

# 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.

# INTRODUCTION

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.

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## Local Government's Role

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”<sup>1</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup>World Bank, 2016.

## Moorabool Shire

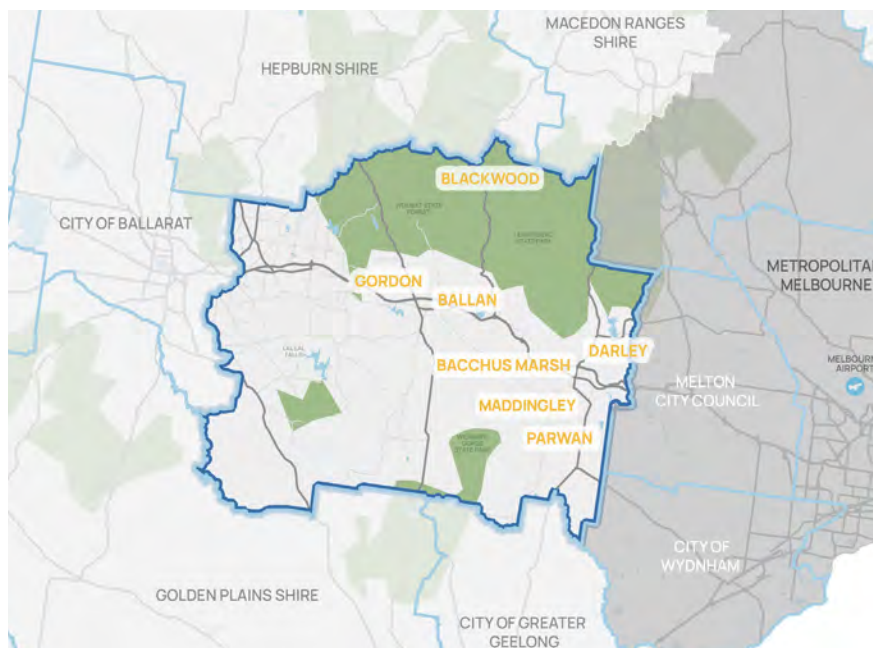
Moorabool Shire is situated to the west of metropolitan Melbourne, encompassing an area of over 2,110 square kilometres and home to over 36,000 residents. The municipality is comprised of 64 localities, hamlets and towns, which includes the key urban centres of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan. As such, most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

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

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



### 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%
4. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing 9%

### Regional Export Value



**\$786M**

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

### Local Jobs



**10,233**

1. Construction 15%
2. Health Care & Social Assistance 12%
3. Education & Training 12%
4. Retail Trade 9%



**\$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.



## 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.
- Create business investment opportunities.
- Leverage unique and diverse lifestyle attributes (mix of urban and rural environments).

### Provision of high-quality supporting and enabling infrastructure.

- Develop efficient and effective transport infrastructure to generate economic and social benefits.
- Ensure zoned land is serviced and activated to encourage investment.
- Leverage significant capital investment pipeline to deliver economic, employment and community benefits.
- Support affordable and diverse housing stock to meet the needs of residents and workers.
- Ensure digital infrastructure and mobile coverage is high-quality and consistent across the Shire.

### Accommodate and support the growing population.

- Provide social services, leisure and recreation activities to ensure population growth is sustainable.
- Provide diverse and high-quality retail and hospitality.
- Activate town centres into thriving public and commercial spaces.
- Ensure townships can be developed to support the community, businesses and workers.

### Industry growth and development.

- Coordinate and enhance industry representation to support the business base.
- Provide businesses with access to a skilled local workforce.
- Support a strong and productive agricultural sector.
- Encourage business growth and investment will generate flow-on benefits for local employment.
- Diversify industry to support sustainable economic growth.
- Activate zoned land to foster investment and business attraction.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

## Vision

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

## Objectives

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- » 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

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THEME	STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS
 <p><b>1. A Population-Driven Economy</b> Leverage population growth to facilitate economic development through attracting investment in key services, amenity and population-driven industry.</p>	<p><b>1.1</b> Population-Based Industry Attraction <b>1.2</b> Develop High-Amenity Townships And Liveable Communities</p>
 <p><b>2. Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Attraction</b> Support investment and business attraction in the Shire to stimulate economic growth and meet the needs of businesses, workers and residents.</p>	<p><b>2.1</b> Public Infrastructure Investment To Enable Growth <b>2.2</b> Activated And 'Investment-Ready' Land</p>
 <p><b>3. A Productive and Engaged Business Community</b> Support the growth and development of a diverse business base to achieve economic and employment outcomes.</p>	<p><b>3.1</b> A Supportive Environment For The Small Business Community <b>3.2</b> Attract Skilled Employees And A 'Job Ready' Labour Force <b>3.3</b> Support Industry Diversity <b>3.4</b> Increase The Value Of The Agricultural And Forestry Sectors</p>



## 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.

### 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.

### 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.

##### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Business Investment Attraction Plan and Prospectus (consumer-facing industries)**  
Identify and promote business attraction activities, focusing on consumer-facing businesses that will support population growth, local consumption and employment.
- **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.

##### OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Service Provision Audit

#### 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.

##### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Small Towns Placemaking and Activation Plan**  
Build on the Small Towns and Settlement Strategy, focusing on activating key townships and settlements across the Shire and promoting growth of the local economies.
- **Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Improvement Program**  
Implement a program to improve town centre amenity and promote activation. This will support increased commercial activity, local consumption and employment.

##### OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Recreation and Leisure Strategy Update

## THEME 2: STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT ATTRACTIONS



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.

### 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.

### 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.

#### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Moorabool Shire Integrated Transport Strategy**  
Develop a Shire-wide Integrated Transport Strategy to help overcome road and public transport related issues and realise growth opportunities.
- **Housing Strategy**  
Develop a strategy that focuses on options to improve housing affordability and availability, in order to support the current and future population.

#### OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Digital Infrastructure Audit

#### 2.2 Activated And 'Investment-Ready' Land

Provide a conducive environment for investment and business attraction.

#### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Land Activation Infrastructure Advocacy and Delivery**  
Prioritise and advocate for public infrastructure to develop and activate zoned land in the Shire.





## 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.

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.

### 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.

### Strategic Directions

#### 3.1 A Supportive Environment For The Small Business Community

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

##### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Moorabool Shire Business Association Program**  
Develop a Business Association Program that includes the establishment of Business Associations covering strategic areas in the Shire to support the business base.

##### OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Disaster Resilience Plan
- Moorabool Shire Entrepreneurs Program
- Co-working Feasibility Study
- Streamline Planning Processes

#### 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).

##### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Remote Higher Education Hub**  
Establish a remote higher education hub, in collaboration with a suitable tertiary provider, that promotes education and training pathways that is aligned to the industry needs of the Shire.
- **Workforce Attraction Strategy**  
Prepare a Shire-wide Workforce Attraction Strategy to attract workers to the region, as well as address skills and workforce gaps.

##### OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Workforce Shortage Taskforce

#### 3.3 Support Industry Diversity

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

##### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Industry Attraction Plan and Prospectus (diverse and emerging industries)**  
Develop a Plan to attract diverse/emerging industries that are suited to Moorabool Shire.
- **Industry Diversification Advocacy Document**  
Prepare an Advocacy Document to promote the advantages of investment in Moorabool Shire and identify areas for industry clusters in strategic locations.

##### OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Circular Economy Investment

#### 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.

##### PRIORITY PROJECTS

- **Agribusiness Branding**  
Build a local produce brand to increase industry and consumer awareness of local agricultural output.
- **Agricultural Strategic Plan**  
Develop a Strategy for the agriculture and forestry sectors to provide strategic direction and identify opportunities to facilitate growth.



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

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