

WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE

*Regional
Investment
Plan*

MAY 2015



This document has been prepared by the Wimmera Development Association on behalf of Hindmarsh Shire Council, Horsham Rural City Council, Northern Grampians Shire Council, West Wimmera Shire Council and Yarriambiack Shire Council. The enclosed information is correct as at May 2015.



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The Wimmera – Everything you need

Whilst the Wimmera Southern Mallee is well known for its cereal, oilseed and pulse production, there is a lot more on offer - excellent health, education and retail services, safe communities, and a positive environment for growth.

Businesses, communities and organisations across the Wimmera Southern Mallee are adaptive and resilient. The region has a proud history of responding to opportunity, working together to build an agricultural sector that competes globally, and working collaboratively to access services needed for a great lifestyle, diverse employment, and great community amenity.

Regional employment is stable, with relatively low unemployment. Vacancies across all sectors include apprenticeship and entry level positions, unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, technical and professional roles seek to attract new skills and people to the region.

Wimmera Southern Mallee communities have capacity to accommodate more people; our businesses seek skills and experience to grow their enterprises. We want to share the wealth of opportunities in the region – more people ensuring sustainable service delivery, more diversity in the jobs for our young people, a range of different communities catering for lifestyle choices, access to quality health and education options, building a stronger and more diverse economy for the future.

The Wimmera Southern Mallee has a reputation for strong networks and collaboration across all sectors – municipal services, health and welfare, education and training, media, agronomy, grains research, community services, volunteering, sport and recreation, freight and logistics. Horsham is the recognised regional centre for the Wimmera Southern Mallee, with the network of smaller communities focussed on local services, retail and agricultural support businesses.

Everything we need to grow

Innovation **Competitiveness**
Confidence **Sustainability**

Major developments in the Wimmera Southern Mallee in recent times have built on the **Competitiveness** and **Sustainability** of the region.

The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline has secured the regional water supply for existing stock and residential purposes, as well as providing 'new' water for business and industry development. Water savings are committed to the **sustainable** management of the region's river systems, enabling the conservation of environmental values and securing the future viability of the whole catchment.

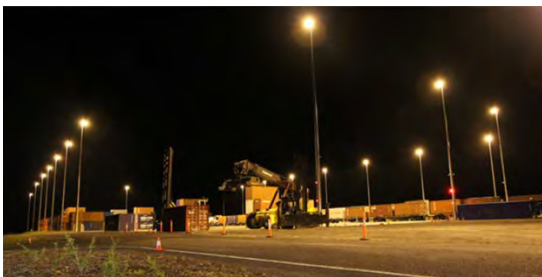
In parallel, the region has led planning for the **sustainable** management of groundwater and promoting high value production in the western Wimmera.

Major investment in transport infrastructure such as the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal, regional aerodromes and rail upgrades for freight have involved industry, Councils and government partnerships. The identification of regional priorities, strong advocacy and government support is ongoing – in particular focussed on increasing the **Competitiveness** of the region to function in a global market. Supply chain efficiency is a major driver to increase the productivity of the region.

Innovation in agriculture is well founded in the region, from the implementation of 'practical' innovation in the paddock by primary producers developing sustainable farming systems, to government and commercial focus on new varieties, and now the international focus on grains research have all combined to make this one of the most exciting times in the region's history.

The strength of Horsham as the regional centre is acknowledged. A centre for agricultural research, production and processing, mining, transport and manufacturing, Horsham provides a focus for regional **Confidence** in the future.

Together with our beautiful natural environment, affordable housing, quality health care and education, and our strong community networks, we really do have...**everything you need to grow.**



Innovation
Confidence **Competitiveness**
Sustainability

The immediate focus for the Wimmera Southern Mallee community is to grow in four key measures



- Diversify regional employment options
- Promote agriculture as a viable career choice
- Increase vocational training opportunities available within the region and retain young people in trades and semi-skilled employment
- Attract our young people back to employment in the region
- Support existing businesses to grow and prosper



- Promote agribusiness opportunities, value adding to agriculture and food processing
- Advocate for regional infrastructure needs
- Promote regional amenity and development in regard to commercial real estate and housing investment
- Liaise with Victorian and Australian Governments to identify investment opportunities
- Encourage regional investment in agribusiness and service sector
- Support increased investment in agricultural research



- Increase value of regional production prior to export, particularly grains
- Encourage the diversification of grains produced in the region through research and development
- Liaise with Victorian and Australian Governments to identify international and national market trends
- Review supply chain and infrastructure for improved efficiencies



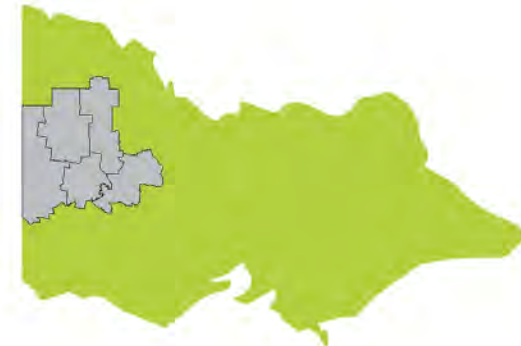
- Increase the use of technology across all sectors
- Sector opportunities include mineral sands mining, eco-tourism, health services, intensive animal production, food processing, niche food production
- Amenity and lifestyle choices
- Stable workforce
- Strong vocational training base

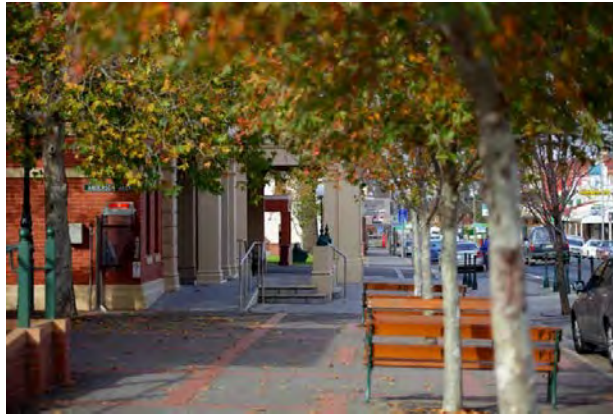


The Wimmera



Innovation
Confidence Competitiveness
Sustainability





Innovation
Confidence Competitiveness
Sustainability



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Critical Infrastructure Projects - Western Highway Upgrades



Project Description

- The duplication of the Western Highway to the South Australian border with an urgent need for duplication between Buangor and Stawell. Estimated cost \$320 million
- Safety and efficiency improvements – Stawell to SA border Estimated cost TBC
- Upgrading the Western Highway to freeway standard between Leigh Creek and Woodmans Hill. Estimated cost \$100 million
- Removal of at-grade crossings between Deer Park and Melton. Estimated cost \$57 million
- Investigate upgrading the Western Highway from Ballarat Western Link Road to the Port of Melbourne for HPFV (Mass). Estimated cost \$0.2 million
- Bypass of Horsham. Estimated cost \$165 million
- Provision of bypasses for towns between Ballarat and the SA border. Estimated cost \$300million - Ararat and Beaufort (planning underway to confirm)

Issues Identified

The Western Highway serves as the principle interstate route between Victoria and South Australia and is the key transport corridor for Western Victoria. Currently, more than 5,500 vehicles travel the highway west of Ballarat each day including 1,500 trucks, expected to double by 2025 (780,000 trucks per annum). West of Stawell, the Western Highway carries lower volumes, around 4000 vehicles per day of which 1,200 are trucks. These volumes have grown at an average of 3.5% since 2003. The 110km stretch of highway between Ballarat and Stawell has claimed 7 lives and more than 80 casualty crashes in the five years to the end of June 2013. Heavy vehicle volumes travelling through towns also reduce the amenity and liveability of those towns. Consequently, there are economic and social pressures to reduce the impact of traffic volumes on towns as well as to provide opportunities for safe and efficient transport of goods and people.

Project Benefits

The duplication of the Western Highway between Buangor and Stawell provides the following benefits:

- Opens up accessibility to the region.
- Economic advantages for the region as the area can access Melbourne, ports and other key destinations more efficiently.
- Improved road safety, including roadside facilities for fatigue management.
- Improved road freight efficiency.
- Improved travel times and costs.

Contact

John Martin, Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Transport Group

Critical Infrastructure Projects - Mobile Phone Coverage



Project Description

Advocate for improved telecommunications services for the Wimmera Southern Mallee. The Federal Government Blackspot Programme consultation has identified the specific priority areas for investment under the program.

Regionally the priority issues for improved telecommunications services are emergency planning and response, tourism and agriculture production.

Issues Identified

Equitable access to mobile telephone/data services is critical to the development of regional communities. Reliance on mobile telephone services to access information, maintain contact and transfer data is increasing, resulting in a growing 'divide' between communities that have mobile telephone/data services and those that do not.

The impact of telecommunications 'black spots' on the productivity of regional businesses is increasing as reliance on information technology and data management grows. In particular, the efficiency and global competitiveness of agriculture is disadvantaged by the lack of access to telecommunications services in rural areas.

Project Benefits

Agriculture is the prime economic activity in regional Australia. Increasing use of technology in agriculture is driven by productivity and efficiency objectives. Data use in animal management, machinery, farm planning, chemical and nutrient management is growing exponentially.

Access to mobile services during emergency events is critical to effective and timely responses. Communities experiencing wildfire, wind storm and flood events must be able to access emergency services during the crises. Emergency services' planning is becoming more reliant on access to mobile data and communications.

Access to mobile telecommunications also impacts on the sustainability of regional tourism, with visitors to regional areas expecting to have mobile telephone and data services available. Tourism businesses rely on internet promotion with the market expectations for online servicing of their needs increasing.

Contact

Jo Bourke, Executive Director Wimmera Development Association

Critical Infrastructure Projects - Rail Freight Upgrades



Project Description

Standardising the rail line between Mildura to the ports of Geelong and Portland through the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region. Estimated cost - \$220 million

Capacity improvements to the Adelaide-Melbourne railway line

- 1 - 5 years - 5 new and/or extended passing loops to 1800m Estimated cost \$25M
- 5 - 10 years - Signalling improvements. Replacement of 47kg rail with new heavier rail. Estimated cost \$158M
- 10-20 years – Double stacking of rail freight. Estimated Cost TBC

Upgrade of Rainbow rail line

- Dimboola and Rainbow upgrade to the allowable mass of 21 tonnes axle load from 19 tonnes axle loads
- Rainbow and Yaapeet upgrade to allow for grain freight services

Issues Identified

The efficiency of the supply chain to ports is a key issue in international competitiveness and the balance of road and rail mode share is a key issue in cost and impacts on regional infrastructure. The rail network provides considerable potential to increase the competitiveness of logistics for the region.

The rail lines within the western area of Victoria are a mixture of broad and standard gauges, causing inefficiencies for rail transportation of products from this region to ports.

The Adelaide to Melbourne railway line is a key freight route between the two cities. Train lengths are dictated by the number and length of existing passing loops, and the capacity for both freight and passenger rail to operate efficiently is impacted by less than optimal signalling. Double stacking containers on rail will increase freight efficiency significantly.

Project Benefits

The standardisation of rail, increased axle weight allowance, signal improvements and passing loops provide the following benefits:

- Increased freight efficiency.
- Reduced travel times and operating costs.
- A reduction of trucks due to a mode shift to rail.
- Community amenity improvement due to fewer vehicles on the road.
- Reduced road maintenance and accidents costs.
- Increased rail provider competition.

Contact

John Martin, Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Transport Group

Freight Efficiency Projects - Henty Highway improvements



Project Description

The project involves sealing shoulders and improving pavement roughness along the Henty Highway from Horsham through to Lascelles. **Estimated Cost** \$16 million
Increased maintenance of the Henty Highway is required to improve the efficiency of commercial vehicles through to the Port of Portland from Horsham. Estimated cost TBC

Issues Identified

The Henty Highway is a key north-south route for the western region of Victoria through the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. It connects the Sunraysia Highway at Lascelles to the Port of Portland passing through regional towns, including Horsham. The highway is a primary freight route providing the connection, for export products, to the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal and Portland.

The Henty Highway is classified an 'A' Class Road south of Horsham and a 'B' Class road north of Horsham.

It has been identified that for the section of the Henty Highway between Horsham and Lascelles, the sealed pavement width is not sufficient to allow vehicles to pass heavy vehicles. This means that when passing other vehicles, commercial vehicles need to travel at reduced speeds and veer onto the unsealed shoulder. These travel behaviours create road safety concerns, freight vehicle efficiency issues and pavement drop offs and increase the maintenance effort for the pavement.

The section of the Henty Highway south of Horsham is a key freight route connecting Horsham to the Port of Portland. Many sections along this length of the road have been identified to be deteriorating due to increased occurrences of potholes and rough patches.

Project Benefits

The proposed improvements along the Henty Highway between Horsham and Lascelles will

- Improve commercial vehicle efficiency and travel time.
- Improve road safety.
- Reduce maintenance costs for pavement reconstruction due to pavement drop off etc.
- Improve efficiencies for export products to markets.

Contact

John Martin, Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Transport Group

Freight Efficiency Projects - Horsham Bypass (Western Highway)



Project Description

The Western Highway travels through the middle of Horsham and the region seeks realignment of the highway to bypass the township.

The alignment of the bypass has not been set and needs to be determined to allow for future growth of the township compatible with the future realignment.

The bypass will involve constructing a new section of highway to the northeast or southwest of the township. **Estimated Cost** \$165 million

Issues Identified

The Western Highway is a key east-west route providing the primary freight route between Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

The efficiency of this road corridor affects the efficiency of regional production and hence the long term viability of regional towns and industries.

Currently the Western Highway travels through the middle of the Horsham township. This results in through traffic along the highway having to slow down through the township and potentially stop at a number of signalised intersections. There are seven signalised intersections on the Western Highway in Horsham, but only two others between Deer Park and the Adelaide fringe.

The highway through the township increases the safety risk due to the number of vehicles (including a high percentage of heavy vehicles) and pedestrians crossing this major highway.

Additionally, the highway creates a barrier through the township which causes connectivity issues and divides the township. This has implications for vehicle, cyclist and pedestrian accessibility for the residents of Horsham, as well as amenity issues.

Project Benefits

The proposed Horsham Bypass (Western Highway) provides the following benefits:

- Increased freight efficiency.
- Reduced travel times and operating costs.
- Improved road safety.
- Improved connectivity and liveability for the township with the removal of the division created by the highway.

Contact

John Martin, Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Transport Group

Freight Efficiency Projects - 'C' Class Roads



Project Description

Sustainable maintenance funding for 'C' Class roads is critical to the efficient movement of grain in the region. These roads are of strategic importance to local government as they provide the links between local roads and the arterial road network. There are a significant number of 'C' Class roads within the regions that have been identified that require upgrades and maintenance, in response to the deregulation of grains marketing and changing farm management practices.

Issues Identified

Each Council has prioritised their top two 'C' Class road upgrades that are required within the immediate to short term.

The roads have been chosen based on a number of factors which include:

- Average Annual Daily Traffic Volume.
- Safety issues/ number of recorded crashes.
- The condition of the road.
- The critical nature of the road for key industries within the municipality.

Hindmarsh Shire – Dimboola/Rainbow Road, Nhill Yanac Road

Horsham Rural City – Horsham/Kalkee Road, Horsham Drung South Road

Northern Grampians Shire – Murtoa/Glenorchy Road, Grampians Road

Yarriambiack Shire – Donald Murtoa Road, Warracknabeal Birchip Road

West Wimmera Shire – Kaniva Edenhope Road, Nhill Harrow Road

Project Benefits

- Increased freight efficiency.
- Reduced travel times and operating costs.
- Improved road safety.

Contact

Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council

Ray Campling, CEO Yarriambiack Shire Council

Justine Linley, CEO Northern Grampians Shire Council

Mark Crouch, CEO West Wimmera Shire Council

Tony Doyle, CEO Hindmarsh Shire Council

Advocacy Projects - Mining Development/Exploration



Project Description

Significant mining exploration with a focus on mineral sands, copper and gold development is occurring in the Wimmera Southern Mallee, as part of the Murray Basin exploration and Stavelly Province.

Issues Identified

There are well advanced proposals currently in investment attraction phase, as well as a number of exploration activities.

- WIM 150/Australian Zircon located at Drung South, 20 km south west of Horsham. The proposal is currently completing the EES approval. There is an expected 40 year mine life, with 250 jobs during mining (125 in mining, 125 in separation plant)
- Donald Mineral Sands/Astron is located 66 kilometres north east of Horsham. There is an expected 30+years mine life with 130-140 jobs in direct mining and first stage processing, with a further 100 jobs if further processing is considered.
- Big Hill Enhanced Development Project is located in Stawell and is a project proposed by Crocodile Gold to open cut mine for gold with a project life of 5 years, 120 jobs in direct mining and further jobs in rehabilitation.
- Various other exploration licences across the region investigating a range of emerging opportunities eg gold, copper, mineral sands.

Issues identified through the Wimmera Southern Mallee Mining Sector Plan include planning for significant rail/road freight impacts, opportunities for regional businesses to provide goods and services, impacts on regional amenity, competition for labour with agricultural sector, training needs and shortage of appropriate housing for new employees. **Estimated Cost** TBC

Project Benefits

Diversification of regional employment and significant increase in employment will attract new people to the region, due to the relatively low unemployment and the need for specialist skills.

The supply of goods and services by regional businesses is an important opportunity. There is also the potential to attract specialist mining businesses to the region.

Potential investment in freight and logistics to facilitate export of minerals is focussed on key freight routes that will also improve efficient movement of grain

- Rail upgrades to increase axle loads and to standardise rail gauge for efficient transport of minerals to port
- Routes will incorporate local and arterial roads to access Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal

Councils are considering the impact of significant increases in employment on regional services and infrastructure. For example housing availability is a key issue, with planning for other community services such as kindergartens, health and welfare services and education incorporated into strategic planning. Timeframes for implementation of mining are uncertain, dependent on investment attraction.

Contact

Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council

Justine Linley, CEO Northern Grampians Shire Council

Ray Campling, CEO Yarriambiack Shire Council

Advocacy Projects - Renewable Energy – Wind Generation



Project Description

There is significant interest by several international development and investment businesses in regional sites for energy generation by wind.

Advocacy by regional municipalities and communities in support of the development of windfarms is important in the investment attraction phase.

Issues such as road maintenance and sourcing road making material, monitoring landowner impacts and applying statutory planning requirements are of concern to Local Government, with the windfarm development. Partnership with the Victorian Government is critical to ensure that the benefits of these developments are maximised for the region. **Estimated Costs** TBC

Issues Identified

Whilst there is strong regional support for the development of wind farms in both the eastern part of the region (Crowlands, Bulgana) and on the Wimmera plains at Murra Warra, investment interest has been impacted by government policy changes and uncertainty.

The Australian Government Renewable Energy Target review has stalled investor activity, due to the uncertainty of both the target and the timeframes for a decision. Victorian Government planning policy and regulatory changes have actually worked in favour of the Wimmera Southern Mallee, with availability of buffer zones

Project Benefits

The alternate energy sector is a growing industry within Australia and wind farms are a key component of this sector. There is strong community interest in renewable energy and the sustainability of our region.

Windfarms provide

- Significant employment during construction
- Ongoing operational employment opportunities
- Diversification of regional employment
- Additional income stream for rural landowners
- Support for a regional culture of support for renewable energy

Contact

Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council

Ray Campling, CEO Yarriambiack Shire Council

Justine Linley, CEO Northern Grampians Shire Council



Advocacy Projects - Improved Weather Information

Project Description

Weather information is currently generated from Bureau of Meteorology radar systems at Mildura and Mt Gambier. Coverage of significant areas in western Victoria is poor, impacting on the quality of weather information.

The installation of an additional radar system in the region would provide improved weather data, increasing the effectiveness of regional decision-making in agriculture, aviation and emergency management. **Estimated Costs** \$7 million

Issues Identified

The lack of 'real time' weather information for the Wimmera Southern Mallee impacts on the economic base of the region. Improved weather information would enable more timely and effective on-farm operations, increased emergency service planning and response, improved aviation safety, more accurate water resource forecasting, as well as improved social and community planning.

The region demonstrated the scale and scope of the impacts on the region of the current weather data and analysis in a submission to the Bureau of Meteorology (October 2011). The submission includes information from a range of regional organisations and individuals articulating the benefits of 'real time' weather data. A partnership project between the Bureau, WDA, DEDJTR and BCG will investigate the use of weather data in regional agriculture, identifying time and accuracy impacts in 2015.

Project Benefits

- Increased **agricultural productivity** will directly impact on national and state food targets, increase national export potential, improve chemical and fertilizer efficacy (production and environmental benefits), improve farm enterprise financial sustainability and enable more effective farm planning (employee and contractor management, certainty for decision-making).
- Regional emergency management and planning would improve with access to 'real time' weather data. **Emergency responses** (including fire and flood events, and evacuation planning) would utilize improved weather services to manage resources (municipal, fire and emergency services, community volunteers, etc) more effectively.
- Regional **aviation** operators (leisure, commercial tour operators, aircraft maintenance and training enterprises) have identified the cost to their operations of poor weather information and its impact on their scheduling and operations. Recent investment in regional aerodrome infrastructure provides opportunities for new developments, but poor weather services continue to constrain interest.

Contact

Jo Bourke , Executive Director, Wimmera Development Association
Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council

Advocacy Projects - Improved Passenger Rail Services



Project Description

Communities in western Victoria and south west Victoria have identified the opportunity to increase passenger rail services, connecting to the service to Ararat. Councils seek increased rail passenger services from Ararat for commuters to more easily access employment, education and services in Ballarat and Melbourne.

The eight councils in Western Victoria are seeking to prepare a feasibility study and business case for improved passenger rail services to their region. It is proposed that a shuttle rail service be provided using the standard gauge lines to the Wimmera and Portland, linking to existing broad gauge passenger rail services at Ararat. The councils involved are Horsham Rural City, Ararat Rural City, Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh, Glenelg, Southern Grampians, Northern Grampians and West Wimmera Shires. Estimated Cost \$100k

Issues Identified

Connectivity to employment, health and education services in Ballarat and Melbourne is restricted by poor public transport links in the western part of the state. Councils seek to investigate the feasibility of extending the current Ballarat to Ararat shuttle service into the region, providing links to vital services.

Project Benefits

- Extended rail services into western Victoria will provide greater access to health and education services for the regional community.
- Disadvantaged groups in the community, the unemployed, elderly and those with disabilities would benefit by improved connectivity to centralised specialist services.
- Additional rail services will also provide opportunities for tourism promotion and development

Contact

Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council

Advocacy Projects - Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory (SUPL)



Project Description

Stawell Gold Mine has been identified as a site for a world class underground Physics laboratory. The ARC Centre for Excellence for Particle Physics proposes to utilise the mine to conduct a long term scientific research project investigating 'dark matter' and other experiments requiring a low background radiation environment. Stage A of the project is underway.

Stage B will establish the basic infrastructure for the underground laboratory at a cost of \$3.5 million. The Victorian Government and Federal Government have each committed \$1.75 million towards the project in 2015.

Stage C will require an estimated \$30 million to build and operate the international research laboratory

Issues Identified

As the Stawell Gold Mine operators Crocodile Gold transition to a different operating model, the opportunity to utilize disused underground areas has been identified, with evaluation of the site completed, a business case and laboratory construction plans developed ready for construction.

The ARC Centre for Excellence for Particle Physics is working with international partners Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare (INFN) and the Chinese Institute of High Energy Physics (IHEP) as well as the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) and the ARC Centre of Excellence for All-Sky Astrophysics (CAASTRO). Contributions from these organisations of particle detectors and related infrastructure are under consideration.

Project Benefits

- SUPL will position Victoria (and Australia) at the cutting edge of international scientific investigation
- SUPL will leverage international R&D investment and partnerships
- SUPL will provide new employment opportunities attracting skills in technology and scientific research
- SUPPL provides diversification in investment and employment, balancing the transition of mining in the regional economy

Contact

Justine Linley, CEO, Northern Grampians Shire Council



Advocacy Projects - Housing for Jobs

Project Description

Investment in housing for people relocating to the region for employment is not keeping up with demand in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. The relativity of return on investment for residential development in regional communities to high growth areas has contributed to the problem.

The 2013 Wimmera Southern Mallee Housing Study was commissioned to investigate the regional situation. It articulated both the housing demand as well as the supply issues for a range of different regional communities.

Investment attraction for a regional scale solution is required to address the shortage of 'housing for jobs'.

Issues Identified

The lack of appropriate accommodation is an impediment for businesses in attracting new skills and new people to grow our businesses.

In the regional centre of Horsham, where the real estate market is active, demand for rental accommodation is strong. In smaller regional communities, there is market failure.

Specific issues in the region, where significant employment is planned, provide a challenge. For example rental accommodation in Nhill is at a premium, with the relocation of the Karen community to work at Luv A Duck. Further expansion is underway, with an additional 20 employees required as the processing plant is refurbished. There is no capacity to adequately accommodate new employees in the community.

Mineral sand mining in the region is an emerging opportunity, with two major developments currently seeking investment. Potential employment of up to 500 jobs when these developments are funded and become operational is envisaged. Whilst the timeframe for mining investment is not yet clear, planning for the increase in housing demand will ensure that there is no impediment to attracting skills to these important regional projects.

Project Benefits

Attracting investment in housing for jobs may include local business investment, community investment and corporate investment

- Increase opportunity to attract new skills
- Mitigate barriers for businesses to attract new employees
- Promote local investment opportunities
- Improve regional housing stock

Contact

Jo Bourke, Executive Director Wimmera Development Association

Tony Doyle, CEO Hindmarsh Shire Council



Advocacy Projects - Childcare

Project Description

Provision of childcare services in small regional communities face regulatory, funding and variable demand challenges, due to thin markets and low population. Lack of accessible and affordable childcare services is a barrier to employment and economic activity.

Issues Identified

From the July 2014 Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Draft Report, the Productivity Commission - Draft Recommendation 8.3

“The Australian Government should abolish operational requirements that specify minimum or maximum operating weeks or hours for services approved to receive child-based subsidies.”

Should this recommendation be adopted, families may become eligible to receive a Child Care Benefit, making the direct cost of services to families far more affordable. This report is currently under consideration.

Flexibility in the delivery of childcare services is required to address local needs.

Project Benefits

Recognition of regulatory impacts on the provision of childcare services in regional Australia will

- Enable flexible arrangements to service local needs
- Provide regional family access to subsidies
- Support increased family access to employment and training opportunities

Contact

Mark Crouch, CEO West Wimmera Shire Council



Advocacy Projects - Education and Training

Project Description

Workforce planning for growth in the region is a critical element in successful economic and business development. In particular, pathways in vocational education, providing for the relevant skills and training for existing and emerging industries, are key building blocks for our region.

Successful workforce development requires a multi-faceted approach. Quality training, industry input into training packages, strong linkages between schools, training organisations and industry, and recognition of the issues for regional businesses in providing training for existing employees, as well as attracting new skills to their enterprises.

The region seeks an intensive review of education and training across priority sectors in the region, in partnership with government and training providers. This will inform government, industry and the region on future needs.

Issues Identified

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Workforce Committee has identified agriculture, health, manufacturing and tourism as key workforce priorities for the region. Longerenong College is highly valued in the region and by the agricultural sector. The college contributes to the skill base of the sector and demonstrates the value of pathways through VET in Schools, apprenticeship training and agricultural certificates and diplomas.

The Wimmera Campus of Federation University is an integral part of our region. Trends to centralise education and nursing programs, increasing the online modes of delivery and changes to TAFE programs are of concern to regional businesses and the community.

Initial reviews undertaken identify that large numbers of apprentices are leaving the region for training. The costs to apprentices, their families and employers are significant. There are some opportunities to deliver training in the region that need to be investigated.

The VCAL and VET in Schools program provide stepping stones into vocational training and employment in the region. Historically regional schools have worked collaboratively to deliver a broad VET program. The program is under extreme pressure due to funding changes to secondary schools, increased training costs and travel arrangements within the region. This is of grave concern.

Project Benefits

- Provide career paths for young people into regional employment
- Engage with industry to identify future training needs
- Increase participation rates and regional skill base

Contact

Jo Bourke, Executive Director Wimmera Development Association



Advocacy Projects – NBN

Project Description

The implementation of the National Broadband Network (NBN) offers significant opportunities to regional communities. Access to increased speed and capacity for business and community activities will change business processes and service delivery modes.

The region seeks to actively participate in promotion of the NBN and the benefits of broadband, and to facilitate early implementation of NBN infrastructure to all regional communities.

Issues Identified

Scheduling of the implementation of the NBN has been delayed several times. The Wimmera Southern Mallee is keen to build on the initial fixed wireless development, and to have certainty in planning for future training and services.

Where fixed wireless infrastructure is operational, take-up of the service has been slow. This is possibly in response to the poor promotion of the service and delays in implementation.

Changes to the NBN implementation schedule have impacted on businesses eg plans to relocate and/or upgrade technology have been stymied by delays to the fibre roll-out.

Business training, awareness raising and education programs have been delayed due to the current poor access to technology in some areas eg new ADSL access not available due to lack of local capacity, limited satellite services, etc

Project Benefits

- Increased access to online services eg e-health and education programs
- Improved e-commerce and marketing for regional businesses

Contact

Tony Doyle, CEO Hindmarsh Shire Council

Tammy McDonald, Project Officer Wimmera Development Association

Advocacy Projects – Wimmera Cancer Centre



Project Description

Located at the Wimmera Health Care Group (WHCG), the Wimmera Cancer Centre will service the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. The centre proposes to increase and improve the range and quality of private and public oncology services available in the region. Estimate cost TBA

Issues Identified

The Wimmera Southern Mallee experiences the lowest five year cancer survival rates in Victoria.

Over 3000 oncology services were provided in the current facility in 2014-2015, with many people forced to travel to Ballarat and Melbourne for treatment. The current facility is over extended and compromises patient care.

An increase diagnosis of 13% or 1300 new patients per annum impacts on the availability of regional services to patients.

Planning for the new centre has commenced, with the WHCG Foundation launch of a community fundraising campaign. An allocation of \$1 million from the Federal Government was announced in early 2015.

Strong linkages with the Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Services ensure quality service delivery in the region.

Project Benefits

The benefits of the Wimmera Cancer Centre include:

- Improved regional service availability.
- Increased accessibility for regional patients.
- Opportunity to address regional cancer survival rates.

Contact

Chris Scott, CEO Wimmera Health Care Group

Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council



Advocacy Projects – Grampians Ring Road

Project Description

Located around the perimeter of the Grampians National Park and incorporating the five adjacent Councils, plus Parks Victoria, the Grampians Ring Road proposal supports tourism development and emergency management.

The project consists of upgrading the roads which currently form a perimeter of the national park to provide a defined ring route. These roads are a combination of arterial and local roads and need to be upgraded to a similar standard to allow for private vehicles and caravans to travel safely along the route. Key upgrades include safety improvements, signing of various roads and pavement upgrades and widening on some of the roads. Estimate cost \$8 million

Issues Identified

The Grampians National Park is a major national park within Victoria and is listed on the Australian Heritage List.

The arterial road network does not pass close by the Grampians National Park for the majority of the route. Additionally there is a lack of a safe alternative road routes around the Grampians for vehicles, mainly for the east, north and western sides where the existing routes are unclear, unsafe, not linked and parts are unsealed.

Caravans especially cannot travel over the top of the mountains and generally do not travel along unsealed gravel roads, therefore the number of routes for these vehicles are limited. The proposed route uses local roads where possible to provide a shorter route in close proximity to the Grampians forming a ring around the base.

The poor road connections impact on the number of tourists that are attracted to the region and the enjoyment of the travel for many that do visit the National Park. Additionally, as there are only a few areas that are easily accessible for tourists it results in particular areas being overcrowded and heavily utilised and other areas unexplored.

Project Benefits

The benefits of the Grampians Ring Road project include:

- Increased tourism through the region.
- Increased visitation dispersal.
- Creation of tourism investment opportunities.
- Provides an alternative route around the park.

Contact

Justine Linley, CEO Northern Grampians Shire Council

Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council



Advocacy Projects – Grains Centre of Excellence

Project Description

The Wimmera Southern Mallee has a successful history of international grains research and development. The development of a Grains Centre of Excellence is a unique opportunity to build on the quality of research and investment attraction to date, and to promote of the region internationally.

The Grains Innovation Park in Horsham has a national focus for grains research and development. Recent investment by government and industry (through GRDC) has resulted in significant upgrades to facilities – glasshouses, information technology applications and the establishment of the National Grains Gene Bank. Links to the AgriBio Centre for AgriBioScience at Bundoora form the basis for further technology and research partnerships. International commercial investment by both Bayer CropScience and NuSeed has increased the profile of the region substantially.

The Grains Centre of Excellence will include improvements to research facilities and business incubation opportunities, enhanced information technology infrastructure, as well as the establishment of a regional collaboration hub, to focus on investment attraction and promotion. Estimates Cost TBA

Issues Identified

Grains research is critical to the ongoing growth and diversification of food production, given population projections, export targets and climate variability. Recognition of the research quality, international expertise and its contribution of grains research will enable the centre to increase its profile, thereby increasing investment and attracting additional research opportunities.

The Grains Centre of Excellence will increase collaboration between research institutions, government agencies and commercial research businesses.

Project Benefits

The benefits of the Grains Centre of Excellence include:

- Increased research investment attraction.
- Support for international research personnel.
- Support for small research/agribusiness innovation.
- Opportunity to promote regional specialisation.

Contact

Peter Brown, CEO Horsham Rural City Council

Terry Lewis, DEDJTR

Council Initiatives

Local Government Priority Projects

Local Government has an important responsibility in leading **Innovation**, **Competitiveness**, **Confidence** and **Sustainability** in their communities. Leadership by Local Government is the key to building an environment for development. Through partnerships with government, business and their communities, Councils can influence jobs and investment attraction, export efficiencies and development opportunities across the region.

Whilst the municipalities of West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarriambiack, Horsham and Northern Grampians collaborate on critical regional projects and the advocacy of key regional issues, each Council maintains a program of prioritising economic and community initiatives.





These initiatives focus on building the facilities and amenity of their communities to attract economic activity, investment and skilled people, as well as providing an attractive environment for residents.

The range of initiatives demonstrates the diversity of Wimmera Southern Mallee communities and reflects their different priorities. The balance of strategic and statutory planning activities, agricultural sector and industry support projects, with recreation and community facility upgrades, reflect each Council's vision for their communities.
















Innovation
Confidence **Competitiveness**
Sustainability












HINDMARSH SHIRE COUNCIL

STATUS	Project Name	Benefit	Approximate Project Cost	Approximate Funding Ask
	Hindmarsh Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs including business opportunities for the Aboriginal community Attract visitors supporting growth of existing tourism businesses Leading tourism product that will attract new private investment to the region 	\$3m	\$3m
	Cultural Heritage Centre, Dimboola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs including business opportunities for the Aboriginal community Attract visitors supporting growth of existing tourism Leading tourism product that will attract new tourism investment to the region Education and cultural awareness 	\$1.8m	\$1.35m
	Redevelopment of Dimboola Caravan Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address tourist accommodation shortage, supporting regional economic growth Leveraging Wimmera River as a tourism asset Increase immediate job opportunities in the Dimboola CBD 	\$2.237m	\$1.437m
	Development of Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum and related tourism products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased tourist visitation Attraction of private sector sponsorship 	\$1.6m	\$0.8m
	Nhill Recreation Reserve Clubrooms/Community Pavilion upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access and usage of community facility 	\$1.2m	\$0.9m
	Dimboola Recreation Reserve Clubroom / Community Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access and usage of community facility 	\$1.2m	\$0.9m
	Industrial Subdivision in Dimboola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase economic development capacity Leverage strategic investment opportunities 	\$1m	\$0.75m
	Residential Subdivision in Nhill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address shortage of appropriate housing in Nhill Support employment growth 	\$1m	\$0.75m
	Township Planning Scheme Structure Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure current zonings will meet future economic and social needs 	\$0.04m	\$0.04m
	Hindmarsh Tourism Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of priorities and opportunities 	\$0.1m	\$0.075m








HORSHAM RURAL CITY COUNCIL

Status	Project Name	Benefits	Approximate Project Cost	Approximate Funding Ask
	Children's Hub Horsham North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "One-stop" shop children's hub for Horsham North • Improved service delivery 	\$4.1m	\$2.1m
	Community centre / Indoor sports stadium 2 stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved use of facilities through co-location • Improved access 	\$2m \$4m	\$1m \$2m
	CBD Revitalisation project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved amenity and urban design • Increased pedestrian and bike connectivity, access for all 	\$6m	\$4m
	May Park Enhancement Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved resident and visitor amenities 	\$0.4m	\$0.265m
	Rosebrook Relocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved community facilities 	\$0.24m	\$0.16m
	Community Halls Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of facilities at community halls 	\$0.21m	\$0.14m
	Apex Island/2 nd stage bridge project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of visitor and community facilities 	\$0.55m	\$0.35m
	Laharum – Cameron Oval Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access and usage of community facility 	\$0.8m	\$0.4m
	Haven Community Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New community facility in growth area 	\$0.6m	\$0.3m
	WIFT Industrial Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrate relevant development with transport hub • Promote rail freight options 	\$1.6m	\$0.8m
	WHCG laundry redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability of regional service assured • Avoid job loss 	\$3.6m	\$1.6m DoH \$1m Fed \$1m State
	Bio Fuel – Aquatic Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of biofuel application • Decrease energy costs 	\$0.30m	\$0.15m
	Horsham South Precinct Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future residential development and infill of Horsham South 	\$0.1m	\$0.05m














NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL

Status	Project Name	Benefits	Approximate Project Cost	Approximate Funding Ask
	Stawell Innovation and Employment Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support implementation of Stawell Gold Mine feasibility planning Provide infrastructure to support new industrial estate within current Crocodile Gold freehold land Support attraction of agribusiness/hydroponic enterprises Support establishment of Stage 1 Underground Physics Lab “Dark Matter” Experiment 	\$7m	\$3.5m
	Stawell CBD Revitalisation Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streetscape works will improve linkages, access, safety Promote economic growth in CBD retail and commercial areas 	\$0.8m	\$0.5m
	St Arnaud Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 2 to improve linkages, access, safety Improved business precinct in St Arnaud 	\$0.4m	\$0.3m
	Great Western Township Streetscape and Public Space Renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community amenity Provision of improved tourism information 	\$0.411m	\$0.35m
	Western Stawell Business Precinct Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of master plan Subdivision, infrastructure upgrades and extensions, transport upgrades (rail & road) Assistance for Frews Manufacturing Expansion and development of Pleasant Creek Industrial area. 	\$6m	\$3m over 3 years
	Halls Gap Tourist Resort Town revitalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Master plan Provide public infrastructure, streetscape, public facilities, paths, drainage, underground power etc according to findings of the Halls Gap Master Plan 	\$10m	\$3m over 3 years
	Frewstal Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased exports Creation of 30 jobs 		\$0.5m
	Lord Nelson Park Precinct Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community facilities for a range of social and recreational needs 	\$1m	\$0.25m
	Recreational Lakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved infrastructure for recreational use of lakes and waterways including Walkers Lake, Lake Bellfield, Lake Fyans, Lake Lonsdale 	\$2m	\$1.5m
	Regional skate parks – Stawell and Halls Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved infrastructure for visitors and residents 	\$0.6m	\$0.5m
	Stawell Gift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for national icon event 		\$0.6m

WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

STATUS	Project Name	Benefits	Approximate Project Cost	Approximate Funding Ask
	Strategic Planning Initiative - Rural Living Zone and Township Zone subdivisions at Kaniva and Edenhope, and Rural Living subdivisions for Apsley, Harrow and Goroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased availability of land, particularly rural lifestyle land, to meet the needs of current and new residents Creation of employment opportunities in rural municipality 	\$0.02m	\$0.01m
	Edenhope Hall Development - Edenhope Mechanics Hall and potential multi use community centre development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fit for purpose multi use facility to cater for current day needs of Edenhope and surrounding communities Larger multi use facility to service the southern section of municipality 	\$1.4m	\$0.5m
	C Class Roads – Impact on the Road Network of Changing Freight and Farming Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key priority roads identified Effective and safe movement of agricultural and related produce Address changing freight and farming practices 	\$15.644m	\$13.118m
	Walking tracks and paths in State Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to nature based tourism assets Increase coordination with other tourism activities in West Wimmera 	\$0.5m	\$0.4m
	Agriculture Investment in West Wimmera – identification and investment case for high value agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and promote business investment in intensive agriculture 	\$0.05m	\$0.04m
	Joint Venture opportunities in Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment attraction focussed on relocating high value agriculture from urban fringe 	\$0.03m	\$0.02m
	Kaniva Town Hall upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase usage and access to key community facility 	\$0.3m	\$0.2m

YARRIAMBIACK SHIRE COUNCIL

STATUS	Project Name	Benefit	Approximate Project Cost	Approximate Funding Ask
	Warracknabeal Aerodrome Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support on-going Air Ambulance services Improved access for agricultural spraying services Supports tourism opportunities. 	\$3m	\$2.7m
	Hopetoun Aerodrome Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support on-going Air Ambulance services Improved access for agricultural spraying services Supports tourism opportunities. 	\$2m	\$1.7m
	Minyip – St Arnaud Road - Widening and Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight efficiency 	\$4.5m	\$4m
	Hopetoun Community Recreation Reserve Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community facilities 	\$0.406m	\$0.298m
	Murtoa Water Reuse Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reuse of water providing alternative water resource Reduced cost for recreation facility 	\$0.477m	\$0.38m
	Warracknabeal Stormwater reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reuse of water providing alternative water resource Reduced cost for recreation facility 	\$0.12m	\$0.11m
	Woomelang Community Hub Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide focus for community owned enterprise Multi-functional facility for residents and visitors 	\$0.4m	\$0.3m
	Woomelang Community Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address housing shortage for employment 	\$0.5m	\$0.459m
	Urban Growth Plans Warracknabeal, Hopetoun, Murtoa, Rupanyup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for growth Identify future residential, commercial and industrial needs 	\$0.065m	\$0.048m
	Review of Planning Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable strategic planning for future growth 	\$0.025m	\$0.02m
	Murtoa Swimming Pool Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade of community facilities for residents and visitors 	\$0.2m	\$0.15m
	Minyip Recreation Reserve – upgrade football and netball facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade of community facilities for residents and visitors 	\$0.12m	\$0.08m
	Beulah Bowling Club – Lighting upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade of community facilities for residents and visitors 	\$0.019m	\$0.013m

