



Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Economic Development Strategy
2021 – 2031



**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

Acknowledgment of Country

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community

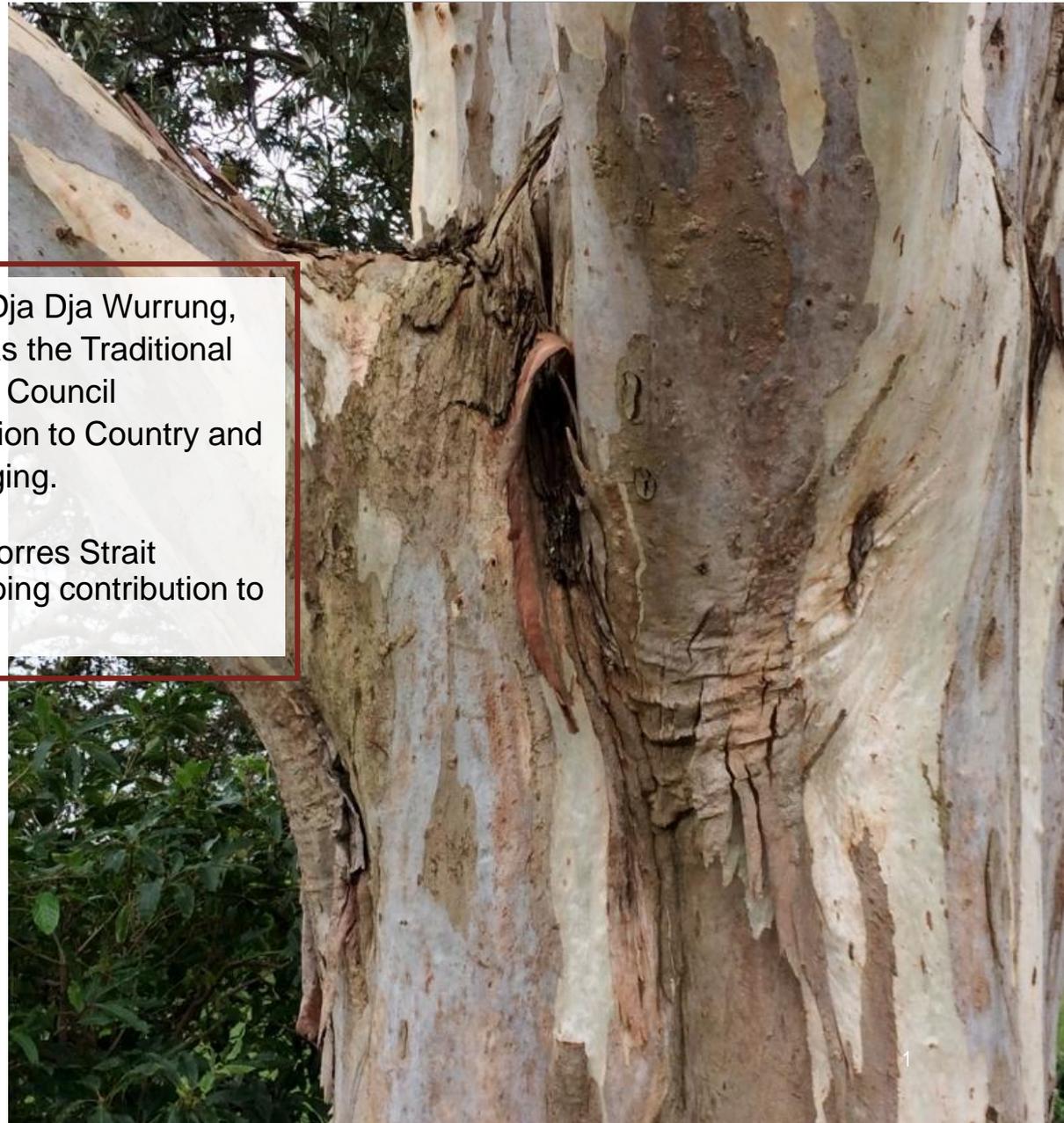


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Macedon Ranges Economic Development Strategy

Introduction

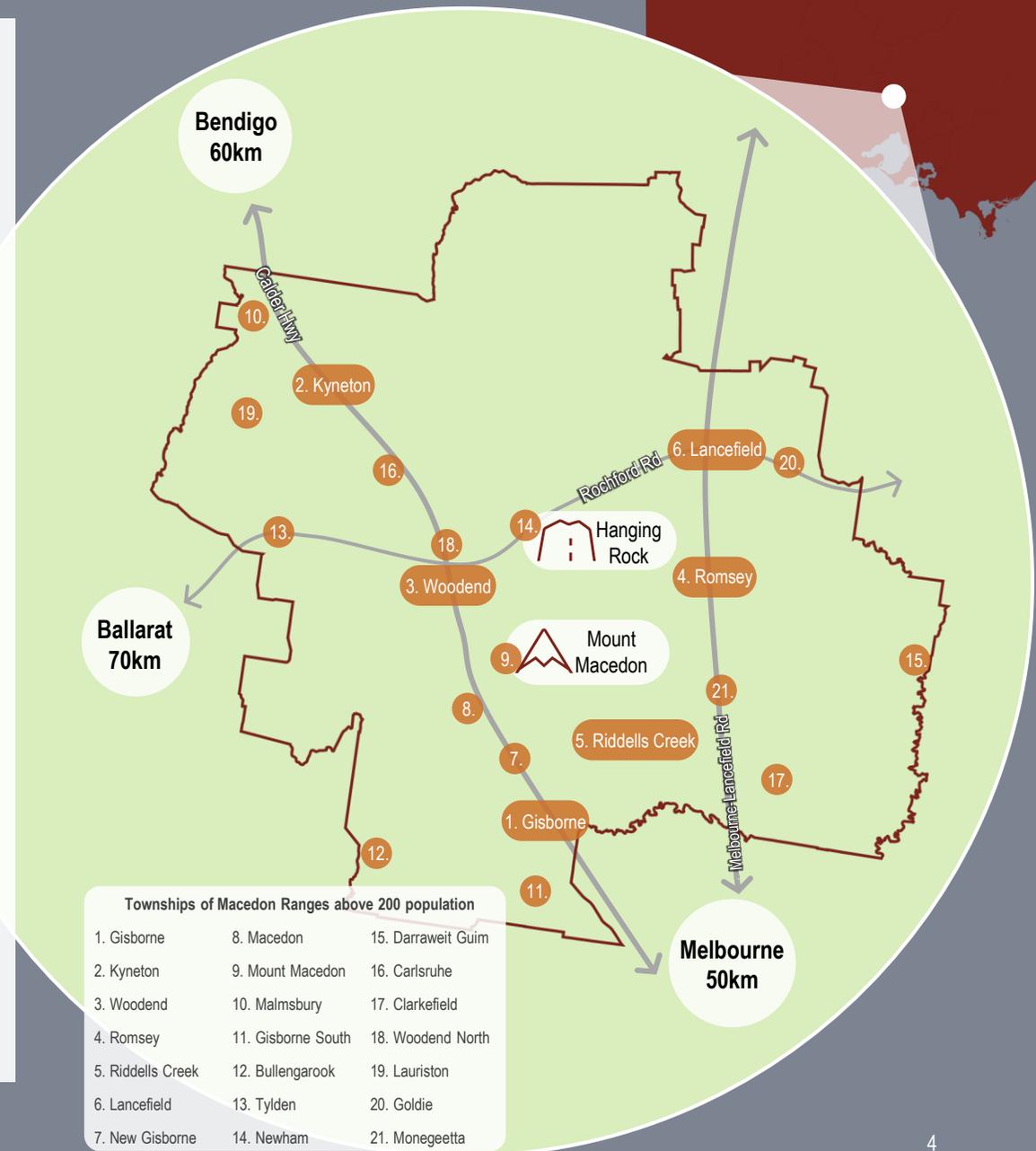
Macedon Ranges Local Government Area (LGA) is located at the juncture of Greater Melbourne Metropolitan Area and the southern extent of the Loddon Campaspe Region. The proximity to Melbourne is a major drawcard for visitors and residents alike given the ability to maintain connections to one of Australia's largest metropolitan regions.

The LGA contains significant landscapes that support environmental services for catchments, diverse ecosystems and iconic landscape features. The LGA is a collective of nine key townships, smaller hamlets and large tracts of productive land.

Macedon Ranges is a magnet for both visitors and a resident population as both cohorts are attracted by the Shire's highly liveable regional setting. The strength of the LGA is a welcoming community set within attractive locations. The geographic position of Macedon Ranges provides some of the best access to the economic momentum that is driven from Greater Melbourne.

The diversity of townships, landscape and relative proximity to larger metropolitan and regional centres of Melbourne and Bendigo at times challenges Macedon Ranges to forge a unique regional identity. In fact, the individual townships are perhaps better known than the broader local government area, something that locals recognise through their passion and drive for the future of their own towns, which are viewed as a higher priority than the collective LGA.

However, broader sustainability objectives that are aligned to economic development recognise the need to strengthen local economic diversity and increase local workforce participation. These issues are best addressed in a coordinated manner that leverages the collective strengths of the region's townships.



Introduction cont.

The impacts and response to COVID-19 has provided an opportunity for many local residents to engage in a more meaningful way within their communities. The daily exodus of workers to Melbourne is a well-known occurrence and is common for most peri urban regions. This pattern has been interrupted during the COVID-related lockdowns and presents opportunities to capitalise on new ways of working, as groups of local employed residents maintain the shift to hybrid forms of work that balance time in a central location with time working productively from home.

Responding to these shifts in working, recognising challenges and inhibitors for local business, developing responses to strengthen the collective townships, and identifying opportunities for increased education and training that can support local employment are central to economic development plans. However, there also needs to be recognition that many people will only be able to access certain jobs and opportunities outside Macedon Ranges.

In fact, change is the one constant that strategic planning by governments actively addresses through the articulation of a clear vision, establishing objectives and the resourcing of actions. This document is such a strategy. The Macedon Ranges Economic Development Strategy 2021 – 2031 (EDS) seeks to address pressure points, threats, opportunities and change through establishment of a clear 10-year strategy and 5-year supporting implementation plan.

This EDS is the successor to the Economic Development Strategy 2009-2019 and therefore builds upon the actions and outcomes achieved over the last ten years, while also repositioning objectives and actions to suit the needs of Macedon Ranges over the next ten years.

This EDS also incorporates an update to the Agribusiness Plan 2013-2018. It is important to note that actions are integrated throughout the EDS and are not explicitly listed or separated from broader priorities and actions. For example, the implementation plan includes certain actions related to agribusiness such as support for small-scale rural enterprises and advocating for a regional assessment of water resources.

Critically, within the Macedon Ranges context is the need to recognise strong local values, leading sustainable development that balances investment attraction, improved environmental outcomes, and provides inclusive economic conditions, so all community members prosper. These themes are central to the Macedon Ranges Economic Development Strategy.



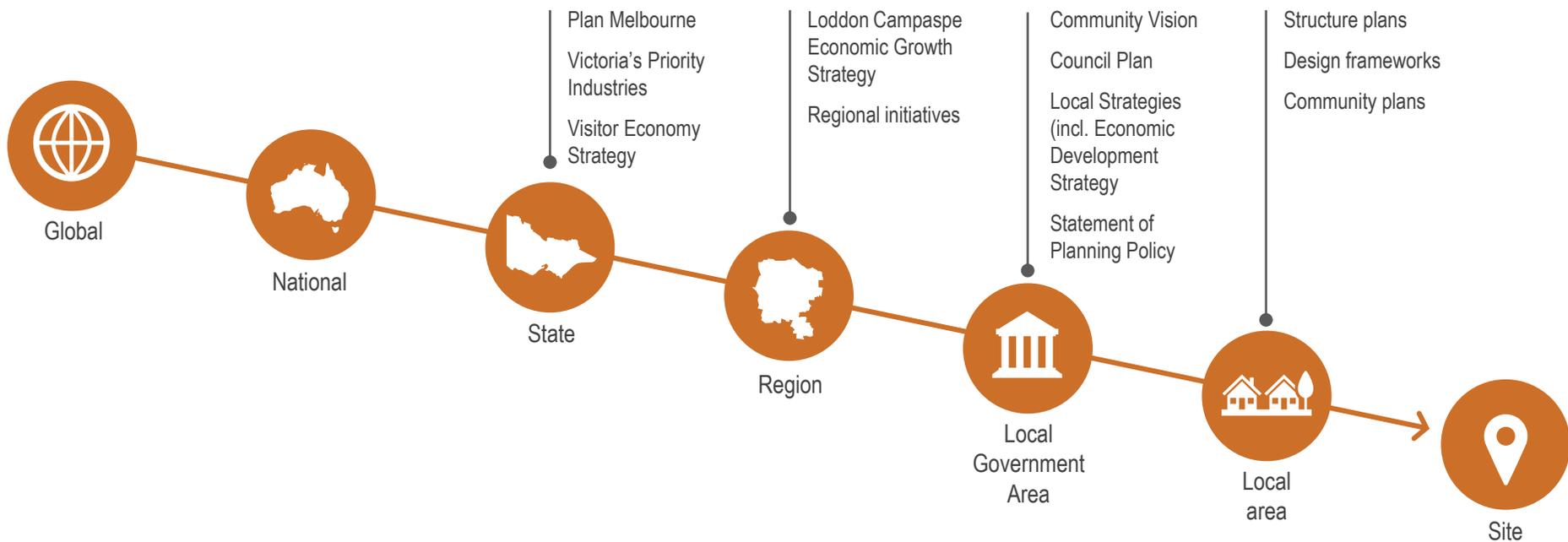
Economic Development Strategy in context

Economic development in local government, and an economic development strategy, is one part of a much broader strategic and legislative framework that guides and controls the actions of local governments.

All actions outlined in this strategy must conform with the responsibilities of Council under various legislation. In addition to the Local Government Act 2020, being the main legislative instrument for Victoria's councils, local governments have responsibilities under more than 120 different pieces of Victorian legislation. Responsibilities not covered under the Local Government Act include land use planning, building control, some public health services, domestic animal control, litter control, parking, roads and traffic.

This economic development strategy also sits within a strategic planning line of sight. From global influences, through National and State strategies and down to site specific plans, economic development strategies influence, and are influenced by, plans at various levels. The figure below provides an example of these.

At a regional level, Macedon Ranges is part of the Loddon Campaspe economic region, which itself is part of the larger Loddon Mallee region. The Loddon Campaspe region is comprised of six municipalities of Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Greater Bendigo, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, and Mount Alexander. While national and state strategies provide overarching direction, it is at the regional level that actions specific to Macedon Ranges begin to be expressed. Understanding Macedon Ranges' role in the regional context, and contributing to regional outcomes is critically important to realising local opportunities.



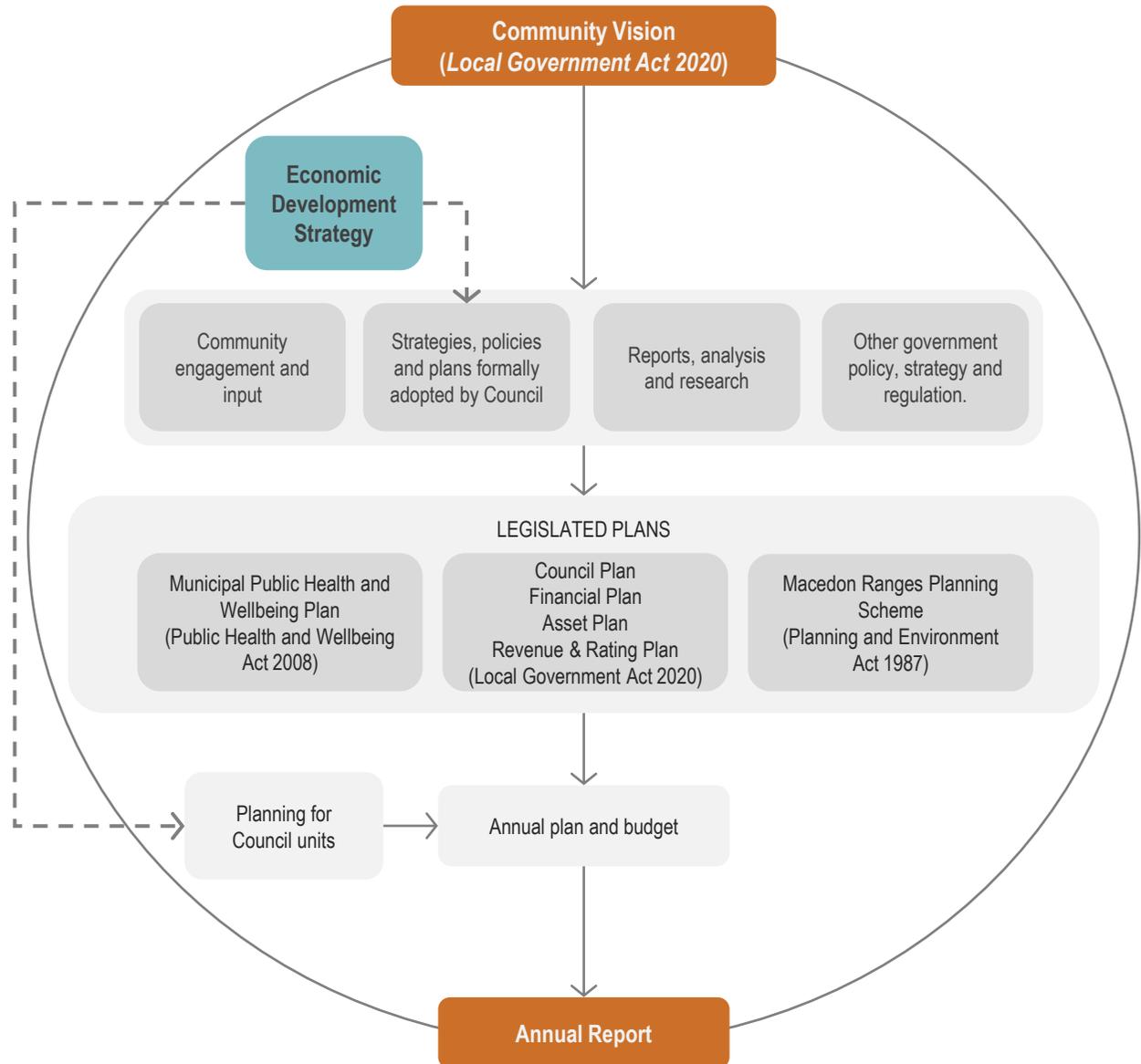
Economic Development in Local Government

The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) is one of the strategies that is formally adopted by Macedon Ranges Shire Council. This aligns with deliberative engagement activities and development of the Council Plan.

The Local Government Act 2020 outlines the powers and accountabilities of local government within Victoria. In performing its role, Council gives effect to a range of overarching governance and supporting principles. Ultimately, these principles aim to ensure Council works toward the best outcomes for the municipal community over the long term.

Other responsibilities of local government can facilitate and guide economic development through their own land holdings as well as their responsibilities as planning authority under the Planning & Environment Act 1987.

The development of strategic plans is an essential component of the planning framework that guides Council's plans and resources and articulates how they seek to achieve agreed community objectives. The adjacent figure demonstrates the relationship of an EDS to both inform future direction over the long term, while guiding annual planning and resource allocation at a Business Unit level for Council's annual plan and associated budget.



Council's role in economic development will be performed through its core functions. Council's core functions and their relationship to economic development are described below:



Advocacy

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



Facilitation

Marketing and incentives | fostering partnerships | 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 economic development vision to local and regional plans | land use planning.



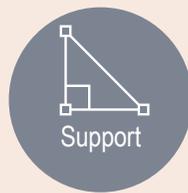
Service Provision

Traditional or new services to support economic development.



Lead

Leading or delivering projects and initiatives | Playing a lead role in activities delivered by others.



Support

Supporting initiatives that are led by other organisations.



Information Provision

Providing information to business and community.

Repeatedly through engagement activities undertaken as part of the preparation of the EDS, participants indicated that Council is most effective through 'Planning' and 'Facilitation' as a means to achieve local economic development outcomes.



Local Government Strategic Planning

The development of an EDS cannot be viewed in isolation from supporting and aligned strategic planning by other Local Government departments and other tiers of government.

The EDS does not seek to incorporate all planning that supports the future of economic sectors, enabling infrastructure investment or core activities to support economic growth. Rather the EDS seeks to align these documents to minimise duplication and to provide support to relevant strategies.

Many opportunities identified during preparation of the EDS relate to activities that support a range of economic sectors. For example, improving digital connectivity, lifting main streets through public domain improvements, and improved signage will benefit many industries within Macedon Ranges.

Key points regarding tourism accommodation, calendars of events, and opportunities for nature-based experiences are strongly aligned to the visitor economy and are identified and incorporated in the adopted Macedon Ranges Visitor Economy Strategy 2019-2029. As a result, these actions are recognised but omitted from the EDS.

The adjacent table outlines some of the relevant strategies and policies which align with the EDS. Where relevant these strategies are recognised as supporting policy within the Implementation Plan. However, to avoid unnecessary duplication and corporate reporting, where an initiative has been recognised and adopted and actions are self-contained, the EDS will omit replication of these actions, as outlined in the Visitor Economy Strategy example above.

COUNCIL PLAN

Financial Plan

Health and Wellbeing in the Council Plan 2017-2027

Arts and Culture Strategy 2018-2028

Biodiversity Strategy 2018

Climate Change Action Plan

Environment Strategy

Macedon Ranges Visitor Economy Strategy 2019-2029

Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme

Individual township structure plans and urban design frameworks

Participate Positive Ageing Plan 2020-2025

Elevate Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy 2018-2028

Municipal Early Years Plan 2021 – 2025: CREATE

Settlement Strategy

Asset Management Strategy 2014

Macedon Ranges Heritage Strategy 2014-2018

Walking and Cycling Strategy 2014

Open Space Strategy 2013

Sustainability in Macedon Ranges



Sustainable Development Goals- United Nations

(Source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>)

Sustainability is a key theme that emerged through development of the EDS and is relevant to many areas of Council’s strategies and policies. However, the notion and perception of sustainability within a given community can vary greatly. Often strongly linked to actions and themes associated with the environment, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations provide a logical and integrated framework that recognises broad elements of sustainable development for global, local and individual action.

At their core, the SDGs provide a call to action to “end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere”.

So how is sustainable development defined? In essence sustainable development can be defined as:

- Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Development that strengthens efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future for people and planet.

Notably, to achieve sustainable development the integration of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection are required. That is, integrating these objectives ensures core outcomes for communities can target prosperity, well-being, and health within a location such as the Macedon Ranges Local Government Area.

Figure 3 demonstrates the 17 SDGs and clearly articulates that sustainability encompasses a diverse range of objectives. These goals provide a strong basis for a local economic development strategy and an investment decision making framework that embraces inclusion, education, and environmental outcomes while recognising the role of meaningful work and economic growth to improve all lives in a responsible and sustainable way.

Regional Economic Context

The Macedon Ranges is positioned at the southern extent of the Loddon Campaspe region which sits in the heart of Victoria. The Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership is one of nine regional partnerships working to identify initiatives important to regional development and to promote these to the State Government.

Macedon Ranges accounts for over 14% of the broader region's gross regional product. The contribution from Macedon Ranges to regional GRP and population has been increasing over recent years demonstrating the Shire's positive role in regional context.

With relative strengths in industries such as manufacturing, construction, professional services, arts and recreation, and tourism, Macedon Ranges will continue to contribute to and benefit from regional initiatives while maintaining its unique character and values.



GRP



Jobs



Population

| Macedon Ranges | \$2.09 B (2019) | 13,348 (2016) | 50,231 (2019) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Macedon Ranges 5-year aagr* | 7.5% | 1.7% | 2.0% |
| Loddon Campaspe 5-year aagr* | 7.1% | 2.1% | 1.4% |

Source: REMPLAN, ABS Regional Population

*aagr = Average annual growth rate

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

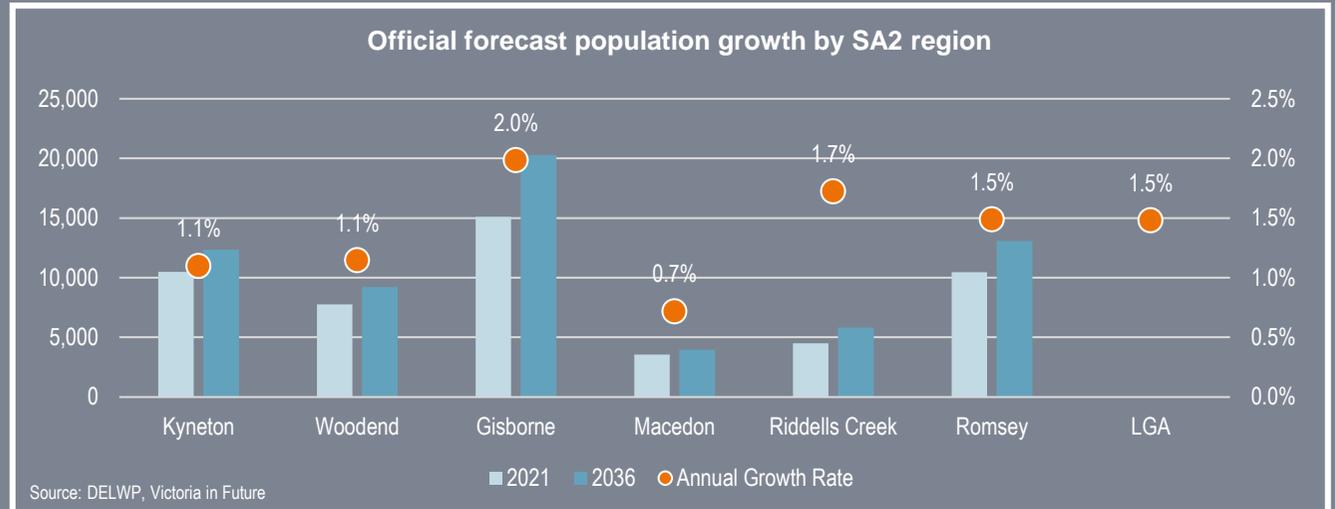
- City of Gastronomy
Bendigo and the region has been accepted by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Gastronomy, in recognition of our region's diverse food culture and our community's commitment to local, sustainable, delicious and creative produce.
- Regional Waste Management
Waste management is a regional issue that requires a coordinated response. Sustainable resource recovery presents opportunities to reduce the environmental and financial cost of waste to landfill, maximise recovery, create new resources and generate employment.
- Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor
This focal area seeks to recognise the region's creativity, innovation, sustainability and liveability, leveraging the population and associated significant public investment throughout the transport corridor and settlements between Melbourne, Bendigo and Echuca-Moama.
- Central Victorian Goldfields World Heritage bid
World Heritage listing of Australia's Central Victorian Goldfields aims to share the extraordinary story of the Central Victorian Goldfields with people from across the globe and create social, cultural and economic opportunities for every community and person across the region.
- 100 Gig City Region
A joint initiative between Bendigo Telco, City of Greater Bendigo and municipalities in the surrounding region aims to make the region a destination for digital businesses and large enterprises. Bendigo Telco has invested in exceptionally high speed data connectivity over the past 20 years and has recently enabled the 100-gig capacity which is more than 1,000 times faster than Australia's average internet speed

Local Economic Context

Each of the Macedon Ranges' settlements and rural areas play a unique role in providing for the needs of the local community and driving economic opportunities. Gisborne and Kyneton are recognised as the major population and employment centres within the municipality.

The Victorian Government prepares population forecasts for local government areas and smaller official geographies termed Statistical Area 2 (SA2) which extend beyond townships to include functional social and economic communities. Gisborne, Riddells Creek and Romsey (which includes the Lancefield township) are all forecast to experience higher annual growth than the LGA.

Established settlements will accommodate the majority of new population and employment. However, the Shire's rural areas will be a critical source of new opportunities that will be realised through agricultural activities.

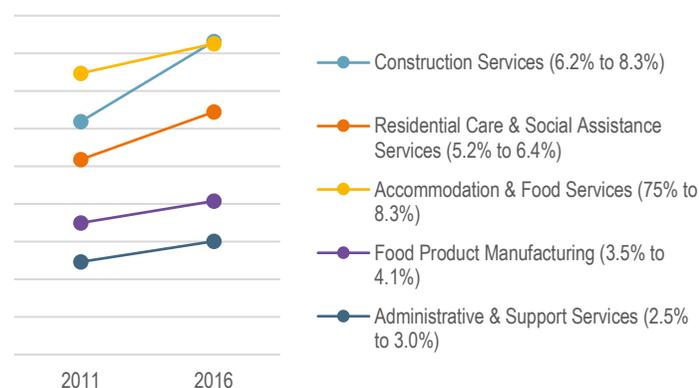


Top 5 Macedon Ranges employing sectors



Source: REMPLAN Economy 2021

Top 5 Macedon Ranges growth sectors (share of employment)



Source: REMPLAN



LOCAL SUPPLY CHAINS
Total local expenditure estimate for Macedon Ranges (S) is \$1.248 billion

Local expenditure refer to the proportion of total revenue spent on intermediate goods from the local region.

When the local sectors with strong local supply chains expand, other local industries also share these benefits.

Source: REMPLAN Economy 2021

Spotlight on the Agribusiness Sector

The *Agribusiness Sector* in the Macedon Ranges represents an amalgam of integrated industry linking primary production with food product manufacturing.

This combined sector is important within the Macedon Ranges context and is a focus for strategy, investment and local industry engagement.

Positive outcomes for the Agribusiness Sector are strongly aligned with objectives of the Loddon Campaspe Regional Economic Strategy, UNESCO City of Gastronomy designation, and land use planning for both peri urban areas and rural land within the LGA.

The Macedon Ranges latent natural assets, underlying geology and soil, rainfall and landscape features support a buoyant and high value *Agribusiness Sector* that suggests secure ongoing agricultural production is important within the LGA.

The *Agribusiness Sector* includes a range of agriculture and manufacturing industries that support food production. This includes the primary production of sheep, beef cattle, poultry, wool other agriculture including nurseries and grapes. Manufacturing activities include meat product manufacturing, wine and beer manufacturing and other food products.

Total value-added¹ estimate for Macedon Ranges (S) is \$1,920.870 million and the Agribusiness Sector contributes \$164.660 million (8.6%) of total value-added within the shire.

These sectors provide important local produce, support local employment and provide direct links with the visitor economy.

Value-added by industry in Macedon Ranges (\$M)



Notably the sector supports 1,240 direct jobs, and for every 1 job in the *Agribusiness Sector* a further job is supported through demand for intermediate goods and services in the shire.

The *Agribusiness Sector* economic contribution is best summarised through the following metrics:

- Total annual output (\$M): \$516.9 or 12.3% of total regional output
- Annual regional exports (\$M): \$291.8, representing 33.3% of total regional exports
- Local expenditure on intermediate goods and services (\$M): \$168.9, 13.5% of total local expenditure

¹Value-Added data represents the marginal economic value that is added by each industry sector in a defined region. Value-Added by industry sector is the major element in the calculation of Gross Regional Product (GRP).



Economic Development Framework

Economic Development Framework

Local economic development aims to increase the economic capacity of a local area which, in turn, improves the well-being of local communities. In this way, economic development is ultimately about progressing outcomes that benefit the local community.

Economic development is a co-responsibility between individuals, businesses, organisations and tiers of government. The Australian Government and Victorian Government 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.

However, businesses and non-government organisations are ultimately the ones that drive and deliver economic development through investment, service delivery, business growth, and local employment. Local government plays a supporting role through its core economic development functions.

In summary, the economic development framework outlines Macedon Ranges Shire Council's vision, commitment, strategic objectives, and key priority areas for the next 10 years. While this is a 10-year strategy, the outcomes will be driven by intentional prioritisation, annual action plans and funding availability. The framework illustrated on page 17 provides an overview of the strategy while the elements of the framework are explored throughout the following sections.

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

There are three key elements which are required to deliver economic development initiatives more broadly, and are critical inputs into delivering on this strategy:

Partnerships – coordination and cooperation of organisations.

Resources – adequate capital, people, time, and material goods.

Market opportunity – a defined geographic extent, identified sectors, supply & demand.



Image: Cider Farm

Vision

The development of an economic vision that encapsulates the values, objectives and aspirations of the people of Macedon Ranges is critical to the preparation of a strategy. Engagement across multiple business representatives, government agencies and organisations, community members and Macedon Ranges Shire Council elected representatives has identified core themes that have informed the development of a vision.

The following vision presents a balanced yet aspirational vision for economic development in the shire. The vision seeks to maintain and protect core values while balancing the need to recognise that change is inevitable. Ultimately, it aims to recognise that development which achieves sustainable goals, is proactive and innovative is consistent with the values and aspirations of Macedon Ranges.

The economic vision for Macedon Ranges Shire is:

To facilitate an inclusive & sustainable economic future for Macedon Ranges achieved through targeted investment in long-term practical measures, combined with innovative development that actively responds to our key values of environment, landscape, proud local towns, and a welcoming community.

Local economic development values

Throughout the development of this Strategy, business and community stakeholders identified critical obligations of Council in addition to the core functions outlined above. These obligations are described here as values which will guide the development, delivery and implementation of the Economic Development Strategy.

In stating these values, Council recognises its role as a leader in the community, but also encourages and requires ongoing input from, and collaboration with, the business community.

1

Leading by example –

Council will leverage their own organisation for employment, training initiatives, investment in local business to business (B2B) procurement.

2

Providing consistent and practical support –

Council recognises the need to set a long-term vision that is achieved through evidence-based decision-making and providing consistent practical outcomes that support local community economic development.

3

Acting as an enabler –

Council will coordinate investment attraction and local business growth through a mindset that is underpinned by facilitation, innovation and collaboration.

4

Being agile and flexible –

Council will hold a firm view on its stated preferred future. However, there will also be a need to respond to opportunities and changes as they occur. While our goal will stay the same, our plan on how we get there will need to be adaptable.

5

Being visionary –

Council will articulate a clearly defined direction and make hard decisions to hold the course for the broader public good.



Image: Woodend

Strategic economic objectives

Aligned with the vision are core objectives that seek to provide a clear direction for each of the strategic priorities established through background research, stakeholder engagement and strategy development. These include:

Establishing a green economy that harnesses progressive businesses where return on investment extends to our social and environment outcomes.

Ensuring an inclusive economy where all community members prosper.

Making our shire a place for business, residents and workers to invest.

Fostering connections between schools, training providers, higher education, skills and local employment.

Leading economic development outcomes through a lens of sustainability, best practice and innovation.



Our Plan on a Page

MRSC EDS VISION

To facilitate an inclusive & sustainable economic future for Macedon Ranges achieved through targeted investment in long-term practical measures, combined with innovative development that actively responds to our key values of environment, landscape, proud local towns, and a welcoming community.

Our commitment

Leading by example

Being visionary

Providing consistent & practical support

Acting as an enabler

Being agile and flexible

Strategic objectives

Championing a green economy that harnesses progressive businesses where return on investment extends to social & environment outcomes.

Leading economic development outcomes through a lens of sustainability, best practice and innovation.

Making our shire a place for business, residents and workers to invest.

Ensuring an inclusive economy where all community members prosper

Foster connections between schools, training, higher education, skills & local employment.

Strategic priorities

Leadership

Leading by example | Regional Partnership | Innovation | Research

Exceptional Landscapes

Natural Assets | Productive Primary Ag | Tourism Activities

Thriving Townships

Great main streets | Business collaboration | Township infrastructure

Enabling Connections

Digital connectivity | Business Networks | Partnerships | Regional Linkage

Employment, Education & Training

Relationships | Skills | Partnership | Innovation

Top Priorities

LEADERSHIP & RELATIONSHIPS

- Support and collaborate with BATA's and Industry peak bodies
- Facilitate access for the business community for upskilling & new commercial opportunities, job ready skills training and relevant further education & training
 - Business-to-Business linkages
- Strengthen links to other agencies (RDV, DELWP, PV etc)

CONNECTIVITY

- Internet and mobile coverage
- WiFi

GREAT MAIN STREETS

- Main street upgrades | structure plans | urban design frameworks
- Vibrant, up-to-date streetscapes and community spaces
 - Signage | wayfinding | interpretive
 - Accessibility

Statement of Preferred Economic Future in 2031

The last ten years of **collaborative community, business and government investment** have had long-lasting positive impacts on the **sustainability** of our Shire, the Macedon Ranges, its collective townships and rural areas.

Greater economic diversity and increased local employment opportunities that were catalysed through a shift in work practices and the increased focus on regions during the COVID-19 pandemic have created more resilient communities with **strong social, cultural and human capital** based within our region.

As we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, Macedon Ranges assets and opportunities were identified by business as a key place to invest where **commercial ethos matched community values** centred around sustainable development. The alignment between community expectations for improvement to environment and increased levels of township resilience did require a **balance between economic growth, and sustainable levels of increased population** to achieve the vibrant thriving local township economies we now boast.

While this process of change was difficult to navigate, requiring high levels of township engagement and **clear economic leadership**, it has strengthened our region and brought community, business and government together in a partnership for our collective future.

The recognition that we are a **collection of proud townships and rural areas** who are **stronger as a connected collection** across the Macedon Ranges rather than in isolation was initially fostered through Council's efforts in regional communication, township wi-fi, direct employment opportunities and procurement policies. As a result we all celebrate **stronger digital connection**, real pathways for local employment at Certificate or higher levels, coupled with higher than ever seen **local business to business expenditure**.

Beyond transactions, our **local business networks foster innovation**, links to education and support direct links to research projects. **Business led initiatives** have tackled regional development outcomes for education and training and we are now finalising development plans for expanded local vocational education facilities within Macedon Ranges. Investment in technology and enabling infrastructure underpins our local economy. Collaboration by local business across industry sectors drives a level of **business acumen that is the envy of regions and cities** across the nation. Furthermore, the link between climate resilience, agricultural output, export markets and our visitor economy directly support the efforts to recognise the region through the **City of Gastronomy and Goldfields World Heritage classification**.

The response by rural landowners reflects these **global classifications and drive high-quality design responses** to enable local rural landscape experiences. These unique and niche offerings are celebrated as they link recognised cultural values, agribusiness and a maturing unique **tourism product that links experience, produce, landscape and main street economies** throughout the Shire.

Critically the level of population and associated talent concentrated in the southern half of the Regional Innovation & Employment Corridor have directly benefited the Macedon Ranges. Our townships' **infrastructure match communities' expectations**. Investment in transport and digital connectivity infrastructure, coupled with highly liveable communities now support pools of talent in a regional context that is unique to the Macedon Ranges.

These 'new' locals (some returned and some new) have developed a strong connection to the sustainable development principles and environmental values that underpin economic development in the Shire. These principles have resulted in **resilient local communities, improved natural environment assets, access to high quality education and great township infrastructure**.



Economic Priorities

Strategic Priorities

The following section outlines the five key priorities established through development of the EDS. Each section describes the logic for investment in these priorities as it relates to Macedon Ranges Shire.

These priorities apply to all sectors of the economy but may have different applications or interpretations for specific industries, businesses or interest groups. As outlined previously, actions related to agribusiness are integrated into these priorities and actions.

While not explicitly identified as a key priority, the principle of environmental sustainability is also an integrated theme. That is, no priority or action should be considered to be separate from, or above the need, to consider how our current actions will impact the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This notion has been bolstered by Council's recent declaration of a climate emergency.

Ultimately, development and investment will strengthen efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet. This was a very important and consistent theme throughout engagement with local businesses and community.

LEADERSHIP

- Leading by example
- Advocacy
- Research and development
- Regional partnerships
- Core economic development

EXCEPTIONAL LANDSCAPES

- Rural land use
- Productive enterprises
- Conservation
- Catchments & forests

THRIVING TOWNSHIPS

- Strong township structure
- Great main streets
- Accessible townships
- Residential development

ENABLING CONNECTIONS

- Digital connectivity
- Business networks & partnerships
- Regional linkage

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION & TRAINING

- Relationships
- Partnership
- Skills
- Participation

Economic Leadership



WHAT

Leaders are agents of change. Leadership in economic development involves identifying the people or organisations who exemplify best practices in a region, inspire a shared vision of increased prosperity, and enable others to act.

Economic development is a whole of community activity. Organisational leadership can be driven by Council to embrace customer service, adopting an approach to 'build on an offer' with a view to opportunity rather than purely limitations or constraints. This shift in approach is being embraced by diverse Council staff teams who interface with local business through statutory requirements for permits, networking opportunities for industry sectors, through to investment attraction for new entries to the Macedon Ranges economy.

Economic leadership should be considered as both an organisation and business led opportunity. Incremental opportunistic economic development can pose a significant threat to the future of regions and places when actions are not working towards the same priorities. Strength in economic leadership often comes through partnerships, communication and networking to impact cultural change that can then drive a strategic direction for a location. Local business networks, tourism and traders' associations, peak industry sector bodies and partnerships between business and government help galvanise support and target initiatives to match priorities of all sectors.

Critically, making strategically hard calls and holding course to achieve broader community benefit should be the focus for Council. This can be politically challenging, particularly in the face of short-term opposition. Decisions that strongly align to the objectives of a sustainable Macedon Ranges, and progress broader objectives around equity and opportunity, should be core to Council's business.



Image: Woodend

Economic Leadership cont.



WHY

A combined voice for leadership is important to ensure actions taken move the region in the desired direction.

Councils are well placed to connect community, business and government to progress local economic development initiatives. The role of regional advocacy that recognises Macedon Ranges as both a regional partner within the Loddon Campaspe and peri-urban partner to metropolitan Melbourne should be seen as an advantage. Coordinating these regional partners to progress local outcomes within Macedon Ranges such as infrastructure investment and workforce attraction will be critical over the next 10 years.

Council's own leadership of strategy delivery for the EDS and other supporting and allied plans, such as the Macedon Ranges Visitor Economy Strategy 2019 – 2029, is a fundamental aspect of delivering tangible economic development outcomes. Engagement activities clearly identified the need for implementation of these existing strategies and plans. Continuing to act on existing plans will result in benefits relating to ongoing local events, master plan implementation for Hanging Rock, capitalisation on the Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor, upgrades to tracks and trails as well the UNESCO City of Gastronomy classification.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is one of the shire's major employers as well as a provider or stakeholder for a range of services. For these reasons Council is often best placed to lead by example while also coordinating partnerships and driving collective impact across multiple stakeholders.

Increasing the level of local procurement could assist in driving activity for local businesses. Estimates suggest that every dollar of local expenditure made by local government has a multiplying effect of almost double. This impact indicates the value of ensuring a proportion of local content is considered in evaluation of tenders for contracts and service providers.



Image: Automotive Industry

Economic Leadership cont.



HOW

There will not be one single leader or approach to leadership that suits all sectors of the economy or community. It is therefore important to identify and support leadership across the spectrum of interest groups. There are a number of existing opportunities to demonstrate and support regional leadership, some of which are outlined below.

Leading by example

- Review Macedon Ranges local business procurement to proactively increase local expenditure.
- Support local employment pathways for students, apprentices and professional staff through Councils diverse sector opportunities.
- Complete and implement a statutory permit and processes review to improve the process for business permits providing greater surety for local business and community and increased efficiency for authority and proponent.

Advocacy

- Actively respond as a regional leader on behalf of local industry through key government submissions.
- Continue to work in partnership with community business and government, advocating for ongoing support to grow local employment opportunities.
- Seek state and federal funding to assist in implementing the EDS.

Research and development

- Continue to focus on opportunities to support and facilitate local industry development with strong links to research and development.
- Investigate opportunities to attract research and development businesses and develop a regional prospectus to proactively engage with businesses about the benefits of establishing in the region. This may include opportunities in agriculture, food manufacturing, high tech industries, or design and architecture for resilience.
- Support local businesses to investigate circular economy opportunities and invest in the waste management strategies that are aligned with Macedon Ranges Shire Council objectives for waste and resource recovery.

Regional partnerships

- Proactively work to support relevant regional partnerships within the Loddon Campaspe region.
- Build on the momentum created through peak industry groups to consolidate the linkage between business, industry and local government economic development.
- Actively support the UNESCO City of Gastronomy regional project, recognising the strong link between Macedon Ranges primary producers, artisanal food offerings, local events and the visitor economy.
- Actively support the Central Victorian Goldfields World Heritage bid.
- Support actions that progress the Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor initiative, such as the “100 Gig City Region” project.

Core economic development

- Undertake core economic development activities to support businesses locally through government support initiatives.
- Supporting business to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the green economy (Note: the United Nations defines a green economy as low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive).
- Undertake regional marketing to attract preferred businesses and promote industries.
- Deliver ‘Buy Local’ campaigns and other initiatives that strengthen local supply chains and retain expenditure in the local economy.

Exceptional Landscapes



WHAT

Macedon Ranges has a collection of high-quality natural assets that are recognised locally, and at a state and national level. These assets are part of broader landscapes that provide important ecological services, underpin agricultural productivity, contribute to liveability for the local population, and act as attractions for visitors to the region. The quality of the Macedon Ranges landscape is recognised through the State Government’s declaration of the region as a “Distinctive Area and Landscape” in planning legislation.

The same natural assets are also under threat of changing processes associated with climate change including increased temperatures, bushfire risk, and secure access to water. Other factors such as over development and poor design standards can jeopardise the quality and integrity of the region’s natural assets.

The ‘Exceptional Landscapes’ priority recognises the need to ensure that future development activities that support agricultural production, artisanal food outcomes, and increased visitor experiences contribute to environmental protection of high-value assets and enhanced local environments. Retaining and enhancing the biodiversity within the Macedon Ranges is an adopted community and organisational strategic objective.

Current land use planning policy framework recognises the state significance of the Macedon Ranges landscapes . However, current planning policy at a local level, and in particular the application of existing rural land use zones can be inhibiting for some local economic development outcomes.

The EDS recognises this constraint on rural land use, which could present opportunity for activation of rural land while simultaneously improving environmental conditions. The application of appropriate controls on use and development can incentivise investment in rural land that is required to enhance environmental assets.



Image: Mount Macedon

Exceptional Landscapes cont.



WHY

The link between landscape and identity is strong in Macedon Ranges. There is intrinsic value provided by natural areas and the Shire's landscapes. These biodiverse, naturally beautiful and productive areas also generate extrinsic economic activity as people want to live or visit these areas and by doing so support economic activity.

The combination of settlement patterns and associated land use practices can threaten natural systems. However, there is a direct connection between local community and their connection to place and landscapes. This same draw for locals also encourages visitors to enjoy seasonal changes, leverage destinations like Hanging Rock for major events or to re-connect with wild places within an hour's drive of Melbourne.

Agriculture remains an important industry sector in Macedon Ranges. The value-added estimate for all industries in Macedon Ranges is \$1,866.234 million and the agriculture, forestry & fishing sector contributes \$95.844 million (5.1%) of total value-added within the shire.

Despite the level of primary production occurring in the municipality, particularly in the north-east of the shire, there is often a need to look at off-farm or secondary revenue streams on rural land to ensure farm viability and improve the levels of investment in land management.

The size of many rural holdings does not allow scaling of enterprise as housing price pressure inflates the cost of land and the ability to farm. Therefore, opportunities for visitor related incomes, be that farm gate sales, accommodation or event related activities, present significant opportunity across rural areas of Macedon Ranges.

The same quality landscapes that provide this opportunity need to be respected with any proposed activity to ensure that it contributes to improving and restoring the environmental context, responds to the capability of the landscape, contributes to interest in the landscape, and meets best practice.

Additionally, key, high-value public land locations are often destinations for visitors. Opportunities to package trips to these locations to support longer (overnight) stays in Macedon Ranges townships and established accommodation should be explored. Long trips and overnight visitation have significant benefit for local businesses within key sectors including food, accommodation, retail and wineries. Many of these locations require targeted investment to support sustainable levels of visitation.



Image: Mairsbury

Exceptional Landscapes cont.



HOW

Recognising the significance of local landscapes and rural areas and their role in sustaining ecosystems, existing primary production, small scale rural enterprises and the local visitor economy. The following strategies will be important for achieving exceptional landscapes.

Rural land use

- Align the priorities for sustainable economic development with the review of the Rural Land Use Strategy to ensure primary land use functions are aligned with land use and development policy while confirming the need for design and development that actively improves local environmental values.

Productive enterprises

- Recognise the importance of farming and its connection to local main street businesses and the visitor economy through targeted business support that encourages resilience in the face of changing climatic conditions.
- Recognise that from little things, big things can grow. Support small scale rural enterprises through business support that builds capability and capacity to establish secondary activities in appropriate locations, such as farm-stays, farm gate sales, and niche high-end activities.
- Leverage business networks and other government support to guide new business entries or existing landholders through development processes and established planning expectations in Macedon Ranges through proactive activities such as property-based site visits and workshops.

Conservation

- Collaborate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and public land managers to identify key locations in Macedon Ranges that require improved investment in infrastructure to support increased visitation while achieving conservation outcomes.

Catchments

- Advocate for a regional assessment of water resources (surface / ground / recycled) to support economic activity, rural land use including agribusinesses and environmental requirements.
- Investigate the need to complete further assessment of the link between long term water security and increased regional economic benefit within the Macedon Ranges. Current assessment within the Wimmera to measure the social and economic value of water resources¹ provides a useful case study for this work.
- Advocate for a co-ordinated State Government (DELWP) and Water Authority strategy, and investment in water infrastructure to support agribusiness in Macedon Ranges.

Forests

- Seek to capitalise on the proposed establishment of the Wombat – Lerderderg National Park through the lens of tourism and existing industry activity to support long term sustainable development outcomes for Macedon Ranges.
- Support the development of tracks and trails through funding applications and advocacy.

¹Wimmera Development Association (2017), *Measuring the social and economic value of recreational & environmental water in the Wimmera Southern Mallee.*

Thriving Townships



WHAT

Macedon Ranges is not one homogenous place but a collection of unique towns and localities each with their own history, character and sense of community. The townships are critical for local economies, local community and increasingly destinations for tourism visitation.

The concentration of visitation and public infrastructure investment is recognised within the Loddon Mallee Economic Growth Strategy. Macedon Ranges townships of Kyneton, Woodend and Gisborne, which are associated with the 'Calder Corridor' are identified as accessible key locations to support sustainable levels of population increase around business innovation that is led by a workforce who do want to live and work locally. While not identified at the regional level, this also applies to the townships of Romsey, Riddells Creek and Lancefield. This accessibility is a result of proximity to Melbourne and the existing road and rail infrastructure, especially along the Calder Corridor.

The linkage to sustainable development principles is important for this theme. The EDS recognises the pressure on infrastructure to ensure local businesses can thrive, visitors want to return and sustainable levels of population and industry growth can occur.

There is a strong alignment between the EDS and land use planning at a township level. In particular, investment in township infrastructure, land for local employment and future housing requirements that underpin sustainable local economic development are key themes for this priority.

It is important to recognise that planning for population growth, through assessment and allocation of residential land, is the role of land use planning. This is controlled through a legislative framework and implemented through local planning schemes which are developed by local councils and the State Government and includes the Macedon Ranges Statement of Planning Policy that establishes settlement boundaries. The role of economic development is not to identify and allocate residential land, but to identify issues and opportunities that are a result of a changing population and facilitate outcomes to benefit the community.



Image: Kyneton

Thriving Townships cont.



WHY

Townships are the Shire's heartbeat. Attracting talent (i.e. workforce) and visitors has been strongly linked to many of the key assets present in the townships of the Macedon Ranges. Walkable, tree-lined, and well-presented main streets compliment local character and heritage architecture of towns and villages. Ensuring that the presentation and structure of each town enables and does not hinder activity will be important for viability and growth. Streetscapes, street furniture, wayfinding and signage will all play an important role in making town centres places that people want to 'linger longer'.

Public investment in developing 'complete streets' has been linked to corresponding private investment by business and property owners within the central trading areas of townships. A high-quality urban form supports repeat visitation and has been strongly linked to innovation 'districts' that attract talent.

The Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor initiative recognises this and seeks to harness the enviable settlement pattern of the Macedon Ranges which has strong, protected township boundaries that are well-connected by road and rail. These aspects all link to the attraction of regional areas, a movement that has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic in response to best practice health policies in major centres, like Greater Melbourne, that restricted the movement of people.

Investment in infrastructure that can support work from home opportunities and ultimately link to business creation or growth for local employment is a significant opportunity for the Macedon Ranges. Importantly this supports the existing population servicing economic base of retail and other local industry that supplies to households.

While the economic impact of visitation is important for many industries in Macedon Ranges it has a weekly and seasonal cycle that does not support demand for full-time operations for many local businesses. Engagement with local businesses indicated that an increased local population would be necessary to grow demand throughout the week and support full-time operation of many businesses. Supplementing these visitor fluctuations through sustainable levels of township population will be important for many locations, particularly in the eastern corridor of Romsey and Lancefield.

Sustainable development objectives are central to this priority of achieving a balanced growth that supports local employment, can reduce work-related travel and provides diversity of industry at a township scale. There are peripheral areas within townships that provide key employment land which need to be protected and, in some instances, expanded to support this diversity.



Image: Market - Lancefield

Thriving Townships cont.

HOW

Sustainable economic growth in Macedon Ranges is intimately tied to the future of the townships and villages. There is a need for integration of economic development activity with land use planning through Township Structure Plans. Economic development within the Thriving Townships priority will be achieved through infrastructure investment for residents, visitors and business, provision of adequate local employment land and through support of signature opportunities within townships.

Strong township structure

- Work with community and business to see the established town boundaries as an opportunity for sustainable growth of townships to accommodate residents and support thriving town centres.
- Review and assess the need for future employment land with a focus on Romsey, Kyneton and New Gisborne.
- Ensure a variety of employment land, which may include commercial, industrial and mixed uses, is secured in townships with strong population growth.

Great main streets

- Support the implementation of township structure plans and/or relevant urban design frameworks through business case development that attracts funding support for high quality urban design and streetscape improvement works.
- Actively support the creation and delivery of a clear capital works program for public infrastructure in all townships through business case development and funding submissions.
- Support businesses and landowners to access funding for heritage restorations that maintain and enhance cultural experiences for locals and visitors.
- Investigate options to address empty shop fronts and high vacancy rates in Township main streets through a range of mechanisms including commercial rate review.

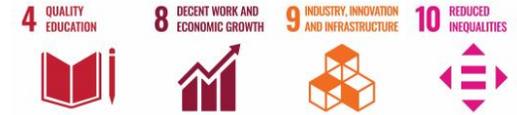
Accessible townships

- Support the delivery of initiatives that will improve tourism signage, enhancing the visitor experience and contributing to adopted place branding.
- Support Council's Environment Department to work with appropriate vendors and electricity providers to implement electric car charge stations in all townships.

Residential development

- Support the implementation of structure plans and settlement strategies by identifying and facilitating opportunities that arise from planned residential growth.
- Advocate to other decision makers to ensure the supply of adequate infrastructure to service the resident population and enable employment growth (such as affordable housing, health services, and education facilities).

Enabling Connections



WHAT

Investment in digital infrastructure and supporting technology that enables business growth and underpins local business confidence is critical as the world has shifted to hybrid forms of work and an increasing reliance on digital communication.

The strength of local regions is often their strong social and human capital which can be harnessed through business networks and physical connection. Where strong connections exist, competition is replaced by a shared vision for the prosperity of a region.

Reliable physical and digital connections are critical for business and industry but are also important for residents to access healthcare and education, and to participate in social activities.

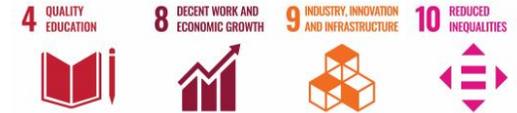
There is a need to continue advocacy for improved telecommunications. This work requires partnership across providers, government and regional organisations to unlock the current constraints within the telecommunication systems.

Building on business relationships across industry and place, the EDS also seeks to harness the recent increase in local business networking to provide stronger links between business, industry and local government.



Image: Woodend Station

Enabling Connections cont.



WHY

The role of connections underpins business activity. Physical connections for partnerships, advocacy and to support business networks have been central to relationship building. The need for equitable digital connectivity has never been more important.

The ability to access markets, clients and undertake marketing or direct transactions digitally are all critical for business as our reliance on these forms of communication and exchange have become a source for resilience and agility. Additionally, people are increasingly relying on communications networks to access education and healthcare.

Regional locations often suffer from inadequate digital connections which creates inefficiencies, increases the cost of doing business, and increases the risk to business continuity. Supporting all members of the Macedon Ranges community to have equitable access to digital communications networks, supporting technology and infrastructure is strongly linked to the inclusive principles of sustainable development. Access to such networks becomes more pressing in the context of emergencies and disasters, both during events and in the recovery phase.

Proposed investment in telecommunications infrastructure in Macedon Ranges has stalled in the past due to opposition to the type of infrastructure proposed, but this has come at a cost to some businesses and local jobs. There is a need for leadership, advocacy and partnership to drive a regional response that secures telecommunications and balances the natural environment.

Beyond digital connectivity, the ability to harness established business networks at a shire-wide or regional level is a strength that can provide confidence for government support while sending a strong message for future business investment. Achieving alignment across business, industry and government for a shared vision for Macedon Ranges is critical within this context.



Image: Telecommunication Infrastructure

Enabling Connections cont.



HOW

The focus of this economic priority within Macedon Ranges is directly addressing the digital divide that exists within the shire. Digital access is both an economic and a social issue. Issues relating to physical infrastructure required to overcome geographical constraints and the cost of access will need to be addressed to overcome the divide. Leveraging existing infrastructure and embracing new technologies will help drive greater equity of digital services. In addition, township infrastructure is required to support broader strategies for the visitor economy, while increased momentum across business networks provides an important opportunity for regional collaboration and support.

Digital connectivity

- Actively support delivery of the Loddon Campaspe Digital Plan prepared by the Regional Partnership to ensure local priorities and future investment requirements are progressed.
- Explore the potential for broader access to communication networks within townships, such as the roll out of free Wi-Fi within each township as outlined in the regional Digital Plan.
- Collaborate with regional Local Government partners to leverage dark fibre (existing but unlit fibre optic cable) opportunities within the Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor.
- Raise awareness regarding the need for improved infrastructure and application of existing infrastructure (such as the existing Telstra Internet of Things (IoT) network) and the impacts that various types of communications networks can have on economic development.
- As opportunities arise, support Telcos and education providers to improve digital literacy across the shire.

Business networks & partnerships

- Build on the momentum created through industry peak bodies to consolidate the linkage between business, industry and local government economic development.
- Investigate opportunities to establish and improve links to businesses in towns with no business association.
- Coordinate shire marketing efforts to support local businesses through business profiles that create awareness and foster increased business to business activity.

Regional linkage

- Work with partners across all levels of government to advocate for investment in mobile infrastructure that will address blackspots and support industry that is based in a rural setting.
- Continue to advocate with key communication providers for improved shire wide communication and connectivity.
- Advocate for improved travel options for people without access to a private vehicle to access work and study.

Employment, Education & Training



WHAT

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.

Employment and education are inextricably linked. Businesses expand and create job opportunities when people are educated and apply their skills and knowledge in the workplace. Enabling people to access educational and training opportunities throughout their working lives not only benefits the individual, but also the community more broadly.

The world is changing, and the skills required for the modern economy are changing with it. The importance of transferrable 'soft skills' alongside the technical 'hard skills' are increasingly recognised. Digital competence, design, marketing and customer service are just some of the areas creating value in the new economy. At the same time, traditional skills of boutique and artisanal makers are being revived as customers seek authenticity and high-quality goods.

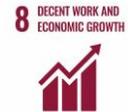
However, accessing post-secondary education and training can be an issue for residents of Macedon Ranges. Poor digital connectivity, constraints relating to physical transport, access to registered training organisations (RTOs), availability of vocationally qualified teachers, and a lack of large local employers who typically provide entry level jobs are some of the barriers that exist.

A lack of education is one of the major barriers to workforce participation and worker productivity. For working parents, and particularly primary care givers, access to appropriate childcare is a crucial enabler for workforce participation. With female workforce participation in Macedon Ranges averaging 60% over the past ten years (compared to 75% for males), supporting provision of adequate childcare in the region can directly contribute to productivity and economic growth.



Image: Manufacturing

Employment, Education & Training cont.



WHY

Local provision of higher education has a range of benefits, from unlocking local talent, retaining skills, creating a more resilient and adaptable workforce, and fostering collaboration and entrepreneurship. Removing barriers to workforce participation can unlock latent economic opportunities and productivity.

Creating an environment that supports continued education, or lifelong learning, is not just favourable but essential. It is widely recognised that people will now typically work in a multitude of jobs across their working lives and will require ongoing upskilling and training. The value of skills is also changing rapidly with the half-life of a skill dropping from 30 years to 6 years. There is an increasing need to update skills and knowledge as the relevance of workers' current abilities is declining at a faster rate than before. This need applies to young workers entering the workforce, current workers, and mature workers who may be transitioning to retirement.

Ensuring businesses have access to workers with the right skills is good for business and good for employees. Coordination between industry groups and education providers can encourage skills alignment. When workers have the skills that industry needs, the employability of individual workers is increased, and the benefit to businesses is also increased.

Some employers may be reluctant to provide opportunities and invest in young workers if they believe that they will ultimately leave the area, while many small businesses lack the resources or time to take on inexperienced employees. However, this can become a self-fulfilling issue as young workers leave due to a lack of opportunity. The ability to acquire post-school qualifications locally, and subsequent employment, can be an incentive for young people to stay within the region.

Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified insecurity for many workers. 'On-demand' workers, casual employees and the self-employed were typically the hardest hit during the lockdowns. Conversely, the opportunity to 'work from home' has been embraced by many employers and employees, a trend that decentralises workers and can negate the need for long commutes. These trends may also see an increase in the number of micro and home-based businesses. Ensuring workers have access to training opportunities and can effectively work remotely if they choose supports a more resilient workforce and economy.

The physical barriers to work and education will also need to be addressed. The lack of public transport options within the Shire is a limiting factor for people of all ages who do not have access to a private motor vehicle. This is especially prevalent when trying to travel east-west, away from the main north-south corridors in the Shire. Many students and young people have to leave the Macedon Ranges for further education (TAFE and University), however for those that can access education locally the inability to travel to a location can be inhibiting. Outside of Melbourne, the nearest TAFE and university campuses are located in Bendigo, Castlemaine, Seymour and Wallan. For those people that do wish to return, access to work and suitable accommodation can also be an issue.

Similar barriers can be present for working parents that are unable to access childcare. When parents are ready and able to work but are prevented from doing so by a lack of adequate childcare services, this impacts families' wellbeing as well as directly affecting local economic activity.

Council can also play a key role in supporting and providing economic opportunities for Indigenous communities. By actively removing barriers and engaging economically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Council can support self-determination and also benefit from unique knowledge and experience.



Image: Manufacturing

Employment, Education & Training cont.



HOW

This economic priority is focused on increasing the accessibility of post-school training and education within Macedon Ranges, and improving employment pathways. One of Council's roles will be in supporting education and training providers to deliver services in the region. As one of the Shire's largest employers, Council can also play a key role in providing opportunities for workers.

Relationships

- Facilitate engagement between industry groups and training providers to ensure the skills being acquired by workers are aligned with needs of industry.
- Actively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to ensure employment and procurement opportunities are developed and promoted in way that effectively reaches workers and businesses.
- Facilitate dialogue between all schools in the Shire, government and private, to improve coordination of VET training programs. This is to focus on creating a critical mass of students to enable program delivery, and also coordinating transport solutions for students.

Partnership

- Participate in the Head Start program and actively promote the program to local employers with the aim of linking them into the program.
- Work with RTOs, TAFE and universities to support local delivery of courses. This could be through creation of a physical space to accommodate students undertaking study at various institutions.
- Support the Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network to improve access to training and education pathways to employment for young people.

Skills

- Council to play a lead role in offering structured workplace learning (SWL), entry-level job opportunities and supporting school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs). This approach is currently being progressed in other neighbouring Councils and can help to lead a whole community approach.
- The reform of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) places a greater focus on vocational pathways and applied learning. Government schools will receive funding for a dedicated Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordinator, and new Area-based Jobs, Skills and Pathways Managers. Council will work with schools and other educational organisations to leverage outcomes of the reform for local students.
- Support the development and implementation of Council's Reconciliation Action Plan, particularly in providing economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Support access to learning opportunities for mature workers and assist with accessing State, Federal Government and other support such as the Skills and Training Incentive and services provided by organisations such as Workspace Australia.

Participation

- Advocate for the provision of childcare services to support employment and labour force participation throughout the Shire.

Implementation Plan 2021 - 2026

Glossary of acronyms

BATAs – Business and Tourism Association

CRLLEN - Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network

DJPR – Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

RDV – Regional Development Victoria

RTBs – Regional Tourism Boards

RTO – Registered Training Organisation

SBATs – School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships

SWL – Structured Workplace Learning

| Strategic Priority | Action | MRSC Role | Partners | Timing Year |
|----------------------------|---|-----------|--|-------------|
| ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP | | | | |
| Leading by example | Review Macedon Ranges Shire Council local business procurement options to proactively increase local expenditure. Ensure ongoing monitoring and review of procurement policy to measure effectiveness. | Lead | Internal departments | 1 |
| | Support local employment pathways for students, apprentices and professional staff, with explicit actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples through Councils diverse sector opportunities. | Support | CRLLEN Djandak | 2 - 3 |
| | Investigate a statutory permit and processes review to improve the process for business permits providing greater surety for local business and community and increased efficiency for authority and proponent. | Lead | Internal departments | 1 - 2 |
| Advocacy | Actively advocate as a regional leader on behalf of local industry through key government submissions. | Lead | BATAs Industry peak bodies | 1 - 5 |
| | Continue to work in partnership with community, business and government, advocating for ongoing support to grow local employment opportunities. | Lead | BATAs Industry peak bodies CRLLEN Workspace Australia | 1 - 5 |
| | Seek and apply for state and federal funding to assist in implementing actions identified in the EDS. | Lead | RDV DJPR | 1 - 5 |
| Regional Partnership | Support relevant regional partnerships within the Loddon Campaspe. | Support | RDV Regional Partnerships | 1 - 5 |
| | Actively support the UNESCO City of Gastronomy project recognising the strong link between Macedon Ranges primary producers, artisanal food offerings, local events and the visitor economy. | Support | Agribusiness Sector Regional Councils RTBs | 1 |

Implementation Plan 2021 - 2026

| Strategic Priority | Action | MRSC Role | Partners | Timing Year |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------|--|-------------|
| ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP (cont.) | | | | |
| Regional Partnership (cont.) | Build on the momentum created through the peak industry groups to consolidate the linkage between business, industry and local government economic development. | Lead | Agribusiness Sector BATAs Industry peak bodies | 1 - 3 |
| | Create and improve linkages between Council and business in towns with no representative business or trader association. | Lead | Local business operators | 1 - 2 |
| | Actively support the Central Victorian Goldfields World Heritage bid. | Support | Lead partners City of Ballarat, City of Greater Bendigo | 2 |
| | Support actions that progress the Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor initiative, such as the “100 Gig City Region” project. | Support | City of Greater Bendigo Mount Alexander Shire Council | 1 |
| Research & Development | Continue to focus on opportunities to support and facilitate local industry development with strong links to research and development. | Support | Government agencies Individual businesses | 2 - 4 |
| | Investigate opportunities to attract research and development businesses and develop a regional prospectus to proactively engage with businesses about the benefits of establishing in the region. This may include opportunities in agriculture, food manufacturing, high tech industries, or design and architecture for resilience. | Lead | Internal departments | 2 - 3 |
| | Support local businesses to investigate circular economy opportunities and invest in the waste management strategies that are aligned with Macedon Ranges Shire Council objectives for waste and resource recovery. | Support | Local business operators | 2 - 5 |
| Core Economic Development | Undertake core economic development activities to support businesses locally through government support initiatives and other measures. | Lead | RDV State and Federal Government agencies | 1 - 5 |
| | Support business to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the green economy. | Support | Internal departments | 2-3 |
| | Deliver Buy Local campaigns and other initiatives that strengthen local supply chains and retain expenditure in the local economy | Lead | BATAs Industry peak bodies | 1 |

Implementation Plan 2021 - 2026

| Strategic Priority | Action | MRSC Role | Partners | Timing Year |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------|--|-------------|
| EXCEPTIONAL LANDSCAPES | | | | |
| Rural Land Use | Collaborate with Council's Planning Department to ensure priorities for sustainable economic development align with the review of the Rural Land Use Strategy with the aim of ensuring primary land use functions are aligned with land use and development policy while recognising and respecting the need for design and development that actively improves local environmental values. | Support | Internal departments | 2 |
| Productive enterprises | Undertake targeted business support for agricultural enterprises that encourages resilience in the face of changing climatic conditions, recognising the importance of farming and its connection to local main street businesses and the visitor economy. | Support | Agribusiness Sector | 2 - 3 |
| | Support small scale rural enterprises to establish compliant secondary activities in appropriate locations, such as farm-stays, farm gate sales, and niche high-end activities. | Support | Agribusiness Sector | 1 - 5 |
| | Collaborate with and support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to identify and progress economic opportunities derived through utilisation of local landscapes and agricultural production. | Support | Dja, Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Agribusiness Sector | 2 - 3 |
| Conservation | Collaborate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and public land managers to identify key locations in Macedon Ranges that require improved investment in infrastructure to support increased visitation while achieving conservation outcomes. | Support | Dja, Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, ParksVic, DELWP | 2 - 4 |
| Catchments | Advocate for a regional assessment of water resources (surface / ground / recycled) to support economic activity, rural land use including agribusinesses and environmental requirements. | Support | Agribusiness Sector | 2 |
| | Investigate the need to complete further assessment of the link between long term water security and increased regional economic benefit within the MRSC. | Lead | Agribusiness Sector | 2 - 3 |
| | Advocate for a co-ordinated State Government (DELWP) and Water Authority strategy, and investment in water infrastructure to support agribusiness in Macedon Ranges while ensuring sufficient water is allocated to the environment. | Support | Agribusiness Sector | 3 - 5 |
| Forests | Support the development of tracks and trails throughout the Macedon Ranges and connections to regional networks. | Support | ParksVic, DELWP, Neighbouring Councils | 1-5 |

Implementation Plan 2021 - 2026

| Strategic Priority | Action | MRSC Role | Partners | Timing Year |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|--|-------------|
| THRIVING TOWNSHIPS | | | | |
| Strong township structure | Work with community and business to see the established town boundaries as an opportunity for sustainable growth of the township for future residents and thriving town centres. | Support | Local communities | 3 - 5 |
| | Collaborate with and assist local business operators to seek funding and support delivery of township activations, events utilising public streets, and other events in public spaces. | Support | BATAs Industry peak bodies | 1 - 3 |
| | Undertake an assessment of the need for future employment land in the Shire with a focus on Romsey, Kyneton and Gisborne/New Gisborne. Where need is identified, Council's planning department to undertake rezonings to secure employment land to support local populations. | Lead | Internal departments | 2 - 4 |
| Great main streets | Support the implementation of Township Structure Plan recommendations and/or relevant urban design frameworks through business case development to access funding support for high quality urban design and active street frontages. | Lead | Internal departments | 1 - 5 |
| | Actively support a clear capital works program for all township's public infrastructure through business case development and funding submissions. | Lead | Internal departments | 1 - 5 |
| | Support businesses and landowners to access funding for heritage restorations that maintain and enhance cultural experiences for locals and visitors. | Support | Local land owners and business owners | 1 - 5 |
| Accessible townships | Investigate options for Council to apply rates increases for long-term vacant commercial premises in townships central business areas. | Lead | Internal departments | 1 - 5 |
| | Work with Council's environment team, appropriate vendors, relevant power companies and other partners to implement electric car charge stations in all townships. | Support | Internal departments | 2 - 3 |
| | Support the delivery of initiatives that will improve tourism signage, enhancing the visitor experience and contributing to adopted place branding. | Support | Internal departments BATAs Industry peak bodies | 2 - 5 |
| Residential development | Support the implementation of structure plans and settlement strategies by identifying and facilitating opportunities that arise from planned residential growth. These may include opportunities for provision of new services or promoting innovative and sustainable forms of residential development. | Lead | Internal departments Industry peak bodies Construction and development industry | 1 - 5 |

Implementation Plan 2021 - 2026

| Strategic Priority | Action | MRSC Role | Partners | Timing Year |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------|---|-------------|
| ENABLING CONNECTIONS | | | | |
| Digital connectivity | Actively contribute to the Loddon Campaspe Digital Plan being prepared by the Regional Partnership to ensure local priorities are captured and future investment requirements are understood. | Support | Regional Partnership | 1 |
| | Explore and advocate for options that provide broader access to communication networks within townships and rural areas, such as the roll out of free Wi-Fi within each township and improved access to telehealth as identified in the regional Digital Plan. | Support | Telecommunication operators | 2 - 4 |
| | As opportunities arise, support Telcos and education providers to improve digital literacy across the Macedon Ranges shire. | Support | Telecommunication operators Education Providers | 1 – 5 |
| Business networks & partnerships | Collaborate with regional Local Government Partners to leverage dark fibre (existing but unlit fibre optic cable) opportunities within the Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor | Support | Corridor Councils | 2 - 3 |
| | Build on the momentum created through the industry peak bodies to consolidate the linkage between business, industry, and local government, including those locations that have no peak body representation. | Lead | BATAs Industry peak bodies RTBs | 1 - 3 |
| | Co-ordinating shire marketing efforts and provision of a mechanism to support local businesses through business profiles that create awareness and foster increased business to business activity. | Lead | All local businesses RTBS BATAs Industry peak bodies | 1 - 2 |
| Regional Linkage | Work with partners across local and state government to advocate for investment in mobile infrastructure that will address blackspots and support industry that is based in a rural setting. | Lead | Agribusiness Sector Neighbouring Councils | 1 - 2 |
| | Continue to advocate with key communication providers for improved shire-wide communication and connectivity. | Lead | Telecommunication operators NBN Co. | 1 - 3 |
| | Advocate for improved public transport travel options for people to access work and study. | Lead | Public transport providers. | 1 - 5 |
| | Advocate for appropriate infrastructure to support safe and efficient transport of goods and services around the shire | Lead | Internal departments Rural Roads Victoria | 1 - 5 |

Implementation Plan 2021 - 2026

| Strategic Priority | Action | MRSC Role | Partners | Timing Year |
|---|---|-----------|--|-------------|
| EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION & TRAINING | | | | |
| Relationships | Establish a regular forum for industry to engage on matters relating to education and training needs/barriers. The focus would be on the ten largest regional employers. | Lead | RTOs Education providers CRLEN Large local businesses | 3 - 5 |
| | Facilitate a working group of local schools and the Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network with the aim of improving access to VET programs. | Support | CRLEN Local schools | 2 |
| Skills | Council to provide employment opportunities for young workers by actively participating in SWL, SBATs and Head Start programs. | Support | Internal departments | 2 - 3 |
| | Upon endorsement, support the delivery of Council's Reconciliation Action Plan and deliver actions that increase employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. | Support | Internal departments Local employers | 2 - 5 |
| | Support access to learning and skill development opportunities for mature workers by assisting with accessing State and Federal Government support initiatives, such as the Skills and Training Incentive. | Lead | Internal departments | 2 - 3 |
| Partnerships | Actively promote the Head Start program to local businesses with the aim of connecting more employers with the program. | Support | CRLEN Local schools | 2 - 5 |
| | Explore opportunities to establish a physical learning hub(s) within the Shire to support students' access to education. | Lead | RTOs Education providers CRLEN | 3 - 5 |
| | Support the Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network to identify education and training challenges and opportunities for young people – including facilitating a local education and training task force. | Support | CRLEN | 1 - 2 |
| | Explore opportunities to promote an awareness of the benefits of disability employment to local businesses. | Lead | Internal departments | 3 - 5 |
| Participation | Advocate for the provision of childcare services to support employment and labour force participation throughout the Shire where opportunities present themselves. | Support | Internal departments Child care providers | 1 - 5 |



Image: Beverage Manufacturing