

MOORABOOL SHIRE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2023- 2027



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which Moorabool Shire sits, the Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and the Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples. On behalf of the municipality, Council pays respect to their Elders, past, present and future.

The Moorabool Shire Economic Development Strategy was prepared by Urban Enterprise in collaboration with Moorabool Shire Council.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Employment	Employment data represents the number of people employed by businesses/ organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Employment data presented in this report is destination of work data. That is, no inference is made as to where people in a defined region reside.
Gross Regional Product	The total value of final goods and services produced in the region over the period of one year.
Output	Represents the gross revenue generated by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. This term is also referred to as total sales or total income.
Non-employing Business	A type of that does not have employees. This may include a range of entity types, such as non-employing sole traders or any other businesses without employees.
Regional Exports	Represents the value (\$) of goods and services exported outside of the defined region that have been generated by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors within the region.
SEIFA	Developed by the ABS, this measures the relative level of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage for a defined area. The index score is based on a weighted combination of census variables that reflect disadvantage (e.g. income, education, employment, etc.), which is then standardised around the national average score of 1,000. A higher score on the index reflects a lower level of disadvantage. Therefore, a score above 1,000 indicates a lower level of disadvantage relative to the national average, while a score below 1,000 indicates a higher level of disadvantage relative to the national average.
Small to Medium Enterprises	For statistical purposes, the ABS defines a business entity employing less than 20 employees as Small to Medium Enterprise.

ACRONYMS

AAGR	Average Annual Growth Rate
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
ERP	Estimated Resident Population
LGA	Local Government Area
PA	Per Annum
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Index for Areas
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
VES	Visitor Economy Strategy



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The *Moorabool Shire Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027* (EDS or Strategy) has been developed by Moorabool Shire Council (Council) to facilitate employment growth, investment attraction and business development in the Shire.

The Strategy provides a clear vision and action plan for growing the Moorabool Shire economy.

The information in this Strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, community groups, businesses, Council and Government stakeholders.

This report has been developed concurrently with the *Moorabool Shire Visitor Economy Strategy (VES)*. As tourism is a key driver of economic development, the recommendations included in the VES are also relevant to the Moorabool Shire economy.

More detailed information relating to the visitor economy can be found in the VES document.

Moorabool Shire

Moorabool Shire is a 'Peri-Urban' Council strategically located at the gateway to western regional Victoria, between metropolitan Melbourne and the regional centres of Geelong and Ballarat. This provides opportunities and challenges for growth.

The municipality is comprised of 64 localities, hamlets and towns, which includes the key urban centres of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan. As such, most settlements are small, rural towns that provide support for rural industry, visitors and provide services for residents across the Shire.

Moorabool Shire is experiencing rapid urban and population growth, which contrasts with the large tracts of rural land, as well as the large volume of land (74%) comprising water catchments, State Forests, State Parks and National Parks. The collection of natural assets and peri-urban environment creates significant lifestyle and economic benefits for residents, businesses and visitors.

Opportunities and Challenges for Growth



Competing for **business and infrastructure investment** against fast-growing neighbouring areas.



Capitalising on **access to export markets and labour** in nearby urban centres.



Supporting both **local jobs growth and attracting remote workers** to the Shire.



Minimising **leakages of jobs and consumption** to other municipalities.

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

POPULATION AND DWELLING GROWTH



37,632

Current Population

+26,430 Population Change
+2.7% p.a. 2021 - 2041



15,453

Current Dwellings

+10,654 Dwellings Change
+2.7% p.a. 2021 - 2041

KEY FINDINGS



- The Shire's population is forecast to almost double in size over the next 20 years.
- Growth will be concentrated in the urban centres of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan.
- Growth will be driven by younger, working-age cohorts including parents and homebuilders (35-49 years) and the young workforce (25-34 years).

KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Total Output

 **\$2.8B**

1. Construction 23%
2. Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services 12%
3. Manufacturing 10%

Regional Export Value

 **\$786M**

1. Construction 26%
2. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing 23%
3. Manufacturing 15%

Local Jobs

 **10,233**

1. Construction 15%
2. Health Care & Social Assistance 12%
3. Education & Training 12%



\$1.2 B

Total Consumption
Local Consumption 37%
External 'Escape'
Consumption 63%



3.9%

Unemployment Rate
June 2022



3,369

Registered Businesses
2022

59% Non-Employing



574,000

Visitors 2019



\$65.3 M

Visitor Expenditure 2019

KEY FINDINGS



- Agriculture and Construction are key drivers of economic growth.
- Local jobs are growing at a slower rate than population growth, contributing to relatively high unemployment.
- Low rate of job containment as resident workers commute to Metropolitan Melbourne and Ballarat.
- High proportion of spend leakage outside the municipality.
- Low-yielding visitor base constrains the value of the visitor economy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

VISION

“ Moorabool Shire will achieve long-term economic growth that supports liveable communities, a thriving local workforce and a productive business base. ”

OBJECTIVES

Support **liveable and engaged communities.**

Increase **local consumption** and **local economic activity.**

Facilitate **local job growth** to support local businesses.

Support **business development** and **attraction.**

THEMES

THEME



1. A Population-Driven Economy

Leverage population growth to facilitate economic development through attracting investment in key services, amenity and population-driven industry.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1.1 Population-Based Industry Attraction

1.2 Develop High-Amenity Townships And Liveable Communities

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Business Investment Attraction Plan and Prospectus (consumer-facing industries)
- Moorabool Shire Retail Strategy
- Small Towns Placemaking and Activation Plan
- Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Improvement Program



2. Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Attraction

Support investment and business attraction in the Shire to stimulate economic growth and meet the needs of businesses, workers and residents.

2.1 Public Infrastructure Investment To Enable Growth

2.2 Activated And 'Investment-Ready' Land

- Moorabool Shire Integrated Transport Strategy
- Housing strategy
- Land Activation Infrastructure Advocacy and Delivery



3. A Productive and Engaged Business Community

Support the growth and development of a diverse business base to achieve economic and employment outcomes.

3.1 A Supportive Environment For The Small Business Community

3.2 Attract Skilled Employees And A 'Job Ready' Labour Force

3.3 Support Industry Diversity

3.4 Increase The Value Of The Agricultural And Forestry Sectors

- Moorabool Shire Business Association Program
- Remote Higher Education Hub
- Workforce Attraction Strategy
- Industry Attraction Plan and Prospectus (diverse and emerging industries)
- Agribusiness Branding
- Agricultural Strategic Plan

Please refer to page 28 for further details on themes and projects.





INTRODUCTION

Overview

The *Moorabool Shire Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027* (EDS or Strategy) has been developed by Moorabool Shire Council (Council) to facilitate employment growth, investment attraction and business development in the Shire.

The Strategy provides a clear vision and action plan for growing the Moorabool Shire economy and considers the ongoing economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on measures to promote business recovery and industry resilience.

The information in this Strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, community groups, businesses, Council and Government stakeholders.

This report has been developed concurrently with the *Moorabool Shire Visitor Economy Strategy (VES)*. As tourism is a key driver of economic development, the recommendations included in the VES are also relevant to the Moorabool Shire economy.

More detailed information relating to the visitor economy can be found in the VES document.

Local Government's Role in Economic Development

The purpose of local economic development is to **“Build the economic capacity of a locality to improve its economic future and the quality of life of its citizens. In this process, public, business and community sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and job creation”**¹.

Local Government plays an important role in facilitating economic growth within their municipalities. Typically, Council's role in economic development includes business engagement and support, business development and investment attraction, promoting liveability outcomes and undertaking advocacy efforts.

In terms of investment attraction, it is important for local Governments to provide and encourage an economic environment that is conducive to attracting private investment.

Moorabool Shire Council is committed to working in partnership with government, industry and community representatives to strengthen the local economy.

Local Insights

The development of the Strategy was underpinned by stakeholder engagement, which facilitated an in-depth understanding of the unique local conditions, challenges and opportunities.

The engagements were undertaken, across November and December 2021.

Stakeholder engagement included:

- » 1:1 Stakeholder Engagements
 - One to one stakeholder engagements with key government agencies and key local operators identified by Council, as well as Wadawarrung Traditional Owners Corporation and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.
- » 7 Industry Workshops
 - » Councillors and Council Executives
 - » Rural West of Shire (x2)
 - » Bacchus Marsh and surrounds (x2)
 - » Ballan, Gordon and Surrounds
 - » Greendale, Dales Creek, Blackwood and surrounds
 - » Ballan Chamber of Commerce
 - » Local Business Advisory Committee
- » 258 Survey Responses
 - Community and business survey for members of the community and local operators, distributed by Council.

Report Structure

The EDS includes the following structure to demonstrate the research and analysis undertaken to inform the recommendations for the economy.

Strategic Context.

An overview of the key factors influencing the Moorabool Shire economy, including its locational context, existing economic development activities, supporting policies and external economic trends.

Demographic Profile.

A profile of Moorabool Shire's population, key socio-economic indicators and future trends.

Economic Profile.

A profile of Moorabool Shire's economy, including key industry specialisations, employment indicators, as well as the local business base.

Strategic Considerations.

A summary of the key issues and opportunities for the Moorabool Shire economy, drawing on the background research and stakeholder consultation.

Economic Development Framework.

An overarching strategic framework that sets the future directions and recommendations to support economic growth, including a vision, objectives and key themes for the Moorabool Shire economy.

Action Plan.

A guide for Council and relevant stakeholders to implement the projects and recommendations identified in the EDS.

¹World Bank, 2016.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Moorabool Shire

Moorabool Shire is situated to the west of metropolitan Melbourne, encompassing an area of over 2,110 square kilometres and home to over 36,000 residents. The municipality is comprised of 64 localities, hamlets and towns, which includes the key urban centres of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan. As such, most settlements are small, rural towns that provide support for rural industry, visitors and provide services for residents across the Shire.

As shown on the following page, Moorabool Shire is strategically located at the gateway to western regional Victoria, between metropolitan Melbourne and the regional centres of Geelong and Ballarat.

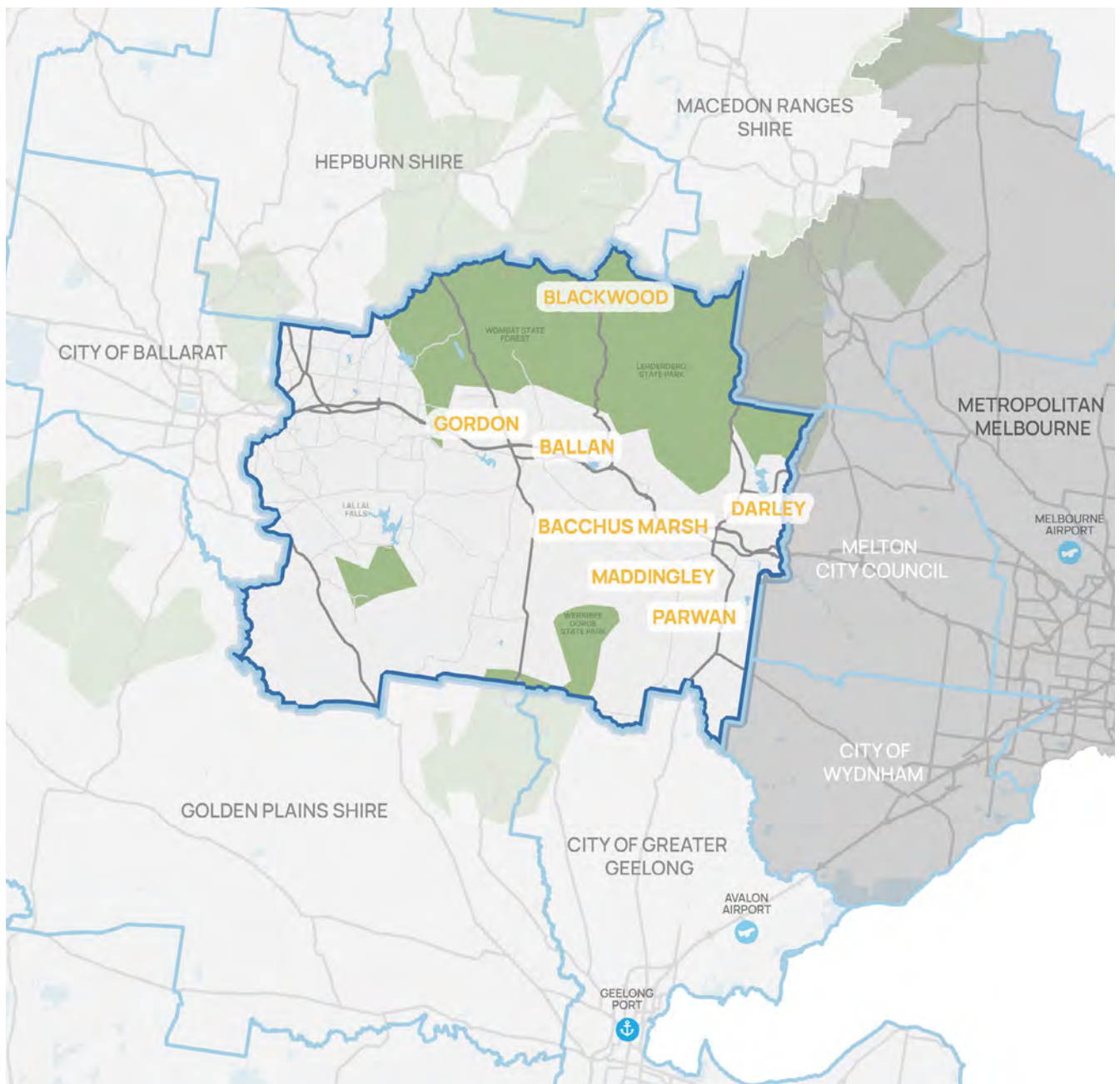
As such, the municipality borders some of the fastest growing urban areas in Victoria, which provides opportunities and challenges for growth, including:

- » **Competing for business and infrastructure investment against fast-growing neighbouring areas (e.g. Melton, Wyndham, Ballarat).**
- » **Capitalising on access to export markets and labour in both metropolitan Melbourne and surrounding regional centres.**
- » **Supporting both local jobs growth and attracting remote workers to the Shire, given the proximity to employment centres in surrounding urban locations.**
- » **Minimising leakages of jobs and consumption to proximate regional and metropolitan centres.**

The municipality is a 'Peri-Urban' Council experiencing rapid urban and population growth, particularly in the eastern region of the Shire – across Bacchus Marsh and Ballan – with the number of residents expected to almost double in the next 20 years.

This urban development contrasts with the large tracts of rural land and traditional agricultural sector, as well as the large volume of land (74%) comprising water catchments, State Forests, State Parks and National Parks. The collection of natural assets and peri-urban environment creates significant lifestyle and economic benefits for residents, businesses and visitors.

MOORABOOL SHIRE COUNCIL





Policy Context

A range of relevant strategic documents and policies were reviewed to identify the potential implications for the Moorabool Shire economy. This included state, regional and local documents listed in the opposite figure.

The State Government's current planning strategy, *Plan Melbourne 2050*, outlines the vision for growth in Melbourne, as well as planning in regional and peri-urban areas across Victoria. Bacchus Marsh and Ballan are identified as growing regional towns within peri-urban areas. The Plan recognises the unique pressures placed on these areas and identifies investment in infrastructure, transport and housing as a key factor in economic and population growth.

At a regional level, the *Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan* provides a regional approach to land use planning to support a productive, sustainable and liveable region for the community. This includes planning for future population growth (specifically Bacchus Marsh and Ballan), protecting rural land uses, providing employment land to support local jobs and ensuring appropriate provision of infrastructure services.

The *Council Plan 2021-2025* aligns with the *2030 Community Vision* statement, which involves "Embracing our natural environment and lifestyle options to create an inspiring place for everyone to live, work and play". This helps focus Council's aims to promote positive community, economic and environmental outcomes for the Shire, which will be balanced with achieving growth outcomes.

The EDS is also informed by localised plans developed for the key urban areas of Ballan and Bacchus Marsh, which identify the challenges for supporting future growth, specifically the need for housing and community infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and workers.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

State-Wide Documents

- » Plan Melbourne 2050
- » Central Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategy 2022

Regional Documents

- » Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan

Shire-Wide Documents

- » Council Plan 2021-2025
- » 2030 Community Vision
- » Moorabool Shire Economic Development Strategy 2015
- » Strategic Importance of Moorabool Shire
- » Moorabool Shire Council Retail Strategy 2016

Local Documents

- » Ballan Strategic Directions 2018
- » Bacchus Marsh Housing Strategy 2018
- » Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework 2018

Macroeconomic Influences

There are a range of external influences impacting economic development in Moorabool Shire, including:



Remote and Flexible Working Arrangements. The rise in remote working (which accelerated with the onset of COVID-19 restrictions) will provide opportunity for employees to be more flexible in choosing a place of residence.



Demand for Co-Working Spaces. The demand for temporary business space and local working facilities is fast growing, due to the rise of remote and flexible working. This has decreased the reliance on permanent business spaces in urban and metropolitan centres.



Workforce Shortages. Skills shortages in key consumer-facing industries such as hospitality, construction, childcare, community and aged care sectors will impact business operations and service provision for residents.



Shifting Agricultural Practices. The industry is experiencing change, with agricultural businesses facing new challenges and opportunities, including increasing global demand for food, adopting more sustainable practices to combat climate change and harnessing innovative technologies to increase productivity.



Environmental Sustainability. Given the recent government commitments to reducing emissions, and rise in sustainable business practices, environmental sustainability is playing an increasing role within local government and influencing economic development decisions.



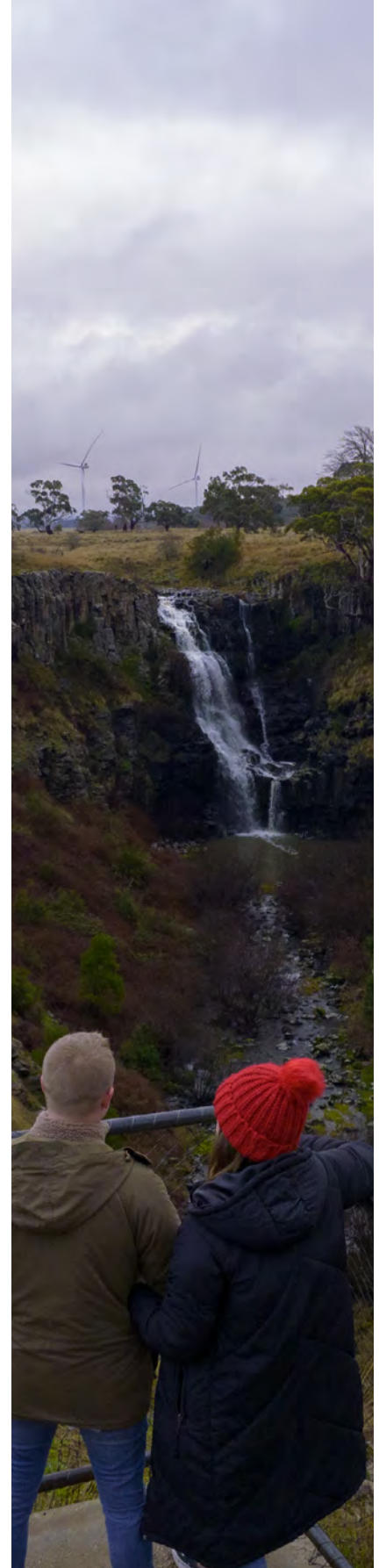
Rise in Renewable Energy. The energy sector is experiencing change both nationally and globally as new technologies emerge, combined with government commitments to sustainable practices. As a result, there is increased demand for investment in new, clean energy technologies to increase energy efficiency and reduce emissions.



Transition of Retail. Retail is an important component of the economy and can provide economic stimulus through direct expenditure and job creation. However, with the prevalence of online retailing, combined with the increase in service-based businesses in shopping precincts (e.g. hairdressers, accountants, etc.), traditional in-store retail is declining and needs to evolve and innovate its operations to meet the contemporary needs of consumers.



Growing Demand for Health Care. As the population ages, demand for health care will increase and significantly grow healthcare-related spending and impact the workforce requirements to meet demand.





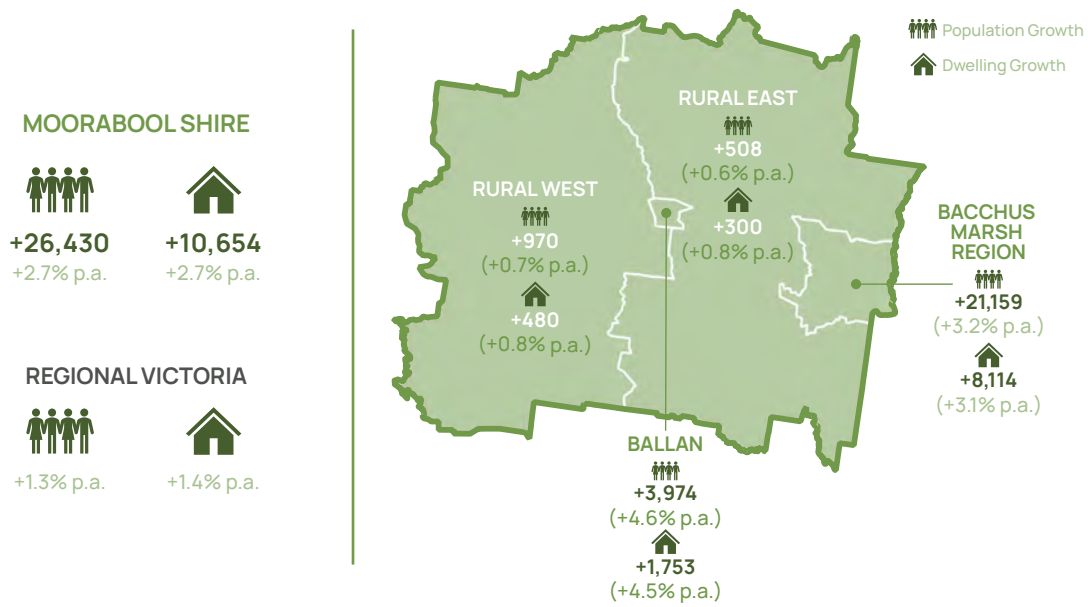
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

This section provides an overview of key demographic indicators that will influence future economic development in the Shire, including population, socio-economic and dwelling trends.

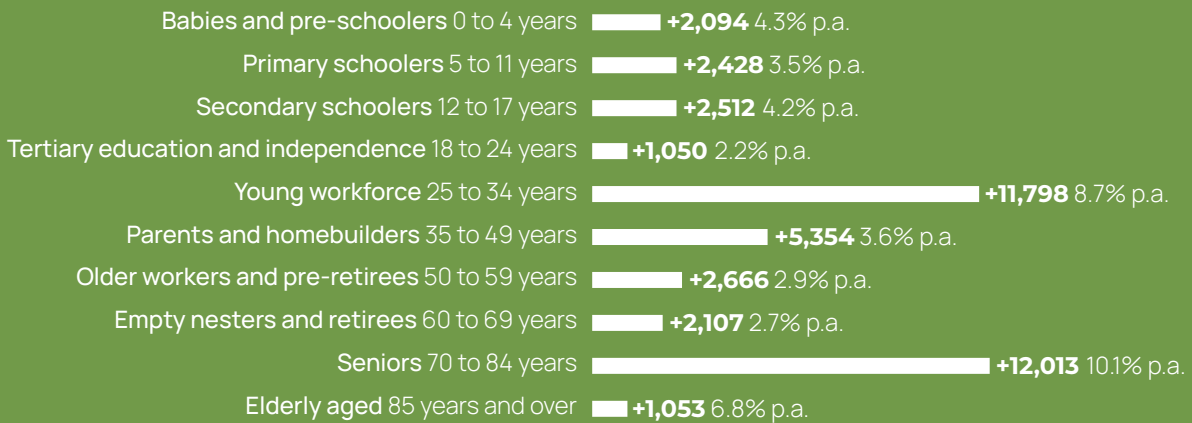
Note: The data included in this section has been compiled by Urban Enterprise from a combination of sources, including: Profile ID, Forecast ID, ABS Census data and the Victorian Valuer-General.

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

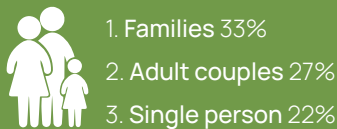
POPULATION AND DWELLING GROWTH Change 2021 to 2041



AGE PROJECTIONS Change 2021 to 2041



HOUSING AND DWELLING PROFILE



SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE



PROPERTY MARKET INDICATORS

	Houses	Apartments	Vacant Blocks
Average Sales 2017-2021	498 p.a.	81 p.a.	371 p.a.
Median Prices 2021	\$591k	\$380k	\$280k
	Metropolitan Melbourne \$875k Regional Victoria \$506k	Metropolitan Melbourne \$630k Regional Victoria \$380k	Metropolitan Melbourne \$325k Regional Victoria \$245k
5-Year Growth 2017-2021	+\$176k +42%	+\$69k +22%	+\$112k +67%

Unless otherwise indicated the data above is from the 2021 calendar year.

Demographic Profile

The demographic nature of Moorabool Shire is rapidly changing as the municipality experiences substantial growth. This provides the following opportunities and challenges for the local economy, which is summarised below:

- » Over the next 20 years the Shire's population is forecast to almost double in size, growing from 37,632 in 2021 to 64,062 in 2041 (+2.7% p.a.). The majority of residents (65%) are located in the Bacchus Marsh region, which will also account for most of the growth in the Shire. This is attributed to the role of Bacchus Marsh as the key urban and service centre for Moorabool Shire, as well as its proximity to Metropolitan Melbourne, making it more attractive for commuters.

The rate of population growth is considerably higher than the Regional Victoria average (1.3% p.a.) and will impact the level of demand and employment needs for local services and community infrastructure across the Shire. It is critical that the population growth is supported by sufficient amenity and services to ensure liveability outcomes are also achieved together with economic growth.

- » With the population growth driven by younger age cohorts, including parents and homebuilders (35-49 years) and the young workforce (25-34 years), this will contribute to an increased supply of local labour which could help sustain the economy over the long-term.

Adequate jobs growth in the Shire will be critical to provide local employment opportunities for the growing labour force.

- » Consistent with the rate of population and dwelling growth, there has been historic growth in the local property market across the municipality, with median prices for houses (+\$176k), apartments (+\$69k) and vacant house blocks (+\$112k) all increasing over the past five years. Although more affordable than metropolitan Melbourne, these prices are relatively higher than the Regional Victoria average, attributed to increasing demand and proximity to Melbourne.

It is critical that the Shire focuses on the provision of affordable and quality housing that meets the needs of residents and workers.

- » The rate of population growth will have a direct impact on housing demand, which is also forecast to significantly increase from 15,453 in 2021 to 26,090 in 2041 (+2.7% p.a.). This growth will also be driven by the urban centres of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan.

With estimated dwelling growth almost double the Regional Victoria average (1.4% p.a.), it is critical that there is adequately zoned land and infrastructure, in strategic locations, to support housing growth to accommodate the growing population.

- » The socio-economic profile of residents is typically measured by The Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), which is based on key variables that reflect disadvantage, notably income, education and employment. Moorabool Shire's SEIFA score of 988 – which is below the national average of 1,000 – indicates a relatively higher level of disadvantage in the municipality. This ranks Moorabool Shire as the 32nd most disadvantaged in the state (out of 79 Victorian LGAs).

Improvements to the Shire's SEIFA score (closer to the national average) should be a priority for the Shire to reduce the level of disadvantage in the Shire. This will be supported by investment in amenity and services to improve liveability outcomes for current and future residents.



ECONOMIC TRENDS

The following details key economic drivers and indicators for Moorabool Shire, highlighting the areas of strength and the opportunities for future economic growth and development.

Note: The data included in this section has been compiled by Urban Enterprise from a combination of sources, including REMPLAN, ABS Census data, Spendmapp and Tourism Research Australia.

ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

KEY INDICATORS

Total Output  **\$2.8B**

Regional Export Value  **\$786M**

 **10,233**
Local Jobs

RESIDENT CONSUMPTION

\$1.2B  **\$749M** External 'Escape' Consumption 63%

Total Consumption  **\$441M** Local Consumption 37%

TOP INDUSTRIES

By Output



1. Construction 23%
2. Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services 12%
3. Manufacturing 10%
4. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing 9%

By Exports



1. Construction 26%
2. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing 23%
3. Manufacturing 15%
4. Mining 10%

By Employment



1. Construction 15%
2. Health Care & Social Assistance 12%
3. Education & Training 12%
4. Retail Trade 9%
5. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing 9%

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

 **3.9%**

Unemployment Rate
June 2022
Regional Victoria 3.3%

 **+556**

Local Jobs Growth 2% p.a.
2017-2021
Victoria 1.9% p.a.

33% Job Containment Rate

61% Total Commuting Out
Ballarat 11%
Melton 10%
Melbourne 9%

BUSINESS PROFILE 2022

3,369 Registered Businesses

+599 5-Year Growth
+22%

Business Count by Industry

1. Construction 26%
2. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing 13%
3. Transport, Postal & Warehousing 10%
4. Professional, Scientific & Technical Services 9%

59% Non-Employing Businesses

40% Small to Medium Businesses
1-19 employees

VISITOR ECONOMY 2019

 **574,000**

Total Visitation

Domestic Daytrip 79%
Domestic Overnight 21%



\$65.3M

Total Expenditure

Domestic Daytrip 51%
Domestic Overnight 49%

 **\$74** spend per domestic daytrip visitor

 **\$259** spend per domestic overnight visitor

 **2.1** nights
Average length of stay

Economic Contribution




\$44M Output
2%

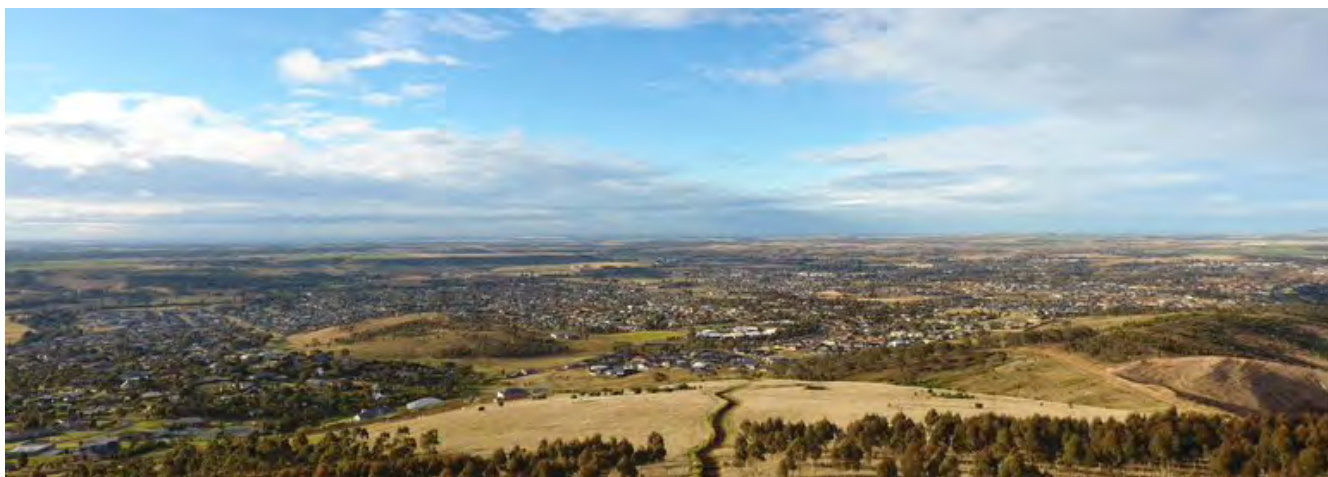
259 Jobs
3%

Economic Drivers

An analysis of the industry and employment profile of Moorabool Shire revealed key economic drivers and specialisations. These specialisations, which are detailed below, indicate areas of strength (in terms of output and employment) that leverage the municipality's competitive advantages.

Combined, these key sectors make up more than **79%** of output, **89%** of regional exports, **77%** of local jobs and, as such, they are fundamental to the function and productivity of the local economy.

Specialisation	Key Sectors	Economic Contribution		
 <p>Primary Industries & Trade</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing » Manufacturing » Transport, Postal & Warehousing » Mining 	27% Output	55% Exports	19% Local Jobs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Agriculture, forestry and fishing is a key contributor to the Shire's total output (9%) and employment (9%), as well as generating almost one-third of total export value (23%). The region is a vital food bowl for Victoria, driven by horticultural production (particularly fruit and flowers), as well as sheep and cattle farming. » The role of agriculture is critical to the Shire, particularly as it supports transport and distribution of production to export markets, as well as manufacturing raw materials (particularly downstream food processing). » There is also a strong mining sector in Moorabool Shire, which contributes to regional exports (10%), including production of rock materials and brown coal. This is a unique strength for the Shire which could drive future economic growth. 			
 <p>Population Driven Industries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Construction » Rental, Hiring & Real Estate » Retail Trade » Accommodation & Food Services 	42% Output	29% Exports	34% Local Jobs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The construction industry is the main contributor to output (23%) and employment (15%) in the Shire. The strength of this industry, as well as property services (i.e. rental, hiring & real estate), is driven by residential growth and property development. » The population growth has also contributed to the strong service-sectors in Moorabool Shire, including retail trade and hospitality, which supports a combined 1,755 jobs (17%). These sectors provide important amenity to residents as well as visitors, and account for most town centre trading. 			
 <p>Public Sector & Knowledge-Based Industries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Health Care & Social Assistance » Education & Training 	11% Output	5% Exports	25% Local Job
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Social, health and education sectors support a large proportion of jobs in the Shire and provides essential services to the population, supporting liveability and community wellbeing. » A growing population will increase demand for these services, as well as generate local employment and training opportunities to service demand. » Although there are a lack of 'white-collar' professional and financial services in Moorabool, the proximity to Melbourne and Ballarat provides opportunities for professional workers to live remotely in the Shire and commute. 			



Other implications of the key economic and employment indicators are summarised below:

- » The unemployment rate for Moorabool Shire is relatively high (3.9%) compared to Regional Victoria (3.3%). This could be attributed to the relatively low rate of local jobs growth (+2% p.a.), which has grown at a slower rate than population growth (+3% p.a.) between 2017 and 2021.

Local jobs growth is, therefore, a key focus for Council, which can be facilitated by business development and attraction. As job opportunities increase, this will also support future resident and workforce attraction.

- » Job containment indicates the proportion of residents that both live and work within the Shire. This is a key indicator for employment, as high rates of job containment can indicate that there are sufficient and suitable jobs available locally to support the local skills and qualifications of the labour force. Moorabool Shire has a relatively low job containment rate of 33%, with 'job leakage' primarily to Metropolitan Melbourne and Ballarat.

Whilst this demonstrates the need to grow local jobs and support the resident workforce, it also presents opportunities for the municipality to cater to a growing commuter population and leverage the rise of remote and flexible working.

- » There is a high proportion of spend leakage (i.e. expenditure that occurs outside the municipality), with around 63% of total resident consumption spent outside Moorabool, including online sales. This is attributed to the Shire's proximity to major urban centres, as well as a lack of consumer-facing businesses (retail, hospitality, service-industrial) to service the population. Low rates of local consumption has a detrimental effect on commercial activity in the Shire, which can constrain future business investment and job creation.

It will be important for Council to identify opportunities to increase local consumption to generate economic and employment outcomes.

- » Almost all registered businesses in the Shire are 'non-employing' (59%) or 'small' (40%) businesses, which impacts the supply of local jobs available to support the resident workforce.

Supporting business growth, investment and attraction of large employing businesses will help generate job opportunities in the Shire.

- » Moorabool Shire has a developing visitor economy, which provides a relatively small contribution to total output (2%) and jobs (3%). Visitors to the Shire are relatively low-yielding (compared to surrounding destinations in Ballarat and Daylesford-Macedon Ranges), which is attributed to the relative lack of commercial accommodation and commissionable products/experiences. This provides significant opportunity to increase the contribution of the tourism industry, which will be established through the development of a Visitor Economy Strategy that will guide tourism development and investment to grow both the value and volume of tourism.

Supporting a successful visitor economy is important for sustainable economic development in the Shire, as it diversifies the industry base, creates local jobs and generates direct local expenditure.



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The following considerations examine the challenges and opportunities for the Moorabool Shire economy, which is used to inform the strategic framework and recommendations for economic development in the Shire.

This information is drawn from a combination of background research, strategic policy review and stakeholder consultation with government, industry and community representatives.

» LEVERAGE THE STRATEGIC LOCATION AND ATTRIBUTES OF MOORABOOL SHIRE

Support population growth and workforce attraction.

The Shire's proximity to large population centres in surrounding cities (Melbourne, Ballarat and Geelong), combined with rural lifestyle attributes, has facilitated population growth, particularly for young families and workers able to work remotely.

Create business investment opportunities.

The Shire provides significant advantages that can be leveraged to attract and grow businesses. This includes access to labour supply and export markets in nearby regional cities and metropolitan centres, as well as a highly developed transport network that provides linkages to intrastate, interstate and international markets, including access to road, rail, air (Avalon and Melbourne airports) and sea (Geelong Port, Melbourne Port).

Unique lifestyle attributes and variable economies.

The mix of rural land, urban living and nature-based assets (e.g. national/state parks) provide unique lifestyle attributes for residents (and visitors).

The western region is predominantly 'rural', comprising agricultural land and small townships, contrasting with a more 'urban' eastern region, comprising the urban centres of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan, which includes majority of the population and business base.

This provides unique strengths, challenges and economic opportunities in different areas of the Shire that needs to be considered for future economic development.

» ACCOMMODATE AND SUPPORT THE GROWING POPULATION

Ensure population growth is sustainable.

The ongoing provision of social services, leisure and recreation activities and community amenity is needed to support the increasing population and promote liveability, including education, health, community facilities and public open spaces.

Provide diverse and high-quality retail and hospitality.

Stakeholders identified the lack of diverse, high-quality retail (i.e. 'big box' retail) and hospitality (i.e. contemporary restaurants) as a constraint to liveability, visitor attraction and leads to a high proportion of spend leakage (72%) to other municipalities.

As such, the provision of key retail, hospitality and personal services³ is a priority to meet the needs of residents, visitors and workers (and generate economic and employment outcomes for the Shire).

The importance of thriving and activated town centres.

Town centres are key public spaces in the Shire that, when utilised effectively, help achieve economic and social outcomes.

Promoting the activation of town centres into desirable destinations and fostering a strong sense of place will support community and visitor engagement, as well as increase dwell time, which maximises local consumption and supports business investment.

Well-defined role of townships.

With 64 small towns, hamlets and settlements across the Shire, it is important that their role is well defined to adequately support the Moorabool Shire economy and community.

The future role and vision of these towns will be impacted by the location, infrastructure requirements and existing land uses. This will influence opportunities for growth, infrastructure investment, as well as the industries to be supported (i.e. rural industry, tourism, etc.).

³Personal services includes hairdressing, dry cleaners, gardening, etc.

» PROVISION OF HIGH-QUALITY SUPPORTING AND ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Efficient and effective transport infrastructure is vital.

Although Moorabool Shire is well-connected to Melbourne and Ballarat via road and rail, and is proximate to sea and air transport, there are several transport-related issues constraining economic growth:

- » Variability of road infrastructure quality across the Shire, with many roads requiring upgrades and unsuitable for frequent resident/visitor usage, as well as large freight; and
- » Lack of public transport servicing outside the Bacchus Marsh and Ballan urban centres, which rely on infrequent bus routes.

Given the strategic location of Moorabool Shire and access to multiple transport nodes, improving connectivity and access will generate significant economic and social benefits.

Ensure zoned land is serviced and activated.

Council, community and industry stakeholders identified the need to provide development infrastructure (e.g. water, sewerage, energy, gas) to adequately service residential and industrial land.

This will encourage activation of zoned land and attract residential and business investment to support the increasing population and facilitate economic growth.

Leverage significant capital investment pipeline.

There is a significant level of public and private sector infrastructure projects that are planned, underway, or have recently been completed in the Shire.

Key infrastructure projects generate positive flow-on impacts for the regional economy, providing economic stimulus throughout planning, design and construction phases, as well as deliver economic, employment and community benefits once complete and operational.

Affordable and diverse housing stock.

Given the Moorabool Shire population is forecast to almost double over the next 20 years and increase demand for housing, a range of potential issues have been identified, including:

- » Increasing housing prices, which have grown by 43% over the past five years;
- » Variances in housing availability across different townships; and
- » Lack of diversity, with over 90% of stock low-density separate houses.

Provision of affordable and diverse housing stock will support needs of residents and workers in the Shire, which will help accommodate future population and industry growth.

Importance of digital connectivity.

Ensuring digital infrastructure and mobile coverage is high-quality and consistent across the Shire will support the community and economy, particularly in response to the rise in remote working and increased e-commerce opportunities for businesses.





» INDUSTRY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Coordinate and enhance industry representation.

Industry representation, including business associations and chambers, are a key factor for business development and growth. These groups support Council efforts in economic development via business support, networking and business events.

This is particularly crucial for the for small business base, which requires ongoing support to capitalise on growth opportunities.

Therefore, it is important that industry is well-represented to support the needs and interests of businesses.

Provide access to a skilled local workforce.

Local businesses reported skills shortages as the primary reason for difficulty in staff recruitment.

Workforce shortages and staff retention is a key issue for local businesses, including retail, hospitality, health, education, which impacts operation and the ability to service residents and workers.

Consideration should be given to strategies that promote skilled workforce attraction, as well as training and development opportunities to ensure the local workforce has the relevant skills to meet industry needs.

Support a strong and productive agricultural sector.

Moorabool Shire has a competitive advantage in agriculture, with well-irrigated and productive land that supports food production and is a key driver of the economy.

Identifying opportunities to strengthen the agricultural sector (and overcome industry challenges) will help realise economic growth, as well as maintain the Shire's competitive advantages.

Business growth supports local employment.

Promoting strong industry in the Shire, through development of existing businesses and new business attraction, provides significant flow-on benefits for local employment.

This is particularly important for the Shire, given the relatively low rate of job containment has resulted in local job growth being outpaced by population growth. Therefore, it is vital that more local job opportunities are available to support current and future residents.

Diversification of industry supports sustainable economic growth.

A more diverse industry base will help meet the growing needs of the economy and population and ensure the economy is more sustainable.

This includes identification of opportunities for new and emerging industries, including those that can be leveraged off existing industry strengths (e.g. tourism, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, etc.).

Activating zoned land.

There are significant land constraints within the Shire with 74% of total land is not suitable for development (including water catchments, State Forests, State Parks and National Parks). Council is currently planning for growth through development of land-use strategies for key towns, including Ballan and Bacchus Marsh, which will provide suitably zoned land in the Shire.

To ensure land use planning fosters investment and business attraction, it is critical that zoned employment land is activated and developed, including the provision of development infrastructure and access to utilities. This will help ensure land is 'investment-ready' and provide a conducive environment for industry growth and development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The following outlines the strategic framework to guide economic development and growth in Moorabool Shire.

Vision

“ Moorabool Shire will achieve long-term economic growth that supports liveable communities, a thriving local workforce and a productive business base. ”

Economic Development Objectives

The following objectives have been identified by Council to support the vision for economic development in the Shire. These are aspirational goals that frame the themes, strategic directions and project opportunities included in this Strategy.

Support **liveable and engaged communities.**

Increase **local consumption** and **local economic activity.**

Facilitate **local job growth** to support local businesses.

Support **business development and attraction.**

Economic Development Themes

The following economic development framework includes the key themes and strategic directions for the Moorabool Shire economy. This is used to identify the project opportunities – including priority projects – and future actions for Council to achieve desired economic outcomes.

The following pages describe this framework in greater detail as well as the project recommendations to be considered by Council. Council's role in delivery and implementation of the Strategy, including key tasks and responsibilities, are detailed in the Action Plan.



THEME

1. A Population-Driven Economy

Leverage population growth to facilitate economic development through attracting investment in key services, amenity and population-driven industry.

2. Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Attraction

Support investment and business attraction in the Shire to stimulate economic growth and meet the needs of businesses, workers and residents.

3. A Productive and Engaged Business Community

Support the growth and development of a diverse business base to achieve economic and employment outcomes.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- 1.1** Population-Based Industry Attraction
- 1.2** Develop High-Amenity Townships And Liveable Communities

- 2.1** Public Infrastructure Investment To Enable Growth
- 2.2** Activated And 'Investment-Ready' Land

- 3.1** A Supportive Environment For The Small Business Community
- 3.2** Attract Skilled Employees And A 'Job Ready' Labour Force
- 3.3** Support Industry Diversity
- 3.4** Increase The Value Of The Agricultural And Forestry Sectors

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- » Business Investment Attraction Plan and Prospectus (consumer-facing industries)
- » Moorabool Shire Retail Strategy
- » Small Towns Placemaking and Activation Plan
- » Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Improvement Program

- » Moorabool Shire Integrated Transport Strategy
- » Housing strategy
- » Land Activation Infrastructure Advocacy and Delivery

- » Moorabool Shire Business Association Program
- » Remote Higher Education Hub
- » Workforce Attraction Strategy
- » Industry Attraction Plan and Prospectus (diverse and emerging industries)
- » Agribusiness Branding
- » Agricultural Strategic Plan



Theme 1

A POPULATION-DRIVEN ECONOMY

Leverage population growth to facilitate economic development through attracting investment in key services, amenity and population-driven industry.

Overview

Economic development in Moorabool Shire will be driven by the rapid population growth in the Shire, which is forecast to almost double over the next 20 years. This will drive economic outcomes through increased demand for services and amenity, which will help promote:

- » Business attraction and investment;
- » Increased quality of social and community services;
- » Local consumption and business activity; and
- » Local employment opportunities.

The following strategic directions and projects are designed to leverage population growth and support existing and future residents, in a sustainable manner, to achieve economic development objectives.

Strategic Directions

1.1 Population-Based Industry Attraction

- » Attract population-driven industries to support and accommodate ongoing population growth and expand the local jobs base.

1.2 Develop High-Amenity Townships And Liveable Communities

- » Promote liveable communities and ensure key townships are supported by high-amenity to meet the needs of residents and workers.



Key Performance Measures

- » Increases in number of local businesses (retail, hospitality, personal services and service-industrial).
- » Increases in number of local jobs and/or job containment levels.
- » Increases in local consumption (reduced expenditure leakage).
- » Decrease in vacancy rates for commercial and industrial properties.



DIRECTION 1.1

POPULATION-BASED INDUSTRY ATTRACTION

Overview

Community stakeholders highlighted the opportunity to grow consumer-facing industry, including retail, hospitality, personal services and service-industrial, to meet the needs of a growing population (as well as visitors and workers). This will enhance resident amenity and drive local consumption, which will support commercial activity and economic growth.

Therefore, attracting relevant businesses and services is critical to the economy, as it promotes local consumption, business activity and helps create local job opportunities.

Priority Projects

Business Investment Attraction Plan and Prospectus (consumer-facing industries)

Prepare an Investment Attraction Plan and supporting prospectus materials that identifies and promotes business attraction activities, focusing on consumer-facing businesses that will support population growth, local consumption and employment.

This should focus on:

- » Identifying suitable consumer-facing industries (e.g. retail, hospitality, personal services);
- » Promoting Moorabool Shire's advantages to industry (via marketing channels);
- » Identifying and engaging with prospective private investors; and
- » Measures/incentives to encourage business investment and relocation to Moorabool Shire (e.g. assistance with planning permits, short-term rent subsidies, etc.).

Moorabool Shire Retail Strategy

Develop an updated Retail Strategy for the Shire, which factors in recent changes to the retail sector and updated population forecasts, focusing on:

- » Gaps in retail provision in key towns and activity centres;
- » Updated demand and supply forecast for retail floorspace;
- » Identify structural changes in retail sector and opportunities for businesses, particularly in response to COVID-19 (e.g. e-commerce opportunities, omni-channel engagements); and
- » Retail attraction opportunities, particularly attracting large retail chains to limit escape spend.

As part of this strategy, Council should ensure there is appropriate land available for retail development.

Other Project Opportunities

Service Provision Audit

Undertake a Service Provision Audit to identify gaps in key community and social services (e.g. health, education, aged care), as well as investment opportunities – in collaboration with the private and public sectors – to improve and expand services to meet the needs of existing and future residents.



DIRECTION 1.2

DEVELOP HIGH-AMENITY TOWNSHIPS AND LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Overview

It is important that economic growth considers liveability outcomes for residents across the Shire through provision of high-quality amenity and facilities. Although population growth is concentrated in the east of the Shire, particularly the urban centres of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan, improving amenity in smaller townships and settlements will encourage population dispersal and support sustainable population growth.

This will have a positive effect on resident lifestyle – which supports attraction and retention – as well as for visitors and workers, who will be drawn to destinations with high-quality amenities and services.

Priority Projects

Small Towns Placemaking and Activation Plan

Building on the Small Towns and Settlement Strategy, this placemaking and activation plan should focus on activating key townships and settlements across the Shire and promoting growth of the local economies through the following activities and actions:

- » Define the role of key towns and long-term vision;
- » High-street enhancements (e.g. streetscaping);
- » Public realm and open space improvements;
- » Infrastructure requirements;
- » Service provision opportunities; and
- » Business attraction opportunities.

Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Improvement Program

Stakeholders identified the need to enhance the Bacchus Marsh town centre, as it is the main service centre for residents and visitors to the Shire and will support increased commercial activity, local consumption and employment.

The program should be designed to improve town centre amenity and promote activation, which will also increase visitation and dwell time to the area, focusing on:

- » Streetscape improvements and beautification activities;
- » Improvements to public realm and open spaces;
- » Public art installations;
- » Pedestrianisation; and
- » Improving wayfinding and accessibility.

Other Project Opportunities

Recreation and Leisure Strategy Update

Provide an update to the Recreation and Leisure Strategy to meet current and future needs of residents (and visitors), including a focus on activities that promote local consumption and visitation, such as sporting activities, etc.

The strategy should include an audit of recreation and leisure activities and facilities to identify gaps, as well as opportunities to develop and/or invest in new products, experiences and facilities.



Theme 2

STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Support investment and business attraction in the Shire to stimulate economic growth and meet the needs of businesses, workers and residents.

Overview

The stakeholder consultation identified investment attraction, including infrastructure and business investment, as critical to future economic development.

This will help support liveability in the Shire, increase commercial activity and achieve jobs growth.

The opportunities include the provision of public infrastructure and enabling both commercial and residential investment to service the population, workers and business base.

Strategic Directions

2.1 Public Infrastructure Investment To Enable Growth

- » Advocate and facilitate investment in strategic public infrastructure to support population growth, local workforce growth and business investment.

2.2 Activated And 'Investment-Ready' Land

- » Provide a conducive environment for investment and business attraction.



Key Performance Measures

- » Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits relating to residential, commercial and industrial properties.
- » Increase in infrastructure funding from the public sector.



DIRECTION 2.1

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT TO ENABLE GROWTH

Overview

Investment in public infrastructure projects to support growth is critical. The rapid pace of population growth is placing a strain on existing resources and increasing demand for infrastructure investment. This includes improvements to public, commercial and private infrastructure.

Priority Projects

Moorabool Shire Integrated Transport Strategy

Improvements to transport and accessibility was identified as a key opportunity to achieve economic outcomes for the Shire, particularly as this could leverage the strategic location of Moorabool Shire and its proximity to Melbourne.

As such, the preparation of a Shire-wide Integrated Transport Strategy could help overcome the issues raised with road and public transport and realise growth opportunities.

This strategy should focus on the following elements:

- » Improvements to the road network within the Shire, including safety and access;
- » Connecting the Shire to surrounding regional centres and export markets (including airports and ports);
- » Public transport, including V/line access and enhanced bus network; and
- » Shared path network, including active transport options such as walking and cycling.

Housing Strategy

A shire-wide Housing Strategy that focuses on affordability and availability will help support the current and future population, particularly as the population in Moorabool Shire is forecast to almost double over the next 20 years.

The Housing Strategy should examine the current supply and demand for housing, including diversity of housing stock and rental supply, which is important to accommodate different population groups, as well as workers.

This strategy should also focus on:

- » Options to increase affordability, including leveraging recent State Government investment in affordable housing;
- » The capacity of townships to accommodate new housing and potential areas for growth;
- » The provision of relevant infrastructure to support housing growth; and
- » Ensuring that housing aligns with the character of specific towns.

Other Project Opportunities

Digital Infrastructure Audit

Undertake an audit of digital infrastructure in the Shire – including mobile coverage and internet connectivity – to identify gaps, areas of need and investment priorities/projects.

Digital infrastructure quality and connectivity is highly variable across Moorabool Shire and subsequent improvements will support businesses, residents and the workforce – particularly the growing remote workforce that requires reliable access and connectivity.



DIRECTION 2.2 ACTIVATED AND 'INVESTMENT-READY' LAND

Overview

Provision of serviced and developed zoned land is critical for economic development, as it will stimulate commercial and residential investment in the Shire.

This is particularly important for the Shire, as it faces significant land constraints.

Therefore, ensuring zoned residential and employment land is activated and ready for investment – through provision of appropriate development infrastructure and services – will support resident and business growth.

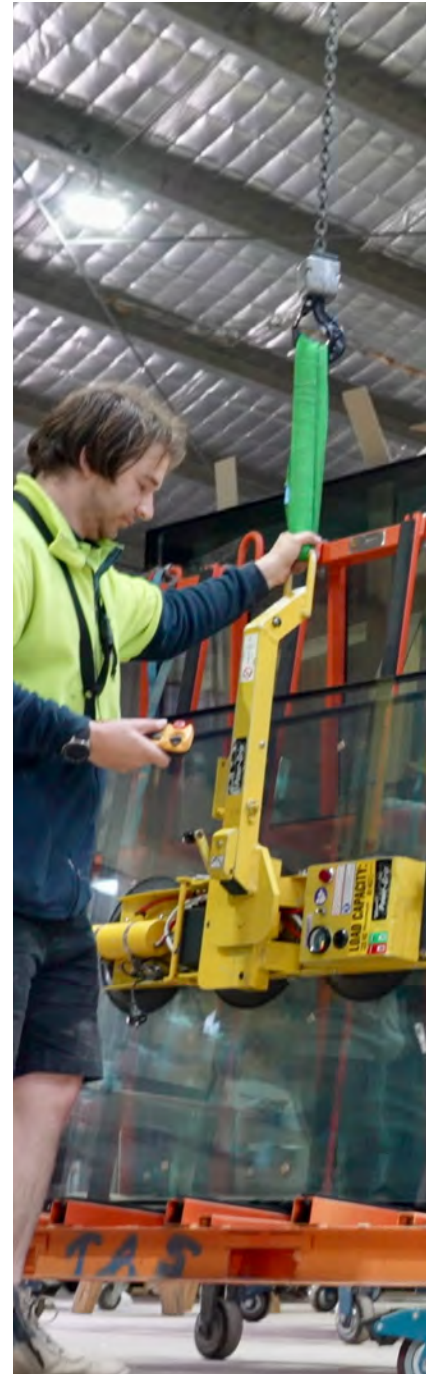
Priority Projects

Land Activation Infrastructure Advocacy and Delivery

Prioritise and advocate for public infrastructure to develop and activate zoned land in the Shire, which will help promote business investment and attraction.

This will identify projects that require additional government and private contributions to facilitate investment, including:

- » Development infrastructure to support business operations and residential development (e.g. sewer, water, energy);
- » Community and recreation infrastructure; and
- » Transport infrastructure to promote accessibility and connectivity to population centres.





Theme 3

A PRODUCTIVE AND ENGAGED BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Support the growth and development of a diverse business base to achieve economic and employment outcomes.

Overview

Local Council's role in economic development includes the core activities to support existing industries and promote business growth and investment. These are typically facilitated through regular and meaningful engagement, with a view to helping businesses overcome specific challenges and providing a conducive environment to achieve positive business and employment outcomes.

This is critical for Moorabool Shire given the size of the business base (almost 3,000 registered businesses), recent growth (+9% over the past five years) and potential for business investment and expansion – aligning with the projected growth expected across the municipality.

Providing business support and encouraging business development and investment is also particularly important as key business sectors recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Therefore, ensuring businesses have the tools to adapt, recover and grow in the long-term is critical to maintaining a thriving and productive business community.

Strategic Directions

3.1 A Supportive Environment For The Small Business Community

- » Support the small business community to enable business development and growth.

3.2 Attract Skilled Employees And A 'Job Ready' Labour Force

- » Ensure businesses have access to labour to meet industry needs (and overcome workforce shortages).

3.3 Support Industry Diversity

- » Identify and promote opportunities to attract business investment that capitalises on emerging and market trends.

3.4 Increase The Value Of The Agricultural And Forestry Sectors

- » Identify opportunities to grow the value of agriculture, increase productivity and ensure the sector remains a key economic pillar for the Shire.



Key Performance Measures

- » Increases in business investment (i.e. number of businesses within the Shire).
- » Increases in local employment.
- » Increase the average number of participants at training, mentorship and networking events.
- » Increase in industry peak bodies/memberships.
- » Increases in number of local tertiary qualifications and training apprenticeships.
- » Reduce the average time taken to provide a planning permit decision.
- » Growth in agricultural output and export value.



DIRECTION 3.1

A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Overview

Smaller businesses typically require additional support as they lack the resources to maximise growth opportunities. Therefore, creating a more supportive environment for the small business community will help nurture a thriving business base and promote business investment.

This has added importance given the expected growth in small and home-based businesses, which is largely in response to the rise in remote working that has seen many smaller businesses (and sole traders) relocate from permanent office spaces in nearby urban centres and Metropolitan Melbourne.

Providing a supportive environment will also allow the municipality to attract more small businesses to the region, including start-ups, digital enterprises and entrepreneur-based businesses.

Priority Projects

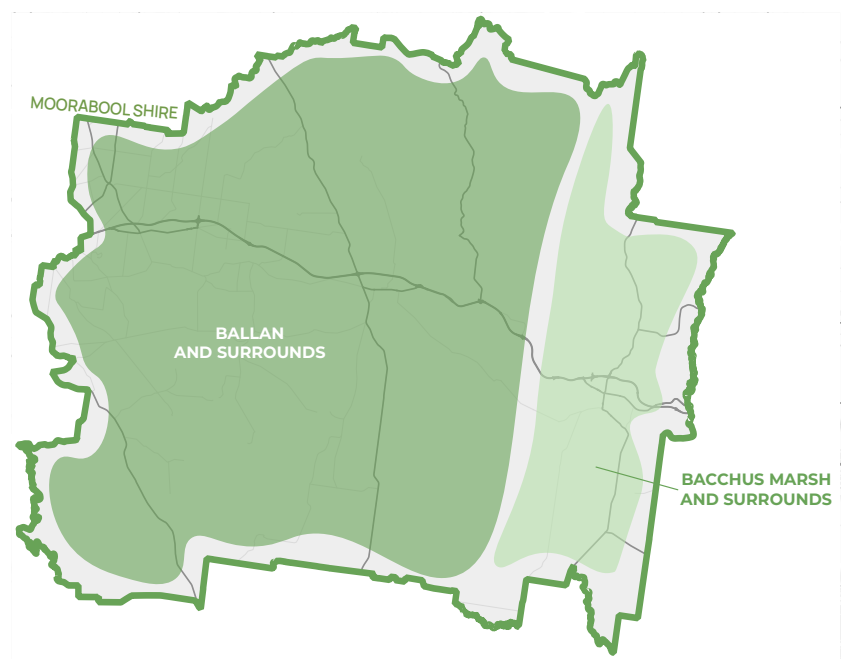
Moorabool Shire Business Association Program

As identified during the background research and consultation process, there are existing gaps in industry representation across the Shire. There is only one official chamber of commerce (Ballan) and a lack of industry support in Bacchus Marsh – which comprises the largest share of the Shire’s business base. This is a constraint to business growth and development, as industry representatives typically provide a support system that includes business training, networking events and advocacy support.

It is, therefore, recommended that Council supports the development of a Business Association Program that includes the establishment of two Business Associations covering strategic areas in the Shire, including:

- » **Bacchus Marsh and Surrounds** (i.e. covering the areas of Bacchus Marsh and surrounding suburbs including Darley, Maddingley, Parwan, Merrimu, Hopetoun Park, etc.); and
- » **Ballan and Surrounds** (i.e. covering the central and western parts of the Shire, including the towns of Ballan, Gordon, Wallace, etc.^{3,4}

BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS CONTEXT MAP



³Note: this could be an extension of the Ballan and District Chamber, with consideration given to the Blackwood Progress Association.

⁴Focuses on areas with a scale of businesses to justify a business organisation.



Business Associations would be the business community's conduit through to Council for individual and collective issues impacting businesses (e.g. road repairs) and serve as an independent advocate for the business base. The organisation would provide key services supporting economic development in the region, including:

- » Local Main Street type promotion and marketing initiatives;
- » Business support and professional development, including mentoring, training and networking events;
- » Assist in local product development; and
- » Identify local economic development and tourism projects, to be discussed with Council.

Council staff will directly liaise and collaborate with these associations in a mentoring capacity, as well as advocate for funding and support local projects and initiatives. This would free Council resources to allow a more strategic focus on economic development initiatives.

The organisational structure and funding of these associations are subject to review, with consideration given to a range of funding sources to support operation, such as direct Council funding, member fees and State Government.

Other Project Opportunities

Disaster Resilience Plan

As the economy and businesses recover from the impacts of COVID-19, as well as recent natural disasters, future recovery efforts by Council and Business Associations should focus on building the long-term resilience against future economic 'shocks'.

This could be delivered through a Disaster Recovery Plan that provides a framework for risk management and resilience measures for businesses, providing them with the knowledge to anticipate, respond and adapt to disasters. This includes communicating the support system and tools available to businesses, as well as providing special grant funding or permits (where required).

In particular, Local governments can strengthen resilience by leading, driving and coordinating local disaster response activities (through specialised Disaster Management Groups or industry representatives/business associations).

Moorabool Shire Entrepreneurs Program

Establish a program – in collaboration with the Business Associations – that targets innovative small businesses and start-ups. This may include grants and business support activities designed to promote business growth, increase business investment and establish a more diverse and innovative business base.

There is an opportunity for Moorabool Shire to attract entrepreneurs through its strategic location and proximity to Ballarat and Melbourne.

Co-working Feasibility Study

Investigate the potential to provide co-working facilities and supporting infrastructure in strategic locations to support small businesses, home-based businesses and remote workers in the Shire. This could include provision of Council-owned facilities/meeting spaces or advocating for private investment in co-working hubs.

Streamline Planning Processes

Improve and streamline regulatory processes (e.g. Better Approvals Process) to help businesses overcome regulatory barriers, improve the efficiency of planning permits and support investment.



DIRECTION 3.2

ATTRACT SKILLED EMPLOYEES AND A 'JOB READY' LABOUR FORCE

Overview

The consultation revealed that many businesses face issues both accessing and retaining a skilled local workforce, which impacts business operation and business growth. This is attributed to several factors, including:

- » Competition from businesses in Ballarat and Metropolitan Melbourne, creating low levels of job containment;
- » Increasing demand in population-driven industries, including health care, aged care and construction; and
- » The diminishing supply of retail, hospitality and agricultural workers, due to employees transitioning away from less reliable casual (and seasonal) work, which has decreased the local migrant workforce.

Ensuring businesses have access to a skilled labour force is, therefore, critical to future economic development.

Priority Projects

Remote Higher Education Hub

Establish a remote higher education hub, in collaboration with a suitable tertiary provider proximate to Moorabool Shire, which leverages proximity to an institution in Ballarat, Geelong and/or Melbourne.

This should be a remote/satellite learning facility that promotes education and training pathways that is aligned to industry needs of the Shire (e.g. agriculture, manufacturing, renewable energy, etc.).

This is designed to support businesses that require access to local skilled labour and increase local job opportunities. It will also provide incentive for the retention of younger-aged cohorts that typically leave the Shire for higher education purposes.

Workforce Attraction Strategy

Prepare a Workforce Attraction Strategy for Moorabool Shire to attract workers to the region, as well as address skills and workforce gaps.

This will involve collaboration with industry and local employment providers, to identify:

- » Employment and skills gaps in key industry sectors;
- » Common issues for employers and jobseekers; and
- » Opportunities for staff attraction and retention, including accessing the local labour force and workers from outside the municipality.

Consideration should also be given to the marketing and promotion of Moorabool Shire as a suitable destination to live and work.

Other Project Opportunities

Workforce Shortage Taskforce

Investigate the potential to establish a Workforce Shortage Taskforce, in collaboration with Business Associations. This is a model adopted by other Councils with relatively high rates of unemployment focusing on:

- » Supporting local jobseekers with training and development programs (e.g. build resumes, improve interview skills);
- » Liaising with industry and local employment providers to identify business recruitment needs and vacancies; and
- » Supporting local employers with recruitment (e.g. promote recruitment drives, connect industry and employment providers with jobseekers, promote employment opportunities online, etc.



DIRECTION 3.3

SUPPORT INDUSTRY DIVERSITY

Overview

Moorabool Shire is well-placed to attract investment in new and emerging industries that leverages its competitive advantages, including location, accessibility, access to export markets, rapid population growth and a productive agricultural sector.

As the business and subsequent jobs base becomes more diversified, the local economy will become more sustainable and resilient, which is key to achieving long-term growth.

Industries that could represent a future diversified economy, based on the Shire's attributes, growth trends and major project pipeline, include:

- » Advanced manufacturing (leveraging existing manufacturing base and access to export markets and labour in surrounding urban centres);
- » 'Green economy', including clean technology, renewable energy, carbon renewal and other circular economy practices (leveraging existing renewable energy investment as well as the Western Victoria Transmission Network, which will support future energy investment);
- » Professional services (leveraging the growing population and rise in remote workers re-locating from Melbourne); and
- » Arts and culture (providing recreation and leisure activities to support the growing population and provide product to support visitation).

Priority Projects

Industry Attraction Plan and Prospectus (diverse and emerging industries)

Prepare an Industry Attraction Plan and supporting prospectus materials to attract diverse/emerging industries (identified above) that are suited to Moorabool Shire, through working with public and private stakeholders, including educational institutions.

The document should identify the key private investment opportunities in diverse sectors, with the prospectus promoting the advantages of investment in Moorabool Shire (and opportunities for industry clusters in strategic locations).

This should also include specific initiatives to engage with investors and encourage business investment.

Industry Diversification Advocacy Document

Prepare an advocacy document to attract diverse industries (identified above) that are suited to Moorabool Shire, through working with public and private stakeholders, including educational institutions.

The document should promote the advantages of investment in Moorabool Shire and areas for industry clusters in strategic locations.

Other Project Opportunities

Circular Economy Investment

Investigate circular economy opportunities for business to increase efficiencies in production and reduce waste, including the following existing activities undertaken by local councils in Regional Victoria:

- » The Advisory Stream for Process Innovation and Resource Exchange (ASPIRE) – an online marketplace for businesses to exchange their waste as a resource; and
- » Business Development Program – Council and industry (i.e. Business Associations) build business capacity to identify and implement circular economy activities.



DIRECTION 3.4

INCREASE THE VALUE OF THE AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY SECTORS

Overview

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry is a key economic driver for Moorabool Shire, generating 11% of total output, 29% of regional exports and 10% of total employment.

Therefore, maintaining a productive agricultural sector will benefit the Moorabool Shire economy over the long-term.

It is important that the sector adopts the global trends facing the industry, embraces sustainable and innovative practices and harnessing key opportunities to increase the value of production.

These opportunities, identified by stakeholders, include future-proofing the sector (in response to extreme weather events), growing jobs in agriculture, overcoming supply-chain inefficiencies and increasing the export value of production.

Priority Projects

Agribusiness Branding

Build a local produce brand to increase industry and consumer awareness of local agricultural output, capitalising on the high-quality produce originating from Moorabool Shire.

Further investigation should be undertaken on the focus of this initiative, which could range from a Shire-wide corporate brand to a more localised version (e.g. Bacchus Marsh fruit and vegetable production).

Having a well-established brand will support businesses in the region through enhanced marketing of the produce, expanding its market appeal and subsequently increasing the volume of sales and reach to domestic and international export markets.

Successful agribusiness branding could subsequently be leveraged to support 'food-based tourism'.





Agricultural Strategic Plan

An Agricultural Strategic Plan is vital for the agriculture and forestry sectors to provide strategic direction and identify opportunities to facilitate growth.

This will support the Rural Land Use Strategy developed by Council, which will provide a vision for future rural land use and support best practices in land use management.

The Agricultural Strategic Plan should be a broad strategy that involves extensive consultation with industry to increase the value and volume of production, support local agricultural businesses as well as complementary industries. As such, this project should focus on:

- » Business diversification opportunities, including agritourism (e.g. farmgates) and small-scale renewable energy investment (e.g. wind/solar farms).
- » Downstream value-adding investment opportunities, focusing on food manufacturing of raw materials (including beef and horticultural production) as well as timber manufacturing. This could also include the establishment of a processing and packing facility that supports warehousing and distribution of processed goods, to be transported to export markets.
- » Leveraging the well-irrigated and fertile land, particularly around Bacchus Marsh, which is supported by the *Bacchus Marsh Irrigation District*⁵ and the proposed *Western Irrigation Network*⁶, providing water security to maintain fruit and vegetable production.
- » Leveraging export market opportunities through utilisation of the transport and freight network, including Bacchus Marsh Aerodrome, rail freight, road transport, as well as access to ports in Geelong and Melbourne.
- » Identify opportunities for investment in niche agricultural production to meet global trends, including plant-based meats, gluten-free produce, etc.
- » Provide succession planning initiatives to ensure rural land remains utilised by new farmers.
- » Promote local employment pathways and jobs in agriculture to support rural industry and ensure effective business operation. This could leverage a potential remote higher education hub to provide for a skilled local workforce.
- » Protect agricultural production against current and future risks (e.g. climate change, bushfires) to ensure long-term growth.

¹²A state significant irrigation and agricultural district with fertile soils, which generates a high volume of horticultural production, primarily fruit and vegetables

¹³To be completed in 2022, this is proposed to be newly irrigated land to the south of Bacchus Marsh in the Balliang area, which could help transition agricultural land uses from cropping to higher value and more intensive horticulture and other food production



ACTION PLAN

The following Action Plan provides a guide for the delivery of the project opportunities – including priority projects – identified in the Economic Development Strategy. It includes relevant actions, lead/supporting stakeholders, indicative costs and timeframes categorised as follows:

- » Short term (within 1 year);
- » Medium term (1-3 years); and
- » Long term (4 years+).

It is intended that Council may be required to lead, support or advocate identified projects, which may be delivered in partnership with State Government and/ or the private sector. In addition, funding contributions (either in full or part) may be required to deliver certain projects.

Implementation of the Strategy should be monitored on an ongoing basis using the key performance measures and monitoring tools outlined throughout the Action Plan.

Additional Council resources may be required to successfully deliver the projects identified in the Strategy. It is recommended that Council reviews internal resourcing and the need for additional investment.

Note: Indicative costs are subject to confirmation. In instances where projects are able to be delivered within existing resources, or where costs are unknown, these are listed as 'N/A'.



THEME 1. A POPULATION DRIVEN ECONOMY

Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		Time frame
		Lead	Partner	
Business Investment Attraction Plan and Prospectus (consumer-facing industries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prepare an Investment Attraction Plan and Prospectus focusing on the Shire's competitive advantages and opportunities to attract in consumer-facing businesses (e.g. retail, hospitality, personal services), supporting by strategies to attract investment in these industries. 	Council		Short
Moorabool Shire Retail Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Appoint a specialist consultant to prepare a Retail Strategy for Moorabool Shire, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Identification of gaps in retail provision; » Updated demand and supply forecast for retail floorspace; » Consideration of structural changes in the retail sector; and » Retail attraction opportunities, focusing on large retail chains to limit escape spend. 	Council		Short
Service Provision Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Undertake an audit to identify gaps in key community and social services (e.g. health, education, aged care). » Prioritise investment opportunities – in collaboration with the private and public sectors – to improve and expand services to meet the needs of existing and future residents. 	Council		Medium
Small Towns Placemaking and Activation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Appoint a specialist consultant to develop a Small Towns Placemaking and Activation Plan, building on the Small Towns and Settlement Strategy, to activate the key towns and settlements. This strategy should identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A long-term vision and role of key towns; » Town centre enhancements; » Public realm improvements; » Infrastructure requirements to enable growth; and » Business attraction and investment opportunities. 	Council		Medium



Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		Time frame
		Lead	Partner	
Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Improvement Program	» Undertake enhancement activities within the Bacchus Marsh town centre and promote activation and placemaking through streetscape improvements, public art, pedestrianisation and improved wayfinding.	Council		Short
Recreation and Leisure Strategy Update	» Appoint a specialist consultant to develop a new Recreation and Leisure Strategy to meet current and future needs of residents (and visitors), including a focus on activities that promote local consumption and visitation. The strategy should include an audit of recreation and leisure activities and facilities to identify gaps, as well as opportunities to develop and/or invest in new products, experiences and facilities.	Council		Medium

Key Performance Measures and Monitoring Tools

KPI	Monitoring
Increases in number of local businesses (retail, hospitality, personal services and service-industrial).	Annually via economic databases (e.g. Economy ID, REMPLAN) and/or the ABR database 'Counts of Australian Businesses (by Local Government Area)'.
Increases in number of local jobs and/or job containment levels.	Annually, via economic databases (e.g. Economy ID, REMPLAN) and every four years via ABS census data.
Increases in local consumption (reduced expenditure leakage).	Quarterly, via Spendmapp database.
Decrease in vacancy rates for commercial and industrial properties.	Annually, via Council's Property Rates Database.



THEME 2. STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		
		Lead	Partner	Time frame
Moorabool Shire Integrated Transport Strategy	» Appoint a transport consultant to prepare an Integrated Transport Strategy, with consideration of road network and public improvements, Shire connectivity and shared path networks.	Council		Medium
Housing Strategy	» Appoint a specialist consultant to develop a Housing Strategy for the Shire, focusing on affordability, availability and diversity of stock, as well as capacity to accommodate housing in key townships.	Council		Long
Digital Infrastructure Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Undertake an audit of current mobile coverage and digital connectivity, to identify gaps and opportunities for improvements. » Advocate for digital investment funding from relevant government authorities and telecommunication providers to enhance digital infrastructure in the Shire. 	Council		Medium
Land Activation Infrastructure Advocacy and Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Complete an audit of relevant zoned land to identify gaps in infrastructure and opportunities to service land (and attract investment). » Prepare an advocacy document that identifies and prioritises infrastructure projects, including estimated costs and required contributions, to be updated on an annual basis. » Promote the document through various advocacy and communication channels with private and government stakeholders. 	Council		Medium and Ongoing

Key Performance Measures and Monitoring Tools

KPI	Monitoring
Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits relating to residential, commercial and industrial properties.	Annually, via Council databases.
Increase in infrastructure funding from the public sector.	Annually, via Council databases.



THEME 3. A PRODUCTIVE AND ENGAGED BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		Time frame
		Lead	Partner	
Moorabool Shire Business Association Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prepare a feasibility study (in collaboration with industry) highlighting the advantages and costs of establishing two umbrella Business Associations, including for Bacchus Marsh and Surrounds and Ballan and Surrounds. » If feasible, prepare a funding agreement to establish the associations, which should cover the funding amounts, funding mechanisms, period of funding, KPIs, as well as activities. » Identify and consult with suitable industry representatives to support the establishment and operation of the associations. » Undertake a review of funding mechanisms to support establishment of business associations. 	Council		Short
Disaster Resilience Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prepare a framework for risk management and resilience measures for businesses, providing them with the knowledge to anticipate, respond and adapt to disasters. » Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Disaster Management sub-committee to represent industry and Council and deliver the framework. 	Council	Local Businesses	Short
Moorabool Shire Entrepreneurs Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Establish a program that attracts and supports entrepreneurs, innovative SMEs and start-ups. This should identify attraction strategies and incentives. 	Council	Business Associations Industry representatives	Medium
Co-working Feasibility Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Undertake a feasibility study for the establishment of a co-working space in strategic location/s (including preferred management model), either through provision of Council-owned facilities or advocating for private investment. 	Council	Private investors	Medium
Remote Higher Education Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Investigate the opportunity to establish a remote higher education hub, in collaboration with a suitable tertiary provider proximate to Moorabool, which promotes education and training pathways that is aligned to the industry needs of the Shire. » This investigation should consider the location, management model and costs of operating a facility. 	Council		Medium



Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		
		Lead	Partner	Time frame
Workforce Attraction Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Appoint a specialist consultant to prepare a strategy that identifies workforce shortages, industry needs and opportunities/incentives to attract and retain a skilled and unskilled labour force. 	Council	Local Employment Providers Business Associations Industry representatives	Medium
Workforce Shortage Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Investigate the potential to establish a Workforce Shortage Taskforce, in collaboration with Business Associations, focusing on supporting local jobseekers, matching jobseekers to industry and supporting local employers. » The taskforce could include representatives from Council, industry and/or local employment providers. 	Council	Business Associations Industry representatives	Medium
Industry Attraction Plan and Prospectus (diverse and emerging industries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prepare an Industry Attraction Plan focusing on investment attraction of new and emerging industries suited to Moorabool Shire, in collaboration with industry, government agencies and educational institutions. » Develop prospectus materials to promote diverse investment opportunities, to be provided through marketing and communication channels. 	Council	Business Associations Industry representatives	Medium
Circular Economy Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Investigate circular economy opportunities for business to increase efficiencies in production and reduce waste, including the following existing activities identified by local councils in Victoria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » ASPIRE – an online marketplace for businesses to exchange their waste as a resource; and » Business Development Program – Council and industry build capacity businesses to identify and implement circular economy activities. Council's role would be to deliver and promote these activities, to be undertaken by the private sector. 	Council		Medium



Project	Action	Stakeholder/s		
		Lead	Partner	Time frame
Agribusiness Branding	» Establish a food group steering committee to oversee the development of a food produce brand for Moorabool Shire.	Council	Farming Moorabool	Medium
Agricultural Strategic Plan	» Appoint a specialist consultant to prepare an Agricultural Strategic Plan for Moorabool Shire to support a growing and sustainable agricultural sector, to be prepared in consultation with industry, government and community stakeholders.	Council	State Government Farming Moorabool Business Associations Industry representatives	Medium

Key Performance Measures and Monitoring Tools

KPI	Monitoring
Increases in business investment (i.e. number of businesses within the Shire).	Annually via economic databases (e.g. Economy ID, REMPLAN) and/or the ABR database 'Counts of Australian Businesses (by Local Government Area)'.
Increases in local employment.	Annually, via economic databases (e.g. Economy ID, REMPLAN) and every four years via ABS census data.
Increase the average number of participants at training, mentorship and networking events.	Annually, with Council recording attendees.
Increase in industry peak bodies/memberships.	Annually, via local business organisations or industry representatives.
Increases in number of local tertiary qualifications and training apprenticeships.	Annually, via population databases (e.g. Profile ID) and every four years via ABS census data.
Reduce the average time taken to provide a planning permit decision.	Annually, via the 'Know Your Council' website.
Growth in agricultural output, export value and job creation.	Annually, via economic databases (e.g. Economy ID, REMPLAN) and every four years via ABS census data.



The Moorabool Shire Economic Development Strategy was prepared by Urban Enterprise in collaboration with Moorabool Shire Council.

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