deep commercial, financial, and regulatory expertise. The Society is led by seasoned corporate professionals capable of managing significant capital upgrades, complex partnerships, and service-based revenue streams.

- **Aidan Mountford, GAICD, FIML (President):**

Aidan brings decades of executive experience in enterprise transformation, mergers and acquisitions, and technology scaling. As the former COO of BigAir Group, he oversaw operations that scaled the business from \$25M to \$100M in revenue over three years. Crucially for GCARS, he possesses deep industry context as a former Vice President and Director of The Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA). His expertise ensures that all GCARS initiatives - from our Community Communications Centre deployments to the STEM Hub - are executed with uncompromising corporate governance and commercial viability.

- **Dr Ashleigh Andrews BSc(Hons) DipEd DipFS Finance DipFS Financial Planning (Secretary):**

A former Research Scientist (PhD Biochemistry & Molecular Biology) and Businessman (Computer Hardware Importer, Real Estate Finance broking and Financial planning businesses) in Victoria, Dr Andrews brings rigorous financial governance, compliance oversight, and risk management expertise to the executive. This ensures all grant funding and operational revenues are managed to the highest fiduciary standards.

## **Governance: A Merit-Based Model**

GCARS is transitioning from a traditional "social democracy" to a "meritocracy." We are separating *facility access* from *organisational governance*. Under the proposed updated constitution, voting rights will be reserved primarily for those who actively contribute to the facility's daily operations, education programmes, or financial sustainability.

## **The New Membership Tiers**

To properly monetise our high-value lab equipment and align member privileges with their financial or operational contributions, we are introducing additional membership tiers. To protect our existing membership core, it is proposed that existing membership classes be "grandfathered" and granted the rights of "Amateur Operator" if qualified or "Social Member" if not.

The existing membership classes will continue, and the existing constitutional structures for managing these historical member classes will be retained; however, new memberships will not be accepted into these historical classes.

- **The "Social" Member - \$50 / year**
  - *Profile:*  
Designed for passive supporters and aspirant amateur operators
  - *Entitlements:*  
Access to social mornings/afternoons, newsletters and club social events & talks.
  - *Restrictions:*  
**No Voting Rights.** This preserves the club's social fabric while preventing non-contributing members from blocking strategic initiatives.
  
- **The "Operator" - \$100 / year**
  - *Profile:*  
Qualified Amateur Operators.
  - *Entitlements:*  
Access to all club functions, amateur radio facilities, test equipment, loan equipment and remote access to amateur radio infrastructure.
  - *Restrictions:*  
**Voting Rights.**

- **The "Standard Facility User" - \$250 / year**
  - *Profile:*  
Ideal for students, new makers, and casual electronics hobbyists.
  - *Entitlements:*  
Unlimited bench time and use of standard lab equipment (soldering, 3D printing, test gear) during **managed hours only** (e.g., when a Key Holder is present).
  - *Restrictions:*  
No 24/7 access. No voting rights.
  
- **The "Key Holder" - \$450 / year**
  - *Profile:*  
Serious engineers, dedicated makers, and high-frequency users who require autonomy.
  - *Entitlements:*  
**24/7 unhindered RFID fob access** to the Molendinar facility (Subject to Probation Period), priority project storage lockers, and full use of all advanced technical equipment.
  - *Governance:*  
**Includes Voting Rights**, as these members are heavily invested stakeholders in the facility's success.
  
- **Tier 4: Corporate / Education Partner - \$2,000+ / year**
  - *Profile:*  
Local tech businesses, IT firms, and educational institutions.
  - *Entitlements:*  
Five transferable "Facility User" passes for their staff/students, branding rights on workbenches, and guaranteed access to the facility for corporate team-building or off-site R&D. **No voting rights.** Corporate Sponsor status on our website.

## The "Contributor" Model

To ensure the club has the volunteer labour required to maintain the facility and run our technical infrastructure, GCARS will implement a "100% Rebate" system for active contributors.

Instead of an arbitrary discount, the core "Premium Facility User" fee (\$450) is maintained in full. However, if a member accepts and consistently performs a formal operational role (e.g., Executive Committee member, Lab/Facility Supervisor, Repeater Keeper, or Lead Educator), their annual fee is **waived entirely** for the duration of their tenure.

- *The Result:*

This filters for active "doers." If a member desires a vote and 24/7 access but does not want to pay \$450, they must take a job. This guarantees our facility is well-maintained and our programmes are fully staffed.

## Transition & Implementation

To successfully execute this 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, GCARS must first modernise its operational and legal foundations. Attempting to roll out facility access, STEM education, or corporate partnerships under our legacy 1970s constitution poses severe financial and legal risks.

Therefore, the transition will be triggered by a comprehensive constitutional overhaul at the upcoming Annual/Special General Meeting, designed to protect legacy members while empowering the Management Committee to run a modern, agile organisation.

### **Why does this matter ?**

#### **Stopping Financial Waste:**

We are cutting the red tape that forces the club to pay for external auditors and archaic rubber stamps. This instantly stops us from wasting membership fees on useless administrative costs, keeping that money in the club to pay for facilities and repeaters.

#### **Iron-Clad Bank Security:**

It is 2026! We are getting rid of the outdated 1980s chequebook rules and mandating 100% Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) . This actually locks down the club's money tighter than ever, ensuring not a single cent can leave the bank without two elected committee members electronically approving it.

#### **Total Transparency at the AGM:**

The new compliance rules legally force the committee to lay all their cards on the table every single year. You get a guarantee that you will hear exactly where the money is going, that the clubhouse is actually insured, and that everything is above board.

#### **No Forced Volunteering:**

By changing the rules to allow the club to pay professional contractors (including our own expert members) to help deliver the strategy, we guarantee that you won't be pressured into teaching if you don't want to. We will pay professionals to handle the educational side so you can just enjoy the hobby.

#### **Funding the Future:**

Expanding our "Objects" to include STEM and IoT isn't about abandoning radio; it's about using the magic buzzwords the government & corporates loves so we can secure massive grants to buy new equipment on their dime, not yours.

Implementation will be executed across the following three phases:

## Phase 1: Governance & Statutory Compliance

Before launching new revenue streams, the Association's rulebook must be bulletproofed. At our June Annual General Meeting, the membership will be asked to approve the following foundational governance changes:

- **Expanding the Objects:**

Legally broadening the club's core purpose to include the activities we currently undertake - including promotion of Amateur Radio, provision of repeater facilities and community event facilities and community disaster resilience - and adding STEM, robotics, IoT, and allied activities. This secures our eligibility for major government grants and corporate sponsorships while providing this and future committees with a clear strategic mandate.

- **Statutory Compliance:**

Embedding mandatory state government reporting (Public Liability Insurance, Financial Tier declarations, and Remuneration Disclosures) into the standard AGM agenda to guarantee absolute transparency and protect the club and future committees from regulatory action stemming from an outdated constitution.

- **Cutting Bureaucratic Red Tape:**

Abolishing archaic requirements such as the Common Seal and mandatory external audits for small-tier revenues instantly saves the club money and the distraction of unnecessary administrative burden.

## Phase 2: Membership & Financial Restructuring

To smoothly integrate the new facility-based model without alienating our rusted-on legacy base, the transition will carefully separate traditional "Amateur Radio" members from modern "Facility Users."

- **Grandfathering Legacy Members:**

All existing long-term members will receive a one-off 20% fee adjustment to account for current & historical inflation, after which their membership classes will be permanently "grandfathered." This provides them with iron-clad protection of their status and voting rights.

- **Establishing Modern Tiers:**

The constitution will legally define the new core classes required for the facility: Social Member (non-voting), Amateur Operator (voting), Standard Facility User (non-voting), Keyholder (voting), and Corporate (non-voting).

- **Agile Membership Creation:**

The Management Committee will be granted the delegated authority to create, define, or remove non-voting promotional membership classes as market demand dictates, without requiring a General Meeting.

- **Inflation-Proofing Membership Fees:**

The Committee will be empowered to automatically index voting membership fees by up to 5% or the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is higher.

Concurrently, the Committee will hold absolute discretion to set and adjust fees for all non-voting classes to reflect the commercial value of the equipment and market conditions.

### Phase 3: Operational Agility & Professional Delivery

With the structure in place, the committee must be unhandcuffed to manage the day-to-day operations of a high-tech facility.

- **Modernising Financial Instruments:**

The obsolete reliance on chequebooks and restrictive \$100 spending limits will be constitutionally abolished. The club will mandate 100% Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) with strict dual-committee-member approval to ensure total security, while day-to-day ad-hoc spending limits will be moved to the By-laws for practical flexibility.

- **Professional Remuneration:**

To ensure the high-quality delivery of our new STEM and educational pathways, the constitution will be amended to legally permit the commercial remuneration of contracted instructors, including our own expert members, provided rates remain at or below standard commercial levels.

## Facility & Infrastructure Modernisation

To successfully execute our enterprise evolution, the physical environment of GCARS must reflect our strategic ambitions. You cannot run a 21st-century Applied STEM Hub in a deteriorating 1980s clubhouse.

GCARS has already commenced a multi-phased capital works programme to transform our Molendinar facility from a legacy social venue into a commercial-grade educational and prototyping lab. This physical modernisation is the foundation that enables our paid educational programmes, community workshops, and Tier 3 (24/7) memberships.

### **Why does this matter ?**

#### **Keeping Members On The Air:**

We know many legacy members eventually downsize into accommodations where they can no longer put up antennas. Phase 1 of this upgrade installs "Remote Access" amateur radio facilities in the modernised Radio Room, allowing you to continue your lifelong passion for radio remotely via the internet.

#### **A Better Clubhouse on the Government's Dime:**

We are completely refreshing the facility with new lighting, fresh paint, a commercial epoxy floor, and a brand-new commercial kitchen. Crucially, we are targeting major state and local grants to pay for the significant majority of these heavy infrastructure upgrades. Limiting the degree to which membership fees are paying for the renovations.

#### **Why We Are Buying 3D Printers:**

You might not personally care about 3D printers or laser cutters. However, this "Applied STEM" gear is exactly what attracts government grants, corporate sponsors, and the new members willing to pay \$450 a year for access. We buy these tools with grant money, and they act as the revenue engine that keeps legacy member fees low.

#### **Enhanced Security:**

We are updating and installing comprehensive CCTV, security and access control systems. This protects the club's high-value radio assets and ensures the facility remains a safe, secure environment for everyone .

## Phase 1: Aesthetics (Currently Underway)

We have actively begun the facility's transformation, utilising our own internal capital and volunteer labour. This immediate action demonstrates our commitment to the strategic pivot.

- **Exterior & Lighting Upgrades:**

We have recently completed a full repaint of the building's exterior and comprehensive upgrades to both internal and external lighting, vastly improving site safety, energy efficiency, and street appeal.

- **Interior Refresh & The "Radio Room":**

We are currently executing a complete interior repaint. Concurrently, we are modernising the primary "Radio Room." The objective of this upgrade is to transform the space from a hobbyist desk into an "impressive," high-tech command centre. This room serves as the centrepiece of facility tours, instantly communicating our technical capability to prospective corporate partners, school Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs), and grant assessors.

- **Remote Access Amateur Radio Facilities:**

A less visible but critically important addition to our "Radio Room" is the provision of "Remote Access" radios to permit qualified Amateur Radio Operators who are no longer living in accommodations where antennas can be erected to continue their lifelong passion for Amateur Radio remotely via the Internet.

## Phase 2: The Applied STEM & Maker Lab

This phase represents the facility's core revenue-generating engine. We will build out dedicated technical zones designed for hands-on learning, rapid prototyping, and advanced electronics diagnostics.

- **The Soldering & Assembly Bar:**

Construction of a dedicated 5-bay soldering and rework station. Crucially, to meet stringent educational OH&S standards, each bay will be equipped with **active fume extraction**, temperature-controlled irons, hot-air rework stations, ESD-safe matting, and magnifying lighting.

- **Rapid Prototyping Corner:**

Acquisition of a high-end desktop 3D printer (e.g., Bambu Lab X1 Carbon or Prusa XL) and a desktop multi-mode/CO2 laser cutter. This allows students and members to fabricate custom project enclosures, robotics chassis, and antenna components on-site.

- **Test & Measurement Bench:**

Upgrading our diagnostic capabilities by getting “on the bench”, not “in the cupboard” or existing bench oscilloscopes, spectrum analysers, and Vector Network Analysers (VNAs), and augmenting this with additional test and measurement equipment that we don't currently have. This equipment is prohibitively expensive for individual hobbyists, making facility access highly attractive to “hardware hackers” - both digital and analog alike.

### Phase 3: Core Infrastructure (Targeting Grant Funding)

To meet the rigorous health, safety, and operational standards required of a public-facing educational facility, the core building requires significant remediation. We are targeting major state and local grants (such as the QLD Gambling Community Benefit Fund) to execute these capital-intensive works.

- **Commercial Epoxy Flooring (Est. \$15,000 - \$20,000):**  
Ripping out the outdated, deteriorating flooring and applying a high-durability, anti-static commercial epoxy coat across the main hall and lab areas. This is a critical requirement for operating an electronics lab.
- **Commercial Kitchen Refit (Est. \$10,000 - \$15,000):**  
Total replacement of the legacy kitchen to support catered workshops, weekend bootcamps, and ensure compliance with safe food handling standards.
- **Security & Access Control:**  
Installation of a 24/7 RFID fob access system for our "Premium Facility Users" (Key Holders), coupled with comprehensive CCTV coverage to protect high-value capital assets and ensure member safety during unstaffed hours.

## Core Educational Programmes

To transition from a traditional club to an Applied STEM Hub, GCARS is commercialising its deep technical expertise. We are moving away from passive, ad-hoc mentoring towards structured, paid educational programmes. These initiatives are designed to be entirely self-funding and profitable, shifting the Society's revenue reliance away from standard membership fees while delivering measurable value to the Gold Coast community.

### **Why does this matter ?**

#### **Members Are Not Free Labor:**

We must adopt a professional delivery model. Instructors will be paid contractors. Members will never be forced, pressured, or expected to run workshops unless they actively want to.

#### **Students Pay For Your Gear:**

These educational programs are strictly designed to be cash-flow positive and profitable. Course fees cover all materials, pay the instructor, and yield a targeted 30% profit margin that is reinvested directly into the club's capital equipment fund . Put simply: the students are paying to upgrade and maintain our facility.

#### **Fresh Blood for Amateur Radio:**

The youth programs aren't just about robotics. Key Programme #2 specifically includes preparation for the Foundation Amateur Radio Licence. This creates a direct pipeline of young operators to talk to on the repeaters and keep the hobby alive.

#### **Upskilling and Extra Cash for Seniors:**

Key Programme #3 is dedicated entirely to our senior members. We will run daytime workshops on how to transition analog skills into the digital age—like using 3D printers to restore vintage radio equipment, or mastering digital mesh networks . Furthermore, if you do want to pass on your decades of RF knowledge, you can step up to become one of the paid instructors .

## Commercial Delivery & Remuneration Model

A critical failing of many community tech spaces is an over-reliance on volunteer labour to deliver complex education, leading to burnout and inconsistent quality. GCARS is adopting a professional delivery model:

- **Contracted Instructors:**

Instructors (drawn from our expert member base or external industry professionals) will operate as paid contractors.

- **Remuneration:**

Instructors will invoice GCARS at an appropriate commercial rate for the time spent teaching.

- **Financial Viability:**

Course enrolment fees will be calculated to cover instructor remuneration, consumable materials (which students retain), facility overheads, and a targeted 30% profit margin directed back into the club's capital equipment fund.

## Key Programme #1: STEM Discovery for Children (Ages 8-12)

- **Strategic Focus:**  
Introduction to fundamental electronics, computers, and robotics.
- **Format:**  
Saturday morning classes, after-school sessions, and school holiday "Tech Camps".
- **Curriculum:**  
Utilising safe, solder-less platforms (like "Snap Circuits") to teach current flow and basic circuitry. Progressing to introductory block-coding using microcontrollers such as the Micro: bit or Raspberry Pi Pico, and culminating in basic robotics assembly.
- **Community Outcome:**  
Breaking the intimidation barrier of hardware at a young age. Parents are actively seeking—and willing to pay for—structured, safe, screen-positive environments that yield tangible educational results, filling a major gap in the Gold Coast market.

## Key Programme #2: Youth & School Pathways (Ages 13-18)

- **Strategic Focus:**

Applied electronics, radio communications, and computing, acting as a direct bridge to formal vocational qualifications.

- **Format:**

Multi-week intensive courses or evening bootcamps, heavily marketed through high school Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs).

- **Curriculum:**

Practical bench skills that schools cannot easily facilitate. This includes OH&S-compliant soldering (building functional FM receivers or Arduino weather stations), introductory Python/C++ programming for hardware integration, and preparation for the Foundation Amateur Radio Licence.

- **Community Outcome:**

Acting as a practical incubator for TAFE or University engineering degrees. We will map these practical skills to align with **Cert II pathways** in Electrotechnology and Telecommunications, making our facility an invaluable off-site resource for local high schools.

## Key Programme #3: Senior Tech Extension & Mentorship (Ages 50+)

- **Strategic Focus:**

Keeping older minds active, engaged, and learning, while modernising the skillsets of our legacy members.

- **Format:**

Mid-week daytime workshops tailored to retirees and older workers.

- **Curriculum:**

Transitioning traditional analog radio skills into modern digital technologies. Workshops will include "Using 3D Printers for Restoring Vintage Equipment," "Introduction to Arduino for Automated Antenna Switching," and "Understanding Digital Mesh Networking (LoRaWAN / D-STAR)."

- **Community Outcome:**

This programme serves a dual purpose. It actively combats social isolation and cognitive decline among seniors by keeping them engaged in complex problem-solving. Crucially, by upskilling our legacy members in modern tech, we empower them to become paid instructors and mentors for Programmes 1 and 2, completing the intergenerational knowledge transfer.

## Financial & Funding Strategy

The historical financial model of GCARS—relying almost exclusively on \$50 annual subscriptions from a shrinking membership base—is fundamentally incapable of sustaining a modern technological facility. To fund our strategic transformation and ongoing operations, GCARS is adopting a diversified, commercial-grade revenue matrix.

We have distinctly separated our operational revenue (which must be self-sustaining) from our capital expenditure requirements (which will be heavily leveraged through targeted government grants).

### **Why does this matter ?**

#### **Protecting the Members Wallet:**

The simple truth is that \$50 a year from our current membership base can no longer pay for the insurance, electricity, and basic upkeep of the club. The committee must act - Instead of constantly asking members for more money or special levies, we are building commercial revenue streams to pay the bills.

#### **Making the Gear Pay for Itself:**

We are shifting the cost of high-end equipment onto the people who use it most via the \$250 and \$450 tiered memberships. Furthermore, every educational program is strictly designed to be cash-flow positive, yielding a 30% profit margin that gets directly reinvested into the club.

#### **Using "Other People's Money" for Renovations:**

We are not draining the club's bank account to pay for the new commercial kitchen, epoxy floors, or 3D printers . By using terms like "STEM Education" and "Community Disaster Resilience," we are aggressively targeting major state and local grants (like the Gambling Community Benefit Fund) to secure tens of thousands of dollars in free government funding.

#### **All Profits Stay in the Club:**

Because we are a not-for-profit, 100% of the surplus generated from these corporate events and paid classes is reinvested right back into maintaining your infrastructure and repeaters .

## Core Operating Revenue (B2C)

Our Business-to-Consumer (B2C) revenue ensures the facility can keep the lights on, pay insurance, and maintain basic infrastructure without relying on external handouts.

- **Tiered Memberships & Facility Access:**

Transitioning from a flat-fee model to our tiered access model (Standard Facility User at \$250/year and Premium Key Holder at \$450/year) ensures that those extracting the most value from our high-end testing equipment are appropriately funding its depreciation and maintenance.

- **Educational Programme Fees:**

All structured educational programmes (Key Programmes 1, 2, and 3) are strictly designed to be cash-flow positive. Course fees are calculated to cover all consumable materials, facility overheads, contractor instructor remuneration (at a baseline of \$50.00+ per hour), and yield a targeted 30% profit margin to be reinvested into the club's capital equipment fund.

- **Casual Access & "Micro-Services":**

High-margin, low-overhead initiatives such as \$25 "Do-Whatever Mornings" (open bench time with expert supervision) and project storage locker rentals create steady, recurring micro-revenue streams.

## Commercial Event Services (B2B)

A major pillar of our financial sustainability is the commercialisation of our mobile communications infrastructure. GCARS provides highly resilient, turnkey communication solutions for high-density public events where standard commercial cellular networks frequently fail.

- **The Community Communications Centre (CCC):**

We deploy our purpose-built, autonomous CCC, which features dedicated

Starlink LEO satellite connectivity bonded with 5G failover, creating a secure event internet gateway.

- **Experience Gold Coast (EGC) Partnership:**

GCARS is actively tendering to provide communications safety nets for major EGC festivals, including Blues on Broadbeach, Cooly Rocks On, and Groundwater. This includes deploying our CCC, secure internet gateways, and fleets of commercial-grade UHF radios. Based on current proposals, this commercial division is projected to generate an estimated \$14,400 in annual revenue across just 18 event days.

## Capital Expenditure (CapEx) & Grant Strategy

To fund the heavy physical infrastructure required for Phases 2 and 3 of our modernisation without draining our operational cash reserves, GCARS will aggressively pursue funding from local and state governments. Our applications will be framed strictly around "STEM Education," "Youth Pathways," and "Community Disaster Resilience."

- **Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund (GCBF):**

We will target the GCBF (which provides grants up to \$35,000) to fund our Phase 2 infrastructure works.

- *Target:*

The commercial epoxy flooring and commercial kitchen refit (Estimated at \$25,000-\$30,000).

- *Alignment:*

Pitching the upgrade as essential remediation to meet health, safety, and food-handling compliance standards required to host community youth STEM workshops and weekend bootcamps.

- **Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) Community Grants:**

We will leverage smaller, equipment-focused council grants to outfit the Phase 3 Applied STEM Lab.

- *Target:*

The 5-bay OH&S compliant soldering station (with active fume extraction), 3D printers, and desktop laser cutters (Estimated at \$10,000 - \$15,000).

- *Alignment:*

Framed as "providing high-end rapid prototyping resources to Gold Coast students and makers to build digital literacy and vocational pathways."

## **Financial Governance**

Under the direction of the Executive Committee, all commercial revenues and grant funds will be managed with strict fiduciary oversight. As a not-for-profit entity, 100% of generated surpluses—whether from B2B event services or B2C educational programmes—are reinvested to maintain our infrastructure, subsidise youth education, and expand our facility's capabilities.

# Marketing & Channel Partnerships

To successfully commercialise our facility and fill our educational programmes, GCARS cannot rely on organic foot traffic or the legacy "ham radio" network. We are executing a proactive, multi-channel marketing strategy targeting the education sector, local government, and corporate enterprise.

Our facility is a product, and our strategy is built on forging strategic partnerships that deliver recurring cohorts of users.

## The Education Sector

Our primary channel for Key Programme #2 (Youth & School Pathways) is direct B2B engagement with Gold Coast high schools.

- **The Target:**  
Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs) and Heads of STEM/IT departments.
- **The Pitch:**  
Public schools often lack the capital to maintain high-end prototyping equipment, active fume-extraction systems, and dedicated RF testing equipment. GCARS will position itself as the premier off-site "Practical Lab" for schools.
- **The Execution:**  
We will formally present our facility to ILOs as a pathway partner for students undertaking Certificate II qualifications in Electrotechnology or Telecommunications. By integrating our hands-on workshops into their curriculum requirements, we secure a recurring pipeline of student enrolments and facility users.

## Local Government & Community Networks (B2C)

To drive attendance for Key Programme #1 (Children's STEM) and our casual \$25 "Do-Whatever Mornings," we will leverage established, high-trust community channels.

- **GCCC "What's On" Calendar:**

All introductory bootcamps, school holiday tech camps, and open days will be aggressively listed on the official Gold Coast City Council events calendar, capturing parents actively searching for structured, screen-positive weekend activities for their children.

- **Community Demonstrations:**

Leveraging the high public visibility of our mobile Community Communications Centre (CCC). When deployed at major Experience Gold Coast events (such as Blues on Broadbeach or Groundwater), the CCC acts as a mobile billboard. We will utilise these deployments not just for operational communications, but as active recruitment and demonstration hubs for our STEM programmes.

## Corporate Partnerships & "Hardware-as-a-Service"

We are transitioning away from asking local businesses for "donations," and instead offering them high-value commercial partnerships.

- **Corporate "Patronage" & Bench Sponsorships:**

Local tech firms, IT service providers (such as TechConnect IT Solutions ), and electrical franchises will be offered the opportunity to sponsor physical infrastructure. For an annual fee, a business can brand a specific workstation (e.g., "The TechConnect Soldering Bay"), generating corporate goodwill while funding our capital upgrades.

- **Off-Site R&D & Team Building:**

We will market our Tier 4 (Corporate/Education Partner) memberships to local engineering and aerospace startups. GCARS offers them "Hardware-as-a-Service"—access to Vector Network Analysers, spectrum analysers, and licensed RF sandbox environments that are otherwise prohibitively expensive for early-stage startups.

- **Corporate Bootcamps:**

Offering highly profitable, single-day corporate team-building events (e.g., "Build an Emergency Go-Box in a Day" or "Intro to Fox Hunting/Radio Direction Finding").

## Brand Modernisation & Visual Identity

To support these channels, the GCARS visual identity must align with our new strategic direction. We are undertaking a comprehensive brand refresh. Our digital presence, prospectus documents, and physical signage will be updated to reflect a modern technology incubator, shedding the "amateur hobbyist" aesthetic in favour of a clean, professional, and commercially credible visual language.

It should be noted that this process has begun with the recent release of our new community focussed website.

# Implementation Roadmap & Timeline (2026 – 2028)

To maintain momentum and generate immediate operational cash flow, GCARS will adopt an agile implementation strategy. We will not wait for the facility to be "perfect" before commercialising our offerings. Marketing, corporate partnerships, and pilot educational programmes will commence concurrently with our phased facility upgrades.

The major structural capital works (commercial flooring and kitchen refit) are strategically positioned at the end of the funding programme. This allows us to use the success of our initial educational pilots as proven community demand when applying for major state grants.

## Phase 1: Governance, Aesthetics & Pre-Marketing (Months 1 - 6)

- **Governance:**  
Hold an Annual/Special General Meeting (AGM/SGM) to formally adopt the constitutional changes required for the new merit-based, tiered membership structure (Supporter vs. Facility User vs. Contributor).
- **Aesthetics:**  
Complete the internal and external painting programme, and finalise the "Radio Room" visual modernisation to create an impressive environment for prospective partners.
- **Initial Fit-out:**  
Procure standalone "Maker" equipment that does not require heavy structural modification (e.g., desktop 3D printers, basic soldering stations, and bench test equipment).
- **Pre-Marketing:**  
Launch the GCARS brand refresh. Begin preliminary discussions with local high school Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs) and list our first \$25 "Do-Whatever Mornings" on the Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) events calendar.

## Phase 2: Pilot Programmes & Revenue Generation (Months 7 - 12)

- **Programme Launch:**

Execute the first pilot cohorts of Key Programme #1 (Children's STEM Discovery) and Key Programme #3 (Senior Tech Extension) using the refreshed, operational lab space.

- **Commercial Activation:**

Deliver contracted B2B Community Communications Centre (CCC) services for major Experience Gold Coast events, banking the projected commercial revenue.

- **Grant Submission:**

With pilot programmes successfully running and demonstrating clear community value, submit the major Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund (GCBF) application. The application will cite the urgent need to upgrade the facility to ensure it has sufficient capacity to accommodate our growing youth cohorts.

### Phase 3: Major Capital Works (Months 13 - 18)

- **Heavy Infrastructure Refit:**

Upon successful grant funding (or allocation of banked commercial revenue), execute the major structural upgrades. This includes installing commercial epoxy flooring across the main hall and a complete commercial kitchen refit.

- **OH&S Finalisation:**

Install the formal, active fume-extraction ducting for the 5-bay soldering station.

- **Access Control:**

Deploy the 24/7 RFID fob access and CCTV systems to fully activate the Tier 3 "Premium Facility User" memberships.

### Phase 4: Scaling & Full Operational Maturity (Months 19 - 24)

- **School Integration:**

Formally launch Key Programme #2 (Youth & School Pathways), bringing high school students on-site for practical Cert II Electrotechnology and Telecommunications units.

- **Corporate Expansion:**

Drive "Hardware-as-a-Service" memberships and bench sponsorships with local tech startups and businesses.

- **Financial Milestone:**

Achieve complete operational cash-flow positivity, ensuring the facility's B2C and B2B revenues cover all depreciation, instructor remuneration, and facility overheads without reliance on legacy \$50 membership fees.

## Measuring Success & KPIs

To ensure our strategic transformation remains on track, the Executive Committee will measure the Society's performance against strict commercial and community metrics. This demonstrates to our grant providers—and our membership—that the pivot is delivering tangible results.

### Financial & Funding KPIs

- **Revenue Diversification:**  
Successfully shifting the Society's revenue mix so that less than 5% of total income relies on the legacy \$50 "Supporter" tier.
- **Commercial Event Income:**  
Securing and executing our targeted 18 annual billable days for the Community Communications Centre (CCC), achieving the projected \$14,400 in B2B event revenue.
- **Grant Execution (The Dual-GCBF Strategy):**
  - *Target 1:*  
Successfully acquiring a Queensland GCBF grant to fund the Phase 2 "Maker Lab" equipment (dedicated CO2 laser cutter, 3D printers, and OH&S fume-extracted soldering bays).
  - *Target 2:*  
Leveraging the success of the new lab to secure a subsequent GCBF grant for the Phase 3 heavy infrastructure works (commercial epoxy flooring and kitchen refit).

## Educational & Community KPIs

- **Programme Enrolment:**

Achieving a minimum of 40 paid enrolments per annum across Key Programme #1 (Children's STEM) and Key Programme #3 (Seniors).

- **School Partnerships:**

Establishing formal, recurring off-site training agreements with at least two Gold Coast high school Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs) for Cert II electrotechnology/telecommunications pathways.

- **Facility Utilisation:**

Measuring the "Bench Hours" to ensure the lab is actively utilised outside of traditional weekend meeting times, particularly during mid-week school hours and evenings.

## Membership & Governance KPIs

- **The "Meritocracy" Shift:**

Successfully transitioning a core team of at least 10-15 active volunteers onto the \$0 "Contributor" tier (100% sweat-equity rebate), ensuring the facility is consistently maintained and managed.

- **Tier 2/3 Growth:**

Acquiring 30+ new "Facility Users" and "Key Holders" from outside the traditional amateur radio demographic within the first 18 months of the Maker Space launch.

## Conclusion & Next Steps

GCARS stands at the precipice of a new era. By executing this strategic transformation, we are doing more than just ensuring the survival of a historic community society; we are building a vital piece of civic educational infrastructure for the Gold Coast.

The transition from a closed social club to an Applied STEM and Innovation Facility allows us to honour our fifty-year legacy of technical experimentation by passing that knowledge to the next generation. We are actively bridging the gap between theoretical classroom learning and practical, hands-on engineering.

### **The Invitation to Partner.**

We cannot achieve this evolution in isolation. GCARS actively invites local government bodies, corporate technology enterprises, and educational institutions to partner with us.

- **To Grant Assessors:**

We invite you to view our facility not just as a clubhouse, but as a high-yield investment in community resilience and youth digital literacy.

- **To Corporate Sponsors:**

We offer the opportunity to align your brand with grassroots innovation through our bench sponsorships and "Hardware-as-a-Service" partnerships.

- **To Educators:**

We open our doors to your students, providing the high-end rapid prototyping and RF testing equipment necessary to complete their vocational pathways.

The demand for accessible, commercial-grade STEM facilities on the Gold Coast has never been higher. We have the infrastructure, the spectrum, and the commercial leadership to deliver it.