



Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Economic Development Strategy 2021 – 2031:
Issues & Opportunities Paper



Economic development in the Macedon Ranges

Local economic development aims to increase the economic capacity of a local area which, in turn, aims to improve the well-being of local communities.

The Federal and State Governments play significant roles in progressing economic development initiatives at broader regional and national scales. Local government plays an equally important role at the local level, undertaking a range of activities and initiatives in collaboration with local partners to promote the interests of the region and underpin business growth, employment and training opportunities.

Businesses are ultimately the ones that drive and deliver economic development through investment, business growth and local employment. Local government plays a supporting role through its core economic development functions.

Working with other levels of government, businesses and non-governmental sector partners to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation are key processes of economic development.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council aims to champion the development of the local region by mobilising local assets and resources to capitalise on specific competitive advantages and help the region thrive.

The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) will provide a framework on how to deliver the desired vision for the shire's economy and community in the future. This vision is yet to be articulated but will evolve out of the process of developing the strategy, being strongly informed through a range of engagement and consultation. The vision will align with the Macedon Ranges Council Plan 2017 – 2027 and other, adopted Council plans and strategies.

Council's core economic development functions



Advocacy –

promotion of regional interests to other levels of government and decision makers.



Facilitation –

providing information, marketing or incentives; fostering partnerships; and, establishing local regulation.



Investment attraction –

creating an environment that catalyses investor interest.



Investigation –

completing due diligence, feasibilities and de-risking for future investment.



Planning –

aligning vision to local and regional plans; land use planning.



Service provision –

traditional or new services to support economic development.

Economic development in the Macedon Ranges

Is this a new Economic Development Strategy?

Yes. This project is delivering a new Macedon Ranges Economic Development Strategy for 2021-2031.

It is important to recognise that a draft EDS for 2019-2029 had been prepared. Ultimately, the draft EDS for 2019-2029 was not adopted by Council and as such the project is being revisited.

During the process of developing the new EDS in early 2020 a version of this Issues and Opportunities paper was finalised and stakeholder engagement planned. At this time, the COVID-19 pandemic reached Australia which was then accompanied by ongoing restrictions that Victorians know too well. This caused major disruptions to businesses and the community and as such, completing engagement and finalising the EDS was put on hold. This process is now recommencing early in 2021.

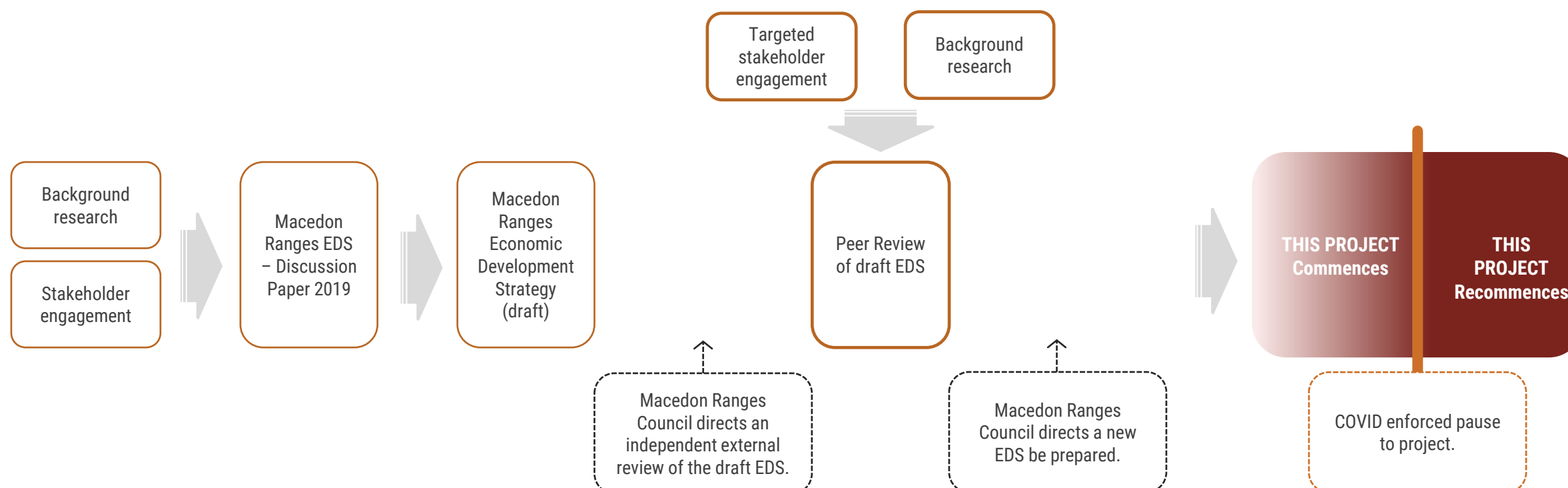
The diagram below provides an overview of the project process to date.

While this project will deliver a new Economic Development Strategy, it is not starting from scratch. This project is a continuation of a process that will build on the analysis and engagement that was undertaken in preparation of the 2019-2029 draft, additional analysis and engagement undertaken through the review of the draft EDS, and the engagement undertaken at the start of COVID-19.

The role of this issues and opportunities paper is to inform strategy and engagement. It is not the final strategy.

The paper builds on previous analysis and integrates aligned policy and strategy. It does not aim to replicate or reiterate the work done to date. The format of this paper is intended to stimulate discussion rather than provide comprehensive data reporting and literature reviews that have already been prepared in earlier work.

The emerging themes that have been identified provide direction for economic development based on previous economic, population and industry profiles coupled with other strategic work completed to date.





What we have learnt to date

What have we learnt to date

Key aspects that must be included in the 2021 – 2031 Economic Development Strategy



Vision –

Requires a focus on key sectors and assets, for example: the visitor economy, agriculture, renewing town centres and leveraging high quality environment assets.



Policy alignment –

Policy can be complex, the new strategy needs to strongly align with federal, state and local policy.



Data & evidence–

The draft EDS would benefit from insight on emerging technologies and opportunities to strengthen current advantages and regional drivers.



Stakeholder engagement–

The strategy needs to be informed by a balanced range of views and inputs from a mix of industry and business interest groups.



Clear implementation plan–

A 10-year economic development strategy needs to articulate resource requirements for specific projects and initiatives that drive outcomes for the Macedon Ranges.

Council commissioned a peer review of the 2019 draft Economic Development Strategy.

The peer review provided guidance to refine and scope this project.

The key limitations in the previous draft strategy identified through the peer review process included:

- Lack of a clear competitive and targeted vision.
- Requirement for supportive and balanced objectives to drive the vision.
- Greater clarity of Council's role to be the most effective.
- Need for greater alignment between actions and the EDS objectives including a clear list of new projects that can enable economic development outcomes within 5 years.

While Macedon Ranges Shire Council remains focused on the administrative boundary of the local government area, economic development initiatives extend beyond the municipality.

There is a need to recognise international and broader regional perspectives relating to macro-economic trends, infrastructure investment and policy opportunities as they relate locally to the Macedon Ranges Shire economy.

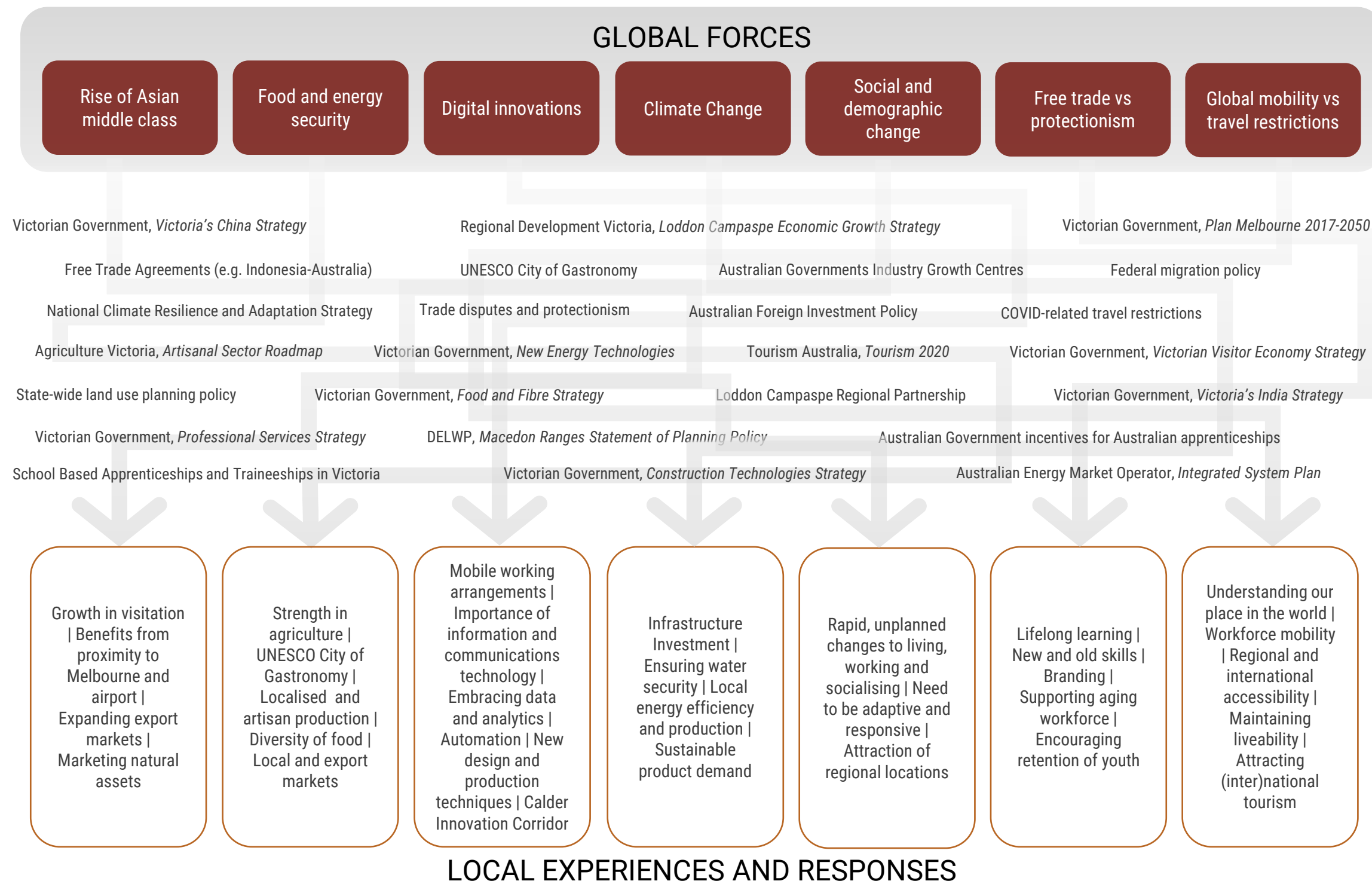
Fundamentally the previous draft lacked specific projects or initiatives that would drive outcomes for industry sectors, specific places or targeted economic development opportunities.



Economic drivers of change

Global forces and regional influences

Economic development in the Macedon Ranges is influenced by a broad range of global and regional factors. Global megatrends are experienced at a local level through an evolving lens of policy and strategy that is developed at the national, state and regional levels.



Economic Impacts of COVID-19

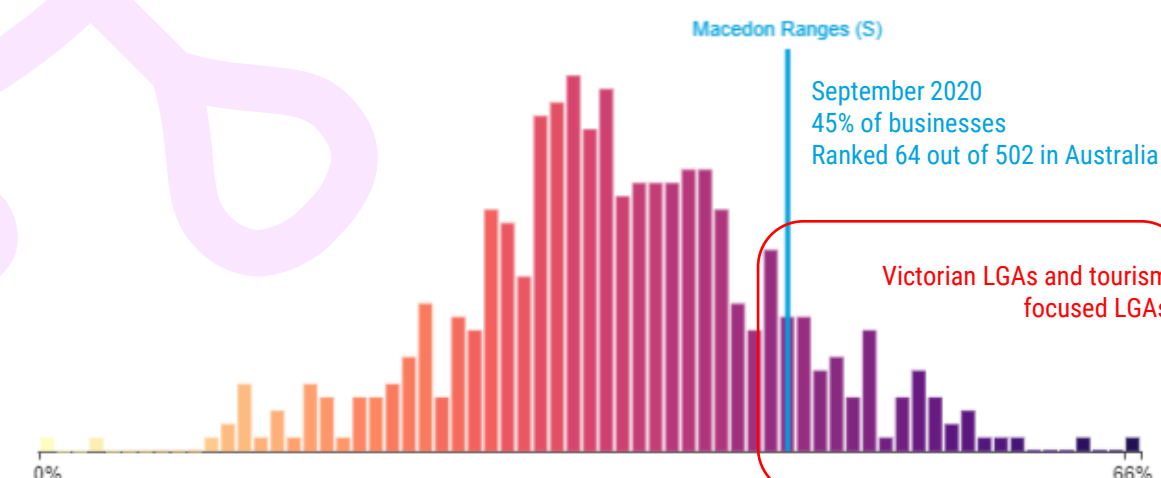
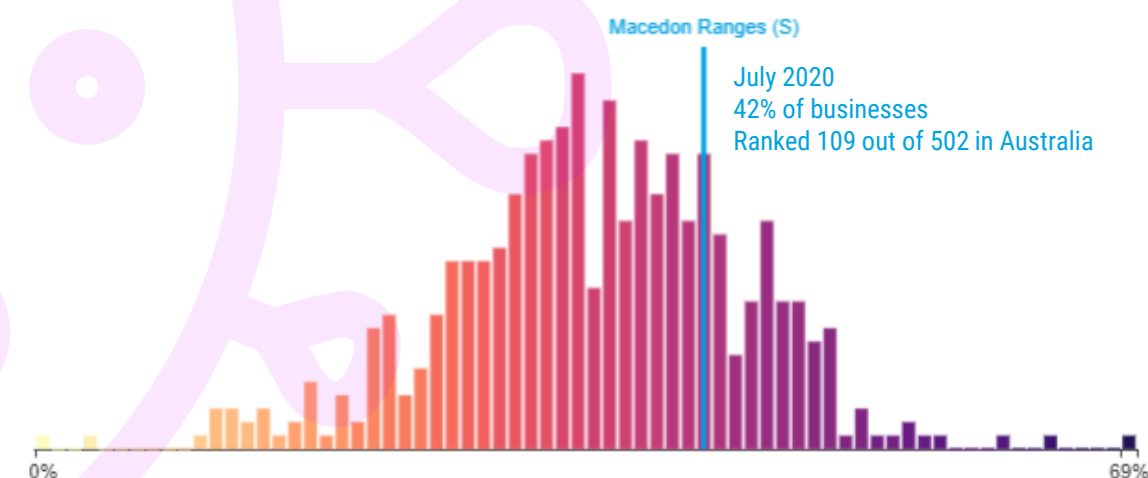
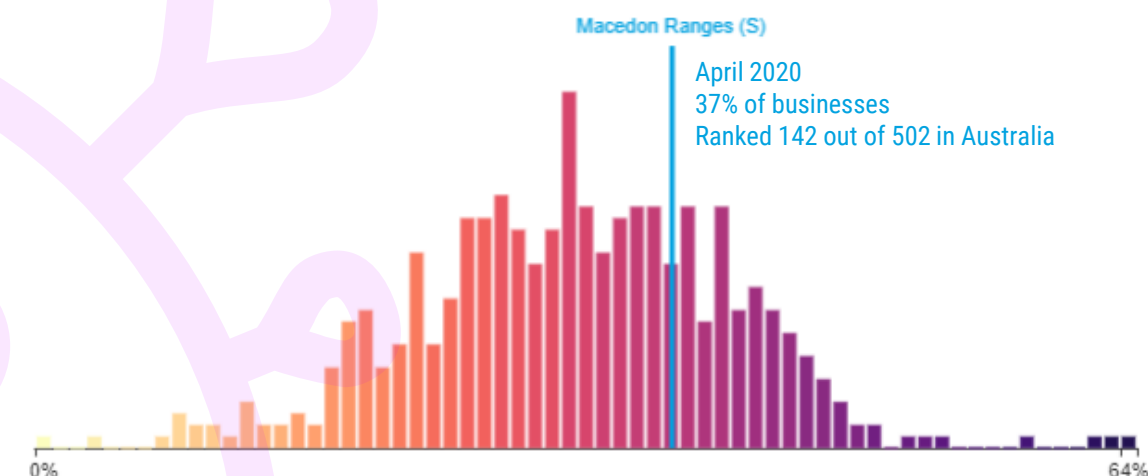
COVID-19 continues to have impacts on businesses and communities across the globe. In Australia, Victoria experienced the longest and strictest restrictions in the country. While the most severe restrictions have eased the pandemic and the associated changes it brings to our way of life is likely to continue for a while to come.

The effects of the COVID-19 restrictions have been experienced to varying degrees by individual businesses. Some businesses benefited greatly from the new patterns of behaviour in work, leisure and consumption that the restrictions have brought about. Conversely, many businesses and individuals have experienced significant negative impacts. While government support may have softened some of these impacts, for many the pandemic has resulted in business closures, loss of employment and financial insecurity.

The JobKeeper Payment scheme was one of the Federal Government's support programs. Businesses eligible for JobKeeper have experienced a decline in revenue of at least 30 percent. Analysing JobKeeper applications can indicate how affected the businesses within a region are with higher levels of applications likely to indicate greater negative economic impacts from COVID-19.

The adjacent figures indicate the proportion of local businesses within Macedon Ranges that have applied for JobKeeper in selected months. As indicated by the charts, more businesses have been applying over time as restrictions in Victoria were increased.

The change in rankings demonstrates how other areas were 'improving' (i.e. fewer businesses making applications) relative to Macedon Ranges. LGAs with a high proportion of businesses making JobKeeper applications in September predominantly consisted of Victorian regions as well as those areas with a strong focus on tourism, such as Byron Bay in New South Wales, and Shark Bay in Western Australia.



Economic Impacts of COVID-19

Industry level analysis indicates that tourism focused industries or those based on social gatherings have experienced the largest and most prolonged declines.

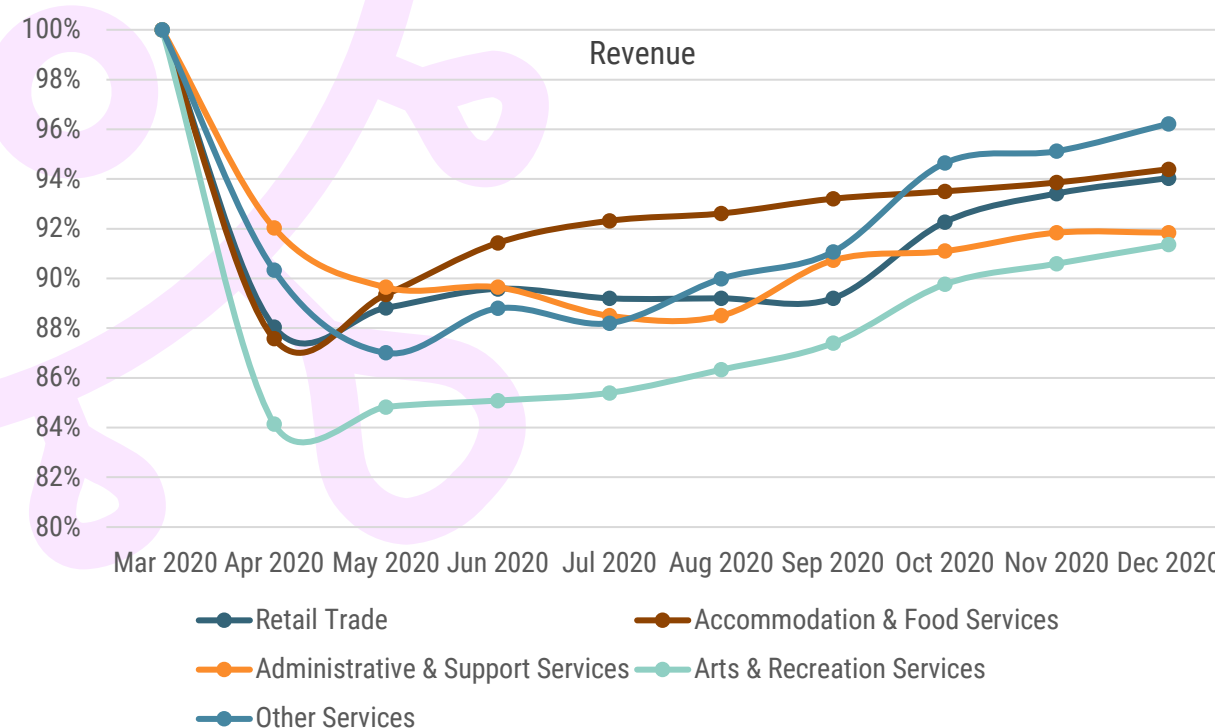
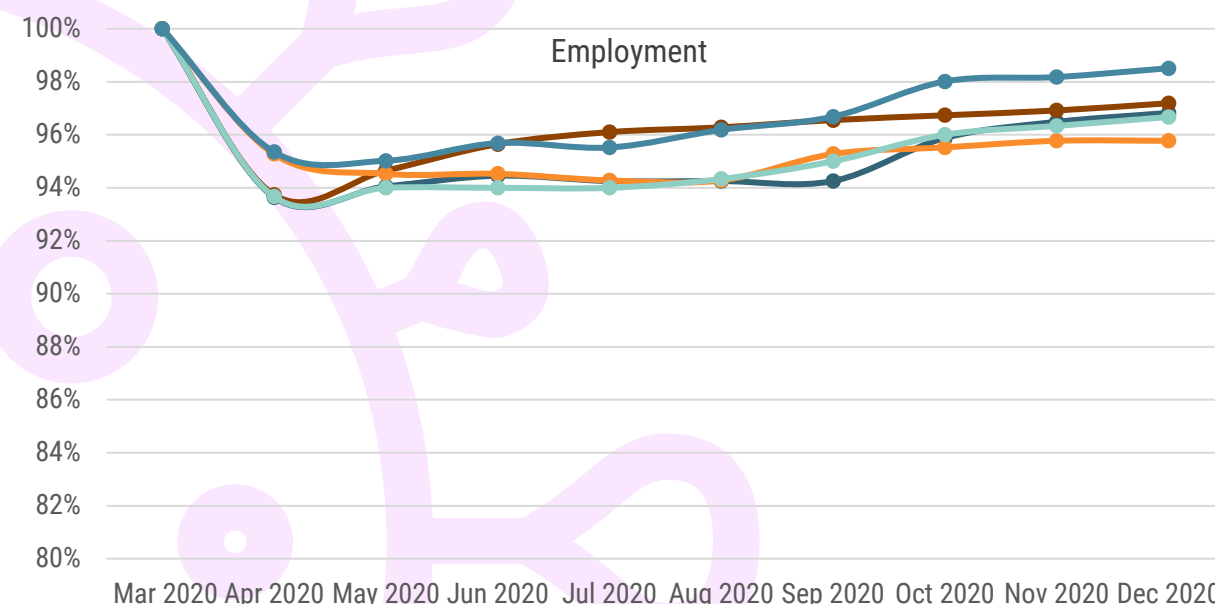
At an industry level, there are some sectors which have bounced back from the impacts of COVID-19 better than others. Broadly speaking, tourism related industries, or those based on social gathering have borne the most significant impacts of the COVID-related restrictions.

The charts adjacent outline the five industries in Macedon Ranges which have experienced the largest relative declines in employment and revenue since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.

As indicated in these figures, arts & recreation services was generally the most affected sector. Other services, which includes industries such as beauticians and mechanics, experienced some early declines but have experienced the strongest recovery out of these most impacted sectors.

What is also illustrated by the adjacent charts is the difference between employment and revenue. Broadly speaking, revenue has been much more impacted than employment. This is most likely due to the support provided through the JobKeeper scheme which allowed businesses to keep employees on despite drops in income.

Top 5 Macedon Ranges Industries Most impacted by COVID-19



Source: REMPLAN 2021

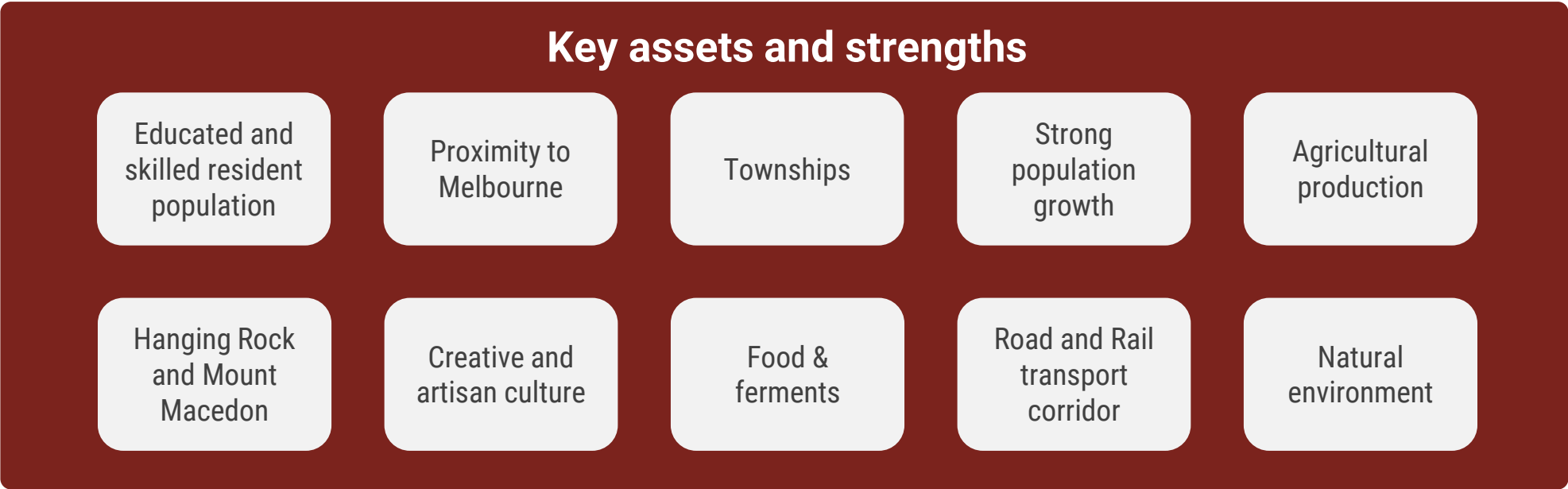
Economic Impacts of COVID-19

Macedon Ranges Shire Council has been actively providing a range of support programs for local businesses, organisations, and community members. This includes a range of direct financial support, promotional campaigns, and delivery of events and training. In addition to administering programs provided by the State Government, such as the \$250,000 Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package, Council initiated a range of actions last financial year and have planned numerous actions for this financial year. A summary of some of these are provided below.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Funding for social inclusion events | Defer penalties on animal registrations | Council-driven 'Buy Local' campaign |
| Footpath and street closures to support outdoor dining | Regular sessions with experts on business topics | |
| Waive rent for tenants at Council owned properties | Engage with the business community via survey | |
| Support to organisations providing critical emergency relief services | Early payment to suppliers | Information for impacted communities |
| Defer interest on both outstanding rates and charges until September 2020 | Ceasing debt collection up to September 2020 | Review Financial Hardship Policy |
| The Pandemic Working Group | Council provide additional boost to Small Project Grants program | |
| Support the local family violence service system | Additional grants within existing community funding scheme | Campaign to promote Small Project Grants |
| Supporting the Central Victoria Volunteer Network | Additional funding for Neighbourhood House group | Provide physical space and equipment to assist the production of online media |
| Liaise with COBAW to provide financial support for services assisting community members at risk of or experiencing homelessness | | Waiver of Goods on Footpath Local Law permit renewal fees for the 20/21 financial year for existing businesses with current permits |
| Initiatives for people to participate in while at home in isolation | | Dedicated response for all queries and support via the Economic Development unit |
| Provide a 50% fee waiver on health permit renewals for the first 6 months of 2021 for existing businesses with current permits. | | Expanding the reach of the business assistance program |
| Dedicated funds for the installation minor infrastructure at Council's reserves | Additional resources to support businesses apply for grants that will increase economic activity | Bringing forward actions from the Visitor Economy Strategy |
| Bringing forward actions from the Arts and Culture Strategy | | Delivering support programs identified through business survey |

Economic assets and strengths

Successful regions utilise existing assets and strengths as a foundation for economic development. Assets are used to both mitigate vulnerabilities as well as enabling opportunities.



| Top 5 local industries ¹ across several key indicators | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <u>Revenue:</u> | | |
| Construction services - Financial & insurance services - Construction – Food product manufacturing - Professional, scientific & technical services | → | 35.8% of all revenue |
| <u>Jobs:</u> | | |
| Education & Training - Retail trade - Construction services – Accommodation & food services - Residential care & social assistance | → | 45.4% of all jobs |
| <u>Value-added:</u> | | |
| Construction services - Education & training - Financial & insurance services – Professional, scientific & technical services - Retail trade | → | 33.4% of value-added by industry |
| <u>Exports:</u> | | |
| Food product manufacturing - Construction services - Financial & insurance services – Transport equipment & parts manufacturing - Livestock, grains & other agriculture | → | 59.7% of regional exports |









1 - Excludes property services which incorporates ownership of dwellings.



Emerging issues and ideas

Emerging issues and ideas

Based on a review of key documents and feedback from consultation sessions held to date, eight general ideas have emerged.

-  Macedon Ranges’ place in the world
-  Rural productivity
-  Macedon Ranges’ natural assets
-  A collection of great towns
-  Environmental change
-  Local skills and employment
-  Geographical accessibility
-  Partnerships

Macedon Ranges' place in the world

What is this about?

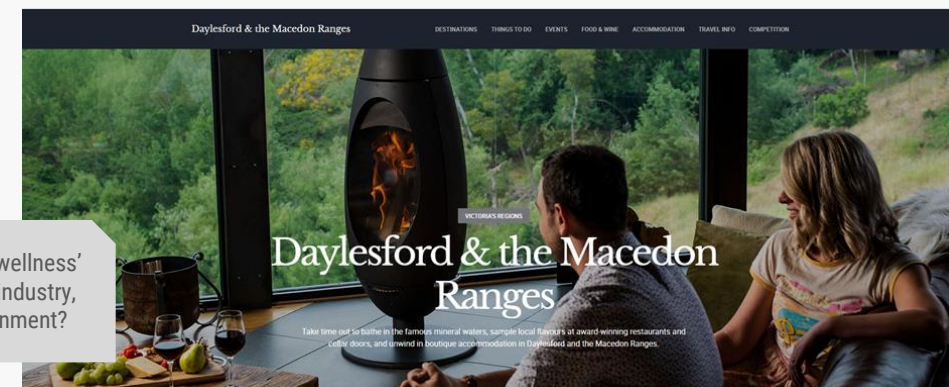
Establishing the identity of the Macedon Ranges in the broader global and regional context. How does the Macedon Ranges see itself and then position itself to deliver a clear consistent message to the world about who we are?

Challenges:

Disparate branding for tourism, businesses, talent and investment attraction can result in vague and confusing messaging to the outside world about a region, its assets and opportunities.

The tourism messaging for the Macedon Ranges is relatively well defined and articulated (figure right). However, joint branding of the broader municipal industry including manufacturers, agriculture and other sectors needs stronger recognition.

Establishing, maintaining and presenting an authentic brand requires buy-in and investment from a range of stakeholders. Authentic place branding is a social process that is created by the people who live and work in a place.



Source: www.visitmelbourne.com

Opportunities:

A strong brand can strengthen sense of place when there is alignment between residents, business, government and visitors (image right).

Branding can be used to set long term goals that can mitigate effects of sudden changes in policy.

A place brand can be effectively leveraged by local businesses to add value to their product or service. In this way, a strategically developed regional brand is a powerful tool for establishing competitive advantage.

MAKE
SOMETHING
EDMONTON

The 'Make Something Edmonton' campaign was setup as an expression of Edmonton's story, a brand and a call to action. It focused on people sharing projects and ideas that make the city a better place to live.

What are others doing?

Margaret River rebranding (WA)

The Margaret River Region in Western Australia is an iconic food, wine and nature destination. For many years, marketing of the wider area was the responsibility of two separate tourism organisations. In 2015, these organisations united as the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association. This regional partnership, formed under a less-than inspiring name, needed a story and brand to share. The result was 'Your Margaret River Region', a brand that was able to be owned and recreated by anyone and extends beyond the tourism sector alone.

<https://corporate.margaretriver.com/leverage-margaret-river-brand/>

Some points to consider...

What is the best approach for the Macedon Ranges? Is a consistent brand the approach we want to explore, or is it best for industry, tourism, education and civic attraction to develop and promote themselves independently?

Who would be best to be involved in any branding exercise? Other than Council, who would be best placed to coordinate it and who could be the champions?

What are the existing networks and 'brands' that are utilised in our region? These could be defined by a geographical area, or by area of interest. Does the declared area status of the Macedon Ranges offer a foundation for regional branding?

Rural productivity

What is this about?

Agriculture supports 4.4% of Macedon Ranges employment. Ensuring ongoing productivity of traditional primary production, while recognising agricultural land can support diverse revenue and higher value activities such as more intensive production, complementary rural industries, and agritourism as supplementary activities.

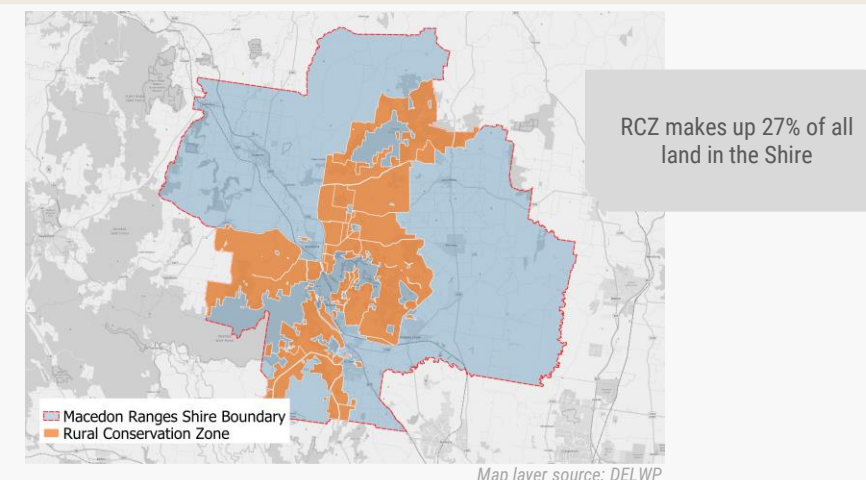
Challenges:

Planning regulation is perceived as a major constraint on agricultural activities. This is particularly the case in the Rural Conservation Zone which makes up 27 percent of all land in the Shire (figure right).

Provision of enabling infrastructure is a key challenge to unlocking the potential of much of the Macedon Ranges' agricultural land. Infrastructure delivery will continue to be a challenge in a large and sparsely populated region such as the Macedon Ranges.

Access to secure water resources underpins the agribusiness sector. More efficient systems for utilising water from various sources will need to be secured in order to maintain and increase levels of agricultural production.

Ensuring high quality design standards that reflect the high quality and amenity of Macedon Ranges natural assets and landscapes.



Opportunities:

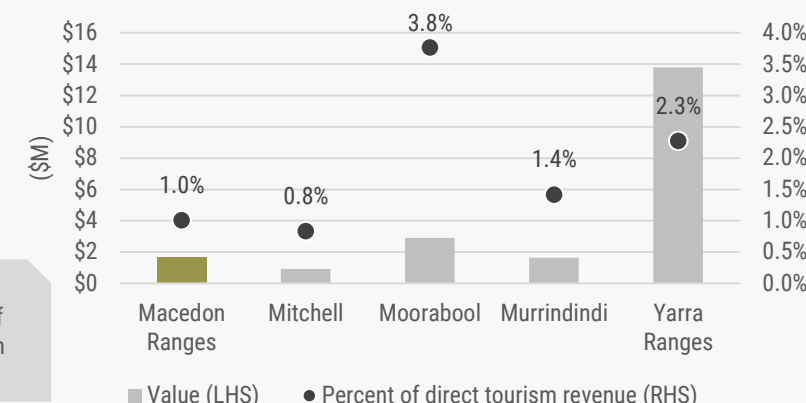
Potential for agritourism to supplement agricultural income as well as being a source of authentic and educational visitor experiences while also creating additional employment opportunities for regional communities.

Agriculture has the potential to play a much greater role in a direct tourism offering. Agriculture in Macedon Ranges makes a relatively small contribution to direct tourism revenue compared to other metropolitan fringe councils (chart right).

Agriculture is the Macedon Ranges' largest net exporter (highest value of exports less imports).

The recent announcement of the Bendigo Region becoming part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Gastronomy opens up notable opportunities for the agribusiness sector.

Agriculture currently constitutes only 1% of tourism expenditure in Macedon Ranges.



Source: REMPLAN

What are others doing?

Freeman's Organic Farm (Currumbin Valley, QLD)

Freeman's Organic Farm is a small 25-acre property located on a hillside capturing sweeping views of the Gold Coast hinterland. Originally offering traditional farm-gate produce sales, this gradually expanded to a slightly larger stall and subsequently a range of other offerings. The popularity of the site prompted other locals to test the idea of providing coffee and food from temporary stalls. The success of the 'café' has seen the business owners gain approval for more permanent operations at the site to cater for visitors. The Farm also offers a selection of events, workshops and farm tours throughout the year. While still a working farm, the new activities provide supplementary income.

Some points to consider...

How can agribusiness work with Council to achieve their business aspirations while retaining the quality, character and amenity of Macedon Ranges? What assistance could be provided to facilitate development that is complementary to both the agricultural use of land and environmental values?

The Visitor Economy Strategy recognises the role of agriculture in tourism and offers some broad opportunities. Is there a critical mass of related opportunities that are ready to be explored? Could proposals that demonstrate high environmental quality receive greater support?

What role should agribusiness (and food related business more broadly) in Macedon Ranges take in the involvement with the UNESCO City of Gastronomy? Should it be an active role to involve the region, or a passive one that benefits from association?

Macedon Ranges' natural assets

What is this about?

The Macedon Ranges has a collection of high-quality natural assets that are recognised locally, regionally and internationally. These assets provide important ecological services, underpin agricultural productivity, contribute to liveability for the local population, and also act as significant attractions for visitors to the region.

Challenges:

The strengthening of planning policy at local and state levels is compelling agriculture and industry to operate in ways that are complementary to the environmental values of the Macedon Ranges.

The Macedon Ranges has several high-profile natural attractions including Hanging Rock and Mount Macedon. As popularity of the region increases (chart right), it will be important to ensure that these areas do not suffer from over-visitation in order to maintain the cultural and environmental values of these places.

Natural assets underpin local industry from primary production to the broader visitor economy. Striking a balance between business growth aspirations and community values requires management and quality proposals.

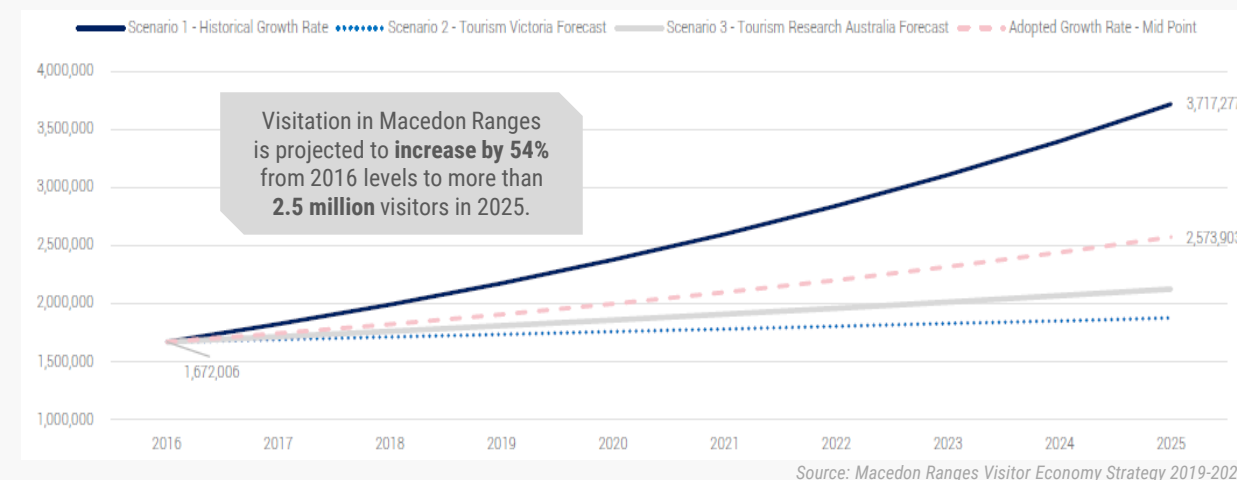
Opportunities:

The Macedon Ranges Visitor Economy Strategy outlines a range of tourism related opportunities relating to the shire's natural asset base, including festivals and events at major landmarks, weddings and other high-value occasions, Aboriginal cultural heritage experiences, as well as wellness retreats.

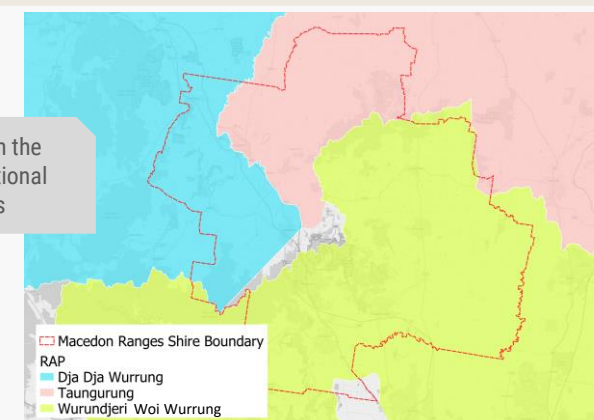
Environmental conditions provide relatively high productive capacity. Capitalising on the conditions provided by the natural asset base by improving infrastructure could support increased value adding opportunities in the shire.

Addressing water quality issues with improved water management for productive uses.

Macedon Ranges is located on the Country of three Traditional Owners/Custodians: the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung (figure right). Each of these communities have unique insights into and connections with the natural assets of the region.



Macedon Ranges is on the Country of three Traditional Owner/Custodians



Some points to consider...

What are others doing?

Measurements of wealth that include natural asset base (World Bank)

In recent reporting, the World Bank provides measurements of wealth that go beyond calculations of gross domestic product, to include, amongst other assets, natural and human capital. Natural capital are underlying assets which can be both renewable (such as forests and pastures) and non-renewable (such as minerals and gas). One of the key findings in this report acknowledges that growing the wealth of regions is, in part, about more efficient use of natural capital and investing earnings into infrastructure and education. Additionally, renewable resources can produce benefits in perpetuity if managed sustainably.

Many of the Macedon Ranges' natural assets are well known. Are there any projects or activities currently in the early phase of conception that could leverage these assets in sustainable way?

Who are the key partners across government, business and the indigenous community who can mobilise people to act on specific initiatives?

Are there natural assets that would benefit from due diligence or feasibility investigation in order to explore their use as economic development drivers?

A collection of great towns

What is this about?

Macedon Ranges is not one homogeneous place but a collection of unique towns and localities each with their own history, character and sense of community. They support a concentration of local employment and services. Each of these towns have their own strengths which can be leveraged to support economic development in the shire more broadly.

Challenges:

The proximity to Melbourne is resulting in population pressures in some areas, particularly for townships such as Gisborne. Most areas within Macedon Ranges are growing at rates comparable to that of the State (figure right).

Tourism visitation is concentrated in the west of the municipality, along the primary transport routes and nearby to the well-known natural attractions. Drawing visitors to other areas will be important to distribute both the impact and benefits of tourist visitation.

Employment in many towns is based on population driven industries such as construction, education, etc. Expanding employment opportunities in these towns is important for both liveability and economic growth.

Opportunities:

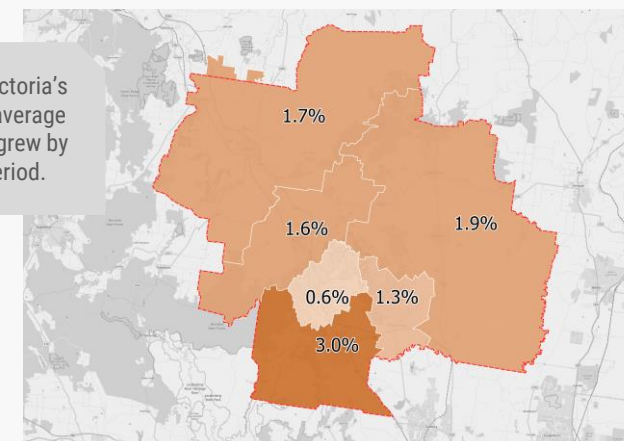
Place-based initiatives increase amenity for both residents and visitors. These can include formal approaches such as urban design, through to community led activation. Often, what makes towns nice places to live are the same things that make them desirable places to visit. This can then extend to people's desire to set up businesses and work in such towns.

Key sites, such as the Kyneton Primary School, offer opportunity for new activities that support business and community, including education and training facilities, creative spaces and outdoor recreation.

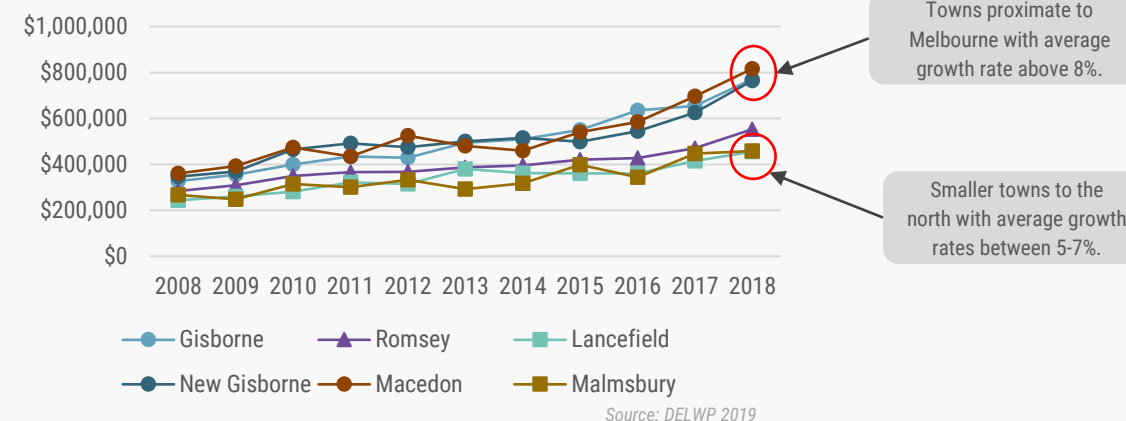
Many smaller townships offer more affordable housing alternatives (chart right) while still providing good amenity and services.

In other locations co-working spaces have proved important launchpads for home based or microbusinesses to grow locally.

Between 2008-2018, Victoria's population grew at an average rate of 1.8%. Gisborne grew by 3.0% over the same period.



Data source: ABS, Cat. No. 3218.0



Source: DELWP 2019

Some points to consider...

There is business and industrial land in Romsey that remains undeveloped. Provision of headworks infrastructure is one limiting factor to opening this land up for development. Are there businesses actively showing interest in this site?

What are the common strengths of each town? What are the unique strengths that could be leveraged to benefit the whole Shire?

What are some underutilised sites in each town that could be activated? Who are some key local stakeholders that could progress the activation of these sites?

What are others doing

The Old Church on the Hill community hub (Bendigo)

The Old Church site was purchased from the Uniting Church by a philanthropic organisation and provided to the local community for a range of uses. The activation of the site is community driven, relying on the resources, interests and capabilities of those who use it. There are several buildings used for community activities such as a playgroup, language classes, a commercial kitchen, live music, martial arts class, yoga, break-dancing class, art therapy, a positive birthing group, and a pop-up op-shop. Much of the grounds have been turned into a thriving community garden.

Environmental change

What is this about?

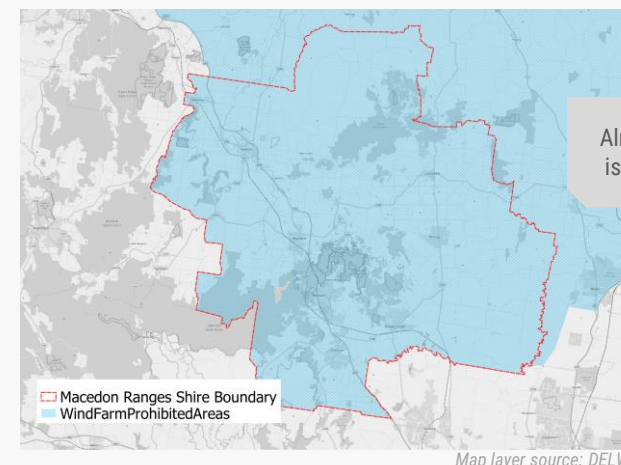
Climate change is occurring. The latest scientific reporting confirms that we are and will experience hotter drier conditions along with an increase in extreme weather. Change presents opportunities for new ways of doing things as well as opening the door to forming stronger partnerships with the local community, businesses and other regions.

Challenges:

Climate change will likely result in additional financial costs for businesses and residents. Hotter weather will increase demand and consumption of energy, variability in water availability will impact the productive capacity of agriculture, and extreme weather will increase the frequency of environmental and infrastructure reparation.

Some agricultural producers will need to apply new types of crops and techniques. Viticulture, for example, will likely need to transition away from cool climate grape varieties.

Communities may seek to increase locally generated energy. Wind, as one of the most cost-effective forms of renewable energy, is essentially excluded from the Macedon Ranges due to planning regulation (figure right).



Opportunities:

Costs associated with responding to climate change, such as provision of new infrastructure and equipment, also presents opportunities for local industry to develop and deliver these new resources.

Eco-friendly construction could present a major opportunity for local businesses and residents alike. Construction is Macedon Ranges' largest sector, and also has the strongest local supply chains (figure right).

Business transition and adaptation will be important. For water supply, businesses could partner with water authorities and other research organisations to identify new opportunities for water sourcing and management.



What are others doing

Tamera water retention landscape (Portugal)

Tamera is a 154-hectare farm in Portugal. The region is suffering from drought, erosion and desertification, processes which are likely to be exacerbated by climate change. To counteract these trends the farm created a "Water Retention Landscape" (WRL) comprised of a system of lakes and of other retention systems, along with other structures such as terraces, swales and rotational grazing ponds. A WRL is a system that allows water self-sufficiency by retaining water in the area where it falls, thereby recharging the groundwater and only allowing water to leave the land via springs.

Some points to consider...

What are the key vulnerabilities within the Macedon Ranges that should be addressed: increased temperatures, access to reliable water, energy production?

What should the economic development strategy focus on: directly supporting business to capitalise on opportunities, assisting local residents and organisations with climate risk mitigation actions, or advocating other areas of Government?

Are there any local projects currently being developed or implemented that need further support? Are there any innovations from local businesses that you know of that have a broader application?

Local skills and employment

What is this about?

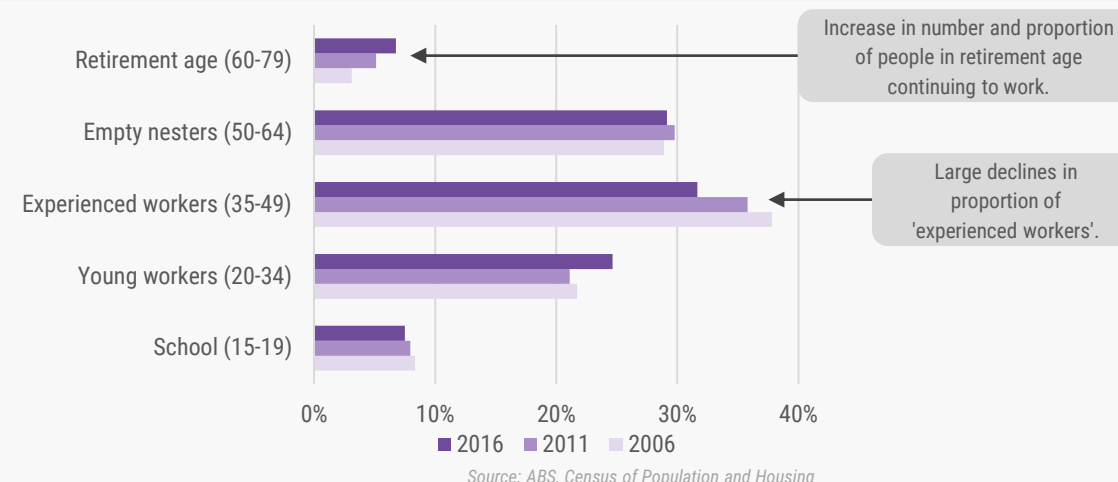
Local skills and employment is about supporting the people who underpin the social and economic fabric of the Macedon Ranges. Providing people with the tools and resources necessary to support themselves, their families and contribute to their community, through ongoing education and practical experience, is vital to economic prosperity.

Challenges:

As with many regions, the resident population in Macedon Ranges is ageing. One effect of this ageing phenomenon is that people are also working longer (chart right). Understanding the role of older workers and the contribution they can make to the local economy will be as important as accommodating needs of younger workers.

The movement of workers out of the Macedon Ranges has been extensively reported. In short, there is a net loss of workers from the Macedon Ranges, typically as people travel to metropolitan Melbourne for work and higher incomes.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that many young people are leaving the Macedon Ranges to continue formal post-school education. While the 'hollowing out' of the younger age cohorts is evident, the actual number and proportion of people aged 20 to 29 in the Macedon Ranges has been increasing since 2006.



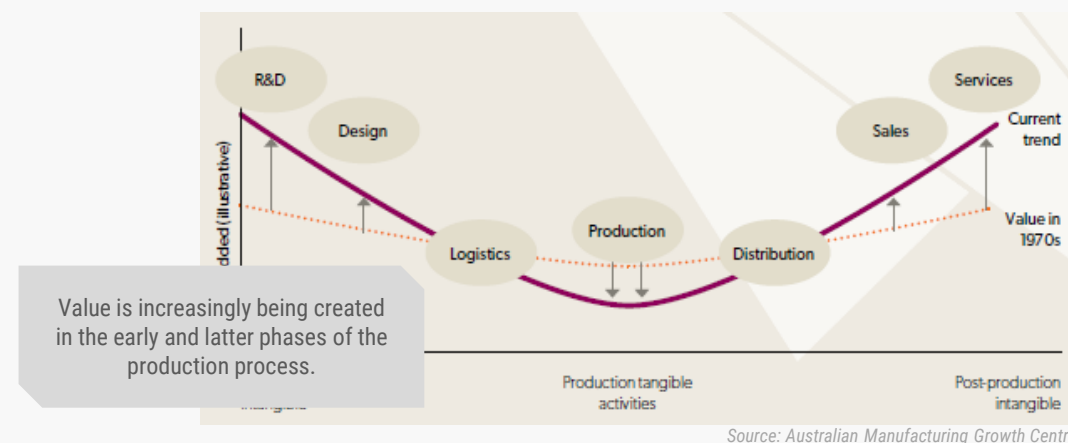
Opportunities:

New skills for a new age – digital competence, design, marketing, customer service. Differentiation (R&D, design), marketing and customer service are becoming the areas where value is created and captured in the modern economy (image right).

Old skills for a new age – the return of boutique and artisanal makers. The resurgence of artisanal and boutique production is a result of people seeking authentic experiences and high-quality goods and services.

The prevalence of 'non-standard' work is increasing. This can provide opportunities for people transitioning into/out of work, provide supplementary income or a test bed for new ventures.

Lower paid and service-related jobs that many local businesses require can play a vital role in developing great customer service and work experience that support future employability and core skills required in higher paid professions.



What are others doing

Marriott Resort & Spa (Gold Coast, QLD)

Eighteen percent of the Marriott's workforce are mature age workers. Of the critical business roles such as management, chefs and logistics, older workers hold one hundred percent of these roles. While this offers a high degree of experience, there is also a risk that the skills and experience could be lost if these workers left the organisation. To mitigate this risk and provide alternate employment pathways, the Marriot introduced a re-skilling program for older workers. The program is particularly important for workers who are unable to continue in their current role due to changing work practices and demands or who are considering retirement.

Some points to consider...

What type of certificate level and basic skills training programs would be important to deliver for people entering the workforce? How would these be best delivered?

List the local businesses that you know of that are looking for employees and include the type of job that it is. Who would this be suited to?

What is the role of 'mature workers' as this proportion of the workforce increases in the future? Could they be offering simple services such as community UBER, or could their experience be used to deliver essential training?

Geographical accessibility

What is this about?

Macedon Ranges is one of the most well positioned municipalities in the State, sitting within an idyllic rural setting while maintaining close links with large national and regional cities. This position can be a double-edged sword, as the proximity to Melbourne pulls people away but at the same time attracts visitors and new residents due to its proximity.

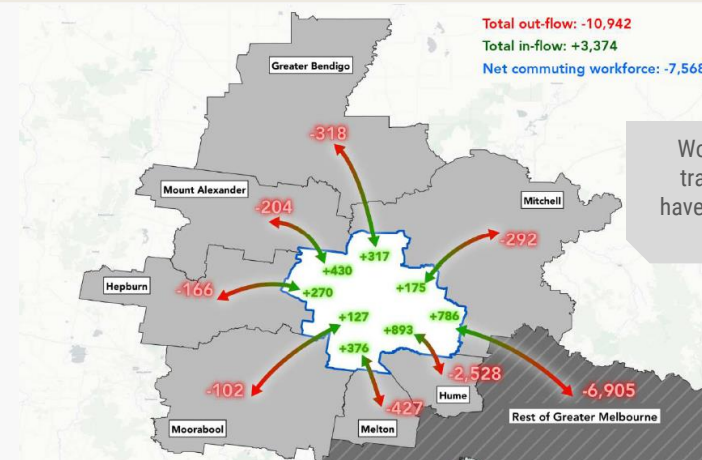
Challenges:

Visitors can travel on day trips from Melbourne, but this reduces the attraction of overnight stays. If the number of overnight stays did increase, is there capacity in the current provision of accommodation to supply for this?

Despite the potential of digital technologies, proximity and geography still matter. Despite ideas to work remotely, face-to-face engagement is still a norm in many workplaces.

Melbourne will continue to have a strong economic influence for employment, supply chains, clients and markets (figure right). The loss of workers to Melbourne translates to escape expenditure in addition to the daily export of skilled labour.

The east-west connection within the shire can be challenging for the community to reach local services or employment opportunities.



Opportunities:

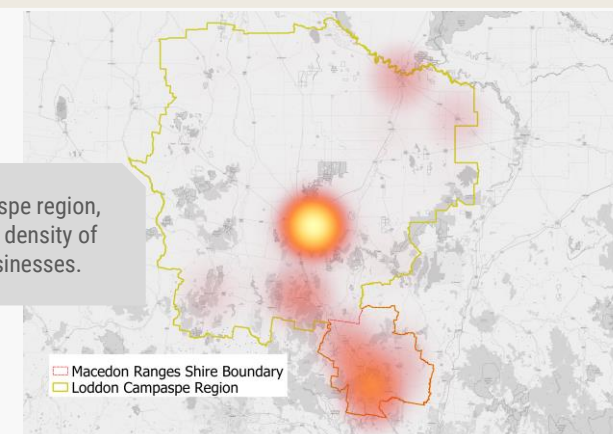
Businesses can work together to attract talent. For a worker, having options for employment at a number of businesses can be a critical factor in decision making (figure right).

Quality of life is important, as this attracts innovative people. Macedon Ranges already provides this critical characteristic which requires ongoing investment to continually improve.

Industry in the Macedon Ranges has many strengths, and is well positioned to capitalise on a large metropolitan market. Providing tangible demonstrations of opportunities available in local businesses can encourage new workers to the region or existing workers to stay working locally.

The Calder Corridor and proposed Melbourne Airport connection by rail will increase opportunities for workforce, visitors and economic activity.

Within the Loddon Campaspe region, only Bendigo has a higher density of professional service businesses.



What are others doing

School and industry partnerships in a wine-making region (Barossa Valley, SA)

This engagement between schools and local industry is an effective example of establishing connections between existing employers, education providers and young residents to build potential for regional workforce retention. Two schools in the Barossa Valley have incorporated aspects of winemaking into school curriculum. From year 10, students learn about elements such as viticulture, label design, through to food and wine pairing. Establishing these connections at an early age encourages young people to see opportunities available in their region by providing tangible, industry-relevant experience.

Some points to consider...

Does Macedon Ranges effectively communicate its competitive advantages in order to attract mobile workers and make the most of its accessibility?

Macedon Ranges is positioned as the metropolitan gateway on a major transport corridor between Echuca and Melbourne. What is Macedon Ranges' role in an Innovation Corridor outlined in the Loddon Campaspe Economic Growth Strategy?

Are there realistic opportunities for residents whose place of employment is in Melbourne to work remotely? Are there local office spaces available? Is the ICT infrastructure sufficient?

The important role of partnerships

What is this about?

No person or region exists in isolation. Partnerships are about harnessing the strengths and abilities of others to solve complex problems, mitigate risks and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. There are numerous agencies, associations and interest groups with which to partner. Determining where the greatest synergies lie is often the most difficult part.

Challenges:

Time and effort need to be invested to foster effective partnerships. Businesses, in particular small businesses, often feel they don't have the resources to dedicate to sustaining partnerships.

Governments still often apply competitive approaches to regional development (figure right), so many regions are more geared towards these short-term approaches.

Specific partnerships will not be useful and fruitful forever. Knowing when to reassess existing partnerships, particularly when they have been maintained for a long time can be confronting.

Competition often offers more efficient and immediate means of delivering resources. Competitive grants are still the most common form of Australian regional development funding.



Source: Regional Australia Institute

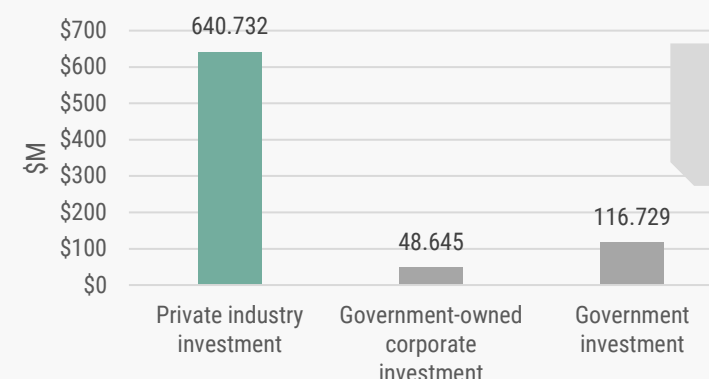
Opportunities:

The private sector drives economic development through job creation and investment (chart right). Effective partnerships can open up new opportunities, both globally and locally, allow businesses to extend into existing markets, and increase employment.

Local partnerships can generate their own opportunities. Examples of this are seen in circular economies taking off in cities and regions around the world.

State and federal governments are increasingly focusing on collaborative approaches to regional development (Regional Partnerships, City Deals, etc). Collaborative approaches typically offer more flexibility with shared responsibility offering lower long-term risks.

Industry networks with a focus on place or industry can support partnerships, resource sharing and increased business to business (b2b) local expenditure.



Source: REMPLAN

In 2019, private investment in Macedon Ranges far exceeded government investment.

What are others doing

Local content advisors (WA)

Following changes to legislation in Western Australia which enacted a 'buy local' agenda for procurement across all of government, local content advisors were installed across the State. The purpose of this legislation was to increase the number of jobs in WA created through state governmental purchases. To implement this, local content teams were charged with providing reporting, awareness and capacity building specifically designed and targeted for each of Western Australia's nine regional areas.

Some points to consider...

What are some of the active private organisations that can foster internal and external partnerships? Do you represent a sector or location in the Macedon Ranges that could benefit from networking and partnerships?

What are the existing partnerships that could be strengthened? Are there existing partnerships that are being maintained but are no longer productive or beneficial?

Council will typically lead inter-governmental partnerships. What role can Council play in facilitating or introducing private sector partnerships? What demand exists for 'institutional' partnerships to support research and development projects?



Next steps

Next steps

This issues and opportunities paper is the first phase in the development of the final Macedon Ranges Economic Development Strategy 2021-2031.

This issues and opportunities paper is the first phase in the process of the development of the Macedon Ranges Economic Development Strategy 2021-2031. This paper will be used to inform industry engagement.

Combined with previous background work, the issues and opportunities paper along with industry engagement will be used to develop the draft economic development strategy. The draft EDS will then be available for public comment over a period of several weeks.

Feedback provided through the public comment phase will then be incorporated into the final EDS.

The final EDS will be a council document, outlining actions where Council can assist the progression of economic development in the region.

As a council document, actions in the final strategy will be confined by the key functions of Council. Council cannot, for example, play the role of industry in economic development. Rather, Council's role will be in assisting to create an environment that is supportive of economic growth and development.

