



WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE DEVELOPMENT

2023 – 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN



Yangga Dyata – Walking On Country Silo Art, Horsham 2022. Cultural Story BGLC. Artist SMUG (Sam Bates).
Image Courtesy of Horsham Rural City Council

We acknowledge that the Wimmera Southern Mallee Development is on traditional lands, including those lands of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Nations, Dja Dja Wurrung and Gunditjmara Nations, as well as other Traditional Owner groups in Victoria who are not formally recognised.

We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, their communities and cultures, the intrinsic connection to Country, the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in developing a prosperous region.

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OUR STRATEGY

Empowering a sustainable WSM future!

With an eye clearly on the future, the launch of our 2023–2027 strategic plan is intended to shape and guide the region's economic, cultural, social and environmental opportunities over the next decade. Our ambitious plan, developed via extensive stakeholder consultation and evidenced based economic and social trend analysis, delivers our exciting 2032 vision, all dedicated to empowering economic growth and supporting our vibrant communities. The 2023–2027 strategy is an important building block in making the vision for our region become alive.

The plan's guiding strategic pillars and priorities support agriculture and its digitalisation pathway, growth in food processing industries, industry diversification with renewable energy and the gold and critical minerals expanding, our growing tourism sector and assists the Wimmera Southern Region to transition to lowering the region's carbon footprint. It addresses critical regional challenges with access to equitable healthcare and childcare and our dire housing shortage, including fit for purpose housing. Our 2023 actions are clear, they are innovative, and support our nimble vision. Our strategies also complement Regional Partnerships – Wimmera Southern Mallee 30-year Horizon Highway vision, for 90,000 people, a \$9 billion economy and a low emissions economy by 2050¹.

The Wimmera Southern Region has experienced strong economic growth in recent years, with the region estimated to currently deliver \$7.126 billion in annual economic output². The continued impacts of COVID-19 have meant that our community resilience has been forever tested. However, the way our community has rebounded into the recovery phase highlights the strength and vibrancy of our region, placing the Wimmera Southern Region in a strong position to grow our population, reduce our carbon footprint and strengthen financial self-sustainability. This provides a ripe opportunity for the launch of our strategic plan as we set our sights on the region's future growth, removal of livability barriers and building community and economic resilience.

Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSM) has undergone significant changes during 2021 - 2022. WSM has transformed from an Association (Wimmera Development Association) to a Company Limited by Guarantee and through the process has implemented new governance structures and increased organisational resourcing. These changes further support our people and reinforce our commitment and capacity to deliver upon our strategic plan, providing significant community benefit and future regional prosperity.

Engaging stakeholder partnerships with our five local government councils West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarriambiack, Northern Grampians and Horsham municipalities is more important than ever, along with strong Victorian and Australian government relationships and engagement with our vibrant communities, GWM Water, Wimmera CMA, local businesses, and industries. We value our culturally rich first nation's history and collaboration with the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples. Our shared regional vision and the support of our stakeholders is essential and will see our region collectively deliver upon this ambitious plan.

OUR PURPOSE

Lead and advocate for responsible economic growth, ensuring future liveability and prosperity for our regional communities.



OUR STORY

With a proud history as the peak regional economic development organisation since 1991, we're preparing for a bright future as we continue to support economic growth, liveability, and prosperity within our vibrant region.

Our organisation encompasses the Horsham Rural City municipality and Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack local government areas. We collaboratively work with community, state and federal governments to attract new investment, develop existing business, advocate for community and healthcare access and promote the Wimmera's sustainable economic and community development opportunities - both within and outside the region.

We are a vital link between industry and government and have a proven track record of advocating for and attracting new development to the region.

OUR PROVEN REGIONAL CAPABILITY

- Lead collaborative establishment of a fighting fund for Wimmera Mallee pipeline implementation - collective partnership delivered \$688 million in funding.
- Secured business case for construction of Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal (Dooen).
- Delivery of the Housing Blueprint - Innovative housing solutions based on seven core foundations addressing the region's dire housing shortages.
- Strong regional training advocacy - collaborative Longerenong College and Federation University partnerships.
- Supporting population retention and or growth working with migrant communities
- Strategic planning, economic and demographic data collation strategically assisting government natural disaster response planning.
- Delivery of Wimmera Business Awards supporting local business promotion and recognition for innovative product and service provision.
- Leadership Wimmera - Annual facilitation of Victorian government supported Community Leadership program, since 2002
- Critical value delivery for:
 - › Federal government settlement services and Victorian Government skilled migration program delivering valuable regional economic and cultural diversity benefit.
 - › Wimmera Mallee Tourism transformational change
 - › By Five advocacy and local delivery of improved developmental outcomes for Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) children.



OUR VALUES

Our values define our people, culture and guide how we collaborate, lead, advocate and deliver value for our region.



INNOVATIVE - We are curious, we test, challenge and work together across the organisation.



SUPPORTIVE - We are empathetic, we respect and care about our colleagues and stakeholders, and we have genuine conversations.



BRAVE - We are courageous and back ourselves. We are open and honest, and we own our performance.



OUR VISION

Purpose

Lead and advocate for responsible economic growth to ensure the future livability and prosperity of our regional communities.

Vision

By 2032 WSM's programs have facilitated population growth in the WSM region by 7,000 people, assisted our region's communities and businesses in lowering their carbon emissions to reach legislated targets, and are financially self-sustaining.



STRATEGIC PILLARS AND PRIORITIES



Enable Growth

Identify and empower projects that enable growth and capture value for the region.

- Leverage the electrification of our region and the nation to ensure our community benefits.
- Influence the growth of the region's digital agriculture and food processing capability.
- Have ongoing employment of over 300 Full time equivalent in renewable energy and minerals sector in the WSM region.
- In 2027 Wimmera Mallee Tourism has growth in Visitor expenditure, Visitor nights and Direct jobs servicing the tourism sector.



Remove Barriers

Enable and support projects that remove barriers to economic growth.

- All WSM communities have accessible childcare.
- All children are able to access consistent, quality allied health (specifically speech and occupational therapy) in the WSM region.
- The 2026 census shows population growth of at least 1% annually since 2021
- Over 1000 new homes are built in the region by 2027.



Build Resilience & Sustainability

Foster a culture of problem-solving within the region and local communities.

- WSM provides the community evidence to lead and support advocacy for the region.
- Building leadership capability of the community and upskill the current and next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs within the community.
- Create opportunities to commercialise technology, services and learnings.

OUR WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE

By 2032 WSM's programs will have facilitated population growth in the region by 7,000 people, assisted our region's communities and businesses in lowering their carbon footprint, and are financially self-sustaining.

54,528



25,056



\$7,126 billion



The Wimmera Southern Mallee Region boasts vibrant communities, a buoyant agricultural industry operating across some of Australia's most fertile soils, and emerging critical mineral and renewable energy industries. These operate amongst striking natural landscapes and landmarks including the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park and renowned silo art trail. Our region is supported by thriving businesses and services, affordable housing and abundant employment, the opportunities are endless.

The Wimmera Southern Mallee is home to 54,528 people² across 33,900 sq km³, 22 towns and two major centres, Horsham and Stawell. Our natural landscape is uniquely Australian characterised by the black soil plains, the Grampians (Gariwerd) Mountain range, Mt Arapiles (Dyurrite), the Big and Little Deserts, iconic natural lake systems and the Wimmera River. A thriving economic region delivering \$7,126 billion⁴ in economic output with Agriculture the lifeblood of the region. Critical Mineral sands and renewable energy industries are expanding the region's industry base, and services are emerging to support these growing industries. Our communities are the social fabric of the region and we're focused on harnessing the region's full potential into the future.

DIVERSE & HIGHLY SUSTAINABLE FARMING SYSTEMS

Over 77% of the region's land is used for medium-low rainfall primary production⁵. Our extremely fertile soils support rotationally diverse farming systems with pulses an integral component. The region is well-known as Australia's largest red lentil producer and agriculture is the WSM's largest employer providing 5,047 jobs⁶. Digital agriculture and use of real-time data offers agriculture within the WSM significant future efficiency opportunities. Additionally, the delivery of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline is one of Australia's largest water infrastructure projects⁷. It provides 7,000 rural customers⁸ with reliable stock, business, and household water access, a significant advantage for our region's farmers and communities in buffering water availability challenges during periods of drought.

A LOWER EMISSIONS FUTURE

Supporting our highly efficient agricultural industry to meet legislated emissions targets provides opportunities in alignment with farm productivity increases. Farmers and the agriculture industry have a very important role to play in reducing emissions, but they need support, data-based evidence, and practical expertise to assist the transition journey⁹.

ICONIC LANDSCAPES & LANDMARKS

Our region features some of Victoria's most recognised natural landscapes. Gariwerd (Grampians National Park) is well-known for its world-famous hiking trails and its heritage listed Aboriginal heritage¹⁰. While Dyurrite (Mt Arapiles –Tooan State Park), rising stunningly from the Wimmera plains. Our spectacular Little and Big Deserts provide striking contrast to our iconic lakes, including Dimboola's Pink Lake, and our epic silo art trail, spanning across 200km, providing an opportunity to explore a region that changes its colours from season to season, from sunrise to sunset. A region that offers adventure in a different light¹¹.

EMERGING RESOURCE INDUSTRIES

The Wimmera Southern Mallee is part of the Murray Basin mineral sands deposits, one of the world's largest critical mineral deposits. It is estimated that the region could service over 15% of the world's demand for some of the priority critical minerals for the next 40 years¹². The Wimmera Regional mining projects have the capacity to broaden the region's industry base and provide significant, whilst skill diverse employment opportunities. Gold Mining is also a staple of the region with the Stawell Mine producing approximately 10% of Victoria's gold production.

SUSTAINABLY POWERING OUR FUTURE

The Western Victoria Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), located within the WSM is well geographically and topographically positioned to support Australia's renewable energy revolution¹³. The WSM has some of the best and most abundant solar and wind energy resources in the country¹⁴. The 99 turbine Murra Warra Wind Farm is the region's first renewable energy project, chosen for its good wind resource, proximity to transport links and on-site connection to the grid network¹⁵. The Western Victoria REZ has more than 700 MW of solar generation projects and 2.3 GW of wind generation projects in the pipeline alone¹⁶. These represent over \$6.16 billion in potential direct capital investment, 1,737 direct construction jobs and 237 ongoing roles¹⁷. Electricity from these projects could supply more than 1.5 million homes across Victoria¹⁸. Substantial future opportunities exist for locally generated renewable energy which will support and provide a competitive advantage for new industries, particularly local and agricultural product manufacturing¹⁹.

COMMUNITIES LIKE NO OTHER & AFFORDABLE LIVING

Our WSM communities are like no other! Supporting our valued community members and volunteer bases is integral to the social fabric of our region. Affordable large quarteracre blocks and traditional three-to-four-bedroom family homes form the basis of our Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) housing, with expanding villa and townhouse home options within towns. Diversification of our housing stock is a priority ensuring community members have sufficient access to a range of housing types and styles. Our region has abundant sporting facilities, offers education, retail and healthcare access with growing arts and cultural precincts supporting regional liveability. We are passionate about equitable access to health and education services and have a network of skilled professionals that specialise in the art of being adaptable to meet the health and wellbeing needs of our rural communities. A priority is to improve our regions poor health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly related to early years, where up to one in three children are presenting at school developmentally vulnerable²⁰.



OUR 2027 STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

Realisation of our 2027 strategic plan depends on effectively leading and advocating for our priorities across three critical pillars.

1. ENABLE GROWTH	2. REMOVE BARRIERS	3. BUILD RESILIENCE
<p>Identify and empower projects enabling growth and regional value capture.</p> <p>OUR PRIORITIES:</p> <p>LEVERAGE – Leverage the electrification of our region and the nation to ensure our community benefits</p> <p>GROW – digital agriculture and food processing capability.</p> <p>PARTNER – with community to enhance our regional natural capital and local businesses.</p>	<p>Enable and support projects that remove barriers to economic growth and inhibit equitable health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>OUR PRIORITIES:</p> <p>IMPLEMENT – cross-sector initiatives that enable equitable health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>DEVELOP – a population growth strategy.</p> <p>IMPLEMENT – the Housing Blueprint</p>	<p>Foster a sustainable and problem-solving culture within the region and local communities.</p> <p>OUR PRIORITIES:</p> <p>LEAD – the region’s evidence-based government and commercial advocacy agenda</p> <p>BUILD – the community’s next generation of entrepreneurs and leaders.</p> <p>CREATE – opportunities to commercialise technology, services, and learnings.</p>



OUR STRATEGY

PILLAR 1. ENABLE GROWTH

Identify and empower projects enabling growth and regional value capture.

KEY 2027 TARGETS

1. Demonstrable Community benefits from transition to electrification

2. Increase regional food and agricultural manufacturing and processing

3. Mineral sands and Renewable energy are major regional employers

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

THE OPPORTUNITIES

LEVERAGE

ELECTRIFICATION OF OUR REGION

- Community benefit from the electrification of our region exceeds expectation with the intent that businesses will transition faster than legislative targets.
- Job growth and Community Benefits from the investment in Transmission, Renewable Energy, Critical Minerals.
- Establish regional priorities that will facilitate pathways for local agricultural production to lower emissions whilst still growing output by 2050.
- 10 communities planning or delivering self-sustaining energy systems projects.
- WSM Development LTD is a net zero operation.

GROW

DIGITAL AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING CAPABILITY

- Increase regional food manufacturers/processing investment within the region with existing businesses growing to six.
- WSM local food produce available in 75% of the region's supermarkets.
- Support the development of infrastructure to support digital agriculture opportunities to be realised ie. Network coverage.

PARTNER

WITH COMMUNITY TO ENHANCE OUR REGIONAL NATURAL CAPITAL AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

- Renewable energy projects established offer regional income diversity and employment opportunities for 400 people.
- Mineral sands is a major regional employer.
- Consistent year on year visitor growth within the region.
- Support and partner with Indigenous businesses to create opportunities in the region identified through self-determination.
- Work with community to leverage our natural assets, environment, and local businesses to enhance the visitor experience.

PILLAR 2. REMOVE BARRIERS

Enable and support projects that remove barriers to economic growth and inhibit equitable health and wellbeing outcomes.

KEY 2027 TARGETS

1. Cross-sectoral initiatives enabling equitable health outcomes
2. Grow the population by 7,000 people
3. Suitable Housing to accommodate the workforce and population growth

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

THE OPPORTUNITIES

IMPLEMENT

CROSS-SECTOR INITIATIVES THAT ENABLE
EQUITABLE HEALTH AND WELLBEING
OUTCOMES

An early year's strategy delivering improved outcomes for children.

Enhance the health and wellbeing needs of children in the WSM region through improved access to quality services and strengthening community conditions known to enable children and families to thrive by:

- All WSM communities have accessible childcare.
- Support rural health services in meeting the maternity capability framework and identify further opportunities to improve quality care for women, children and families across the support spectrum.
- Advocate for sustainable funding and policy reforms that increase service accessibility across the WSM specifically childcare, primary care and paediatrics.

DEVELOP

A POPULATION GROWTH STRATEGY

- Align the recruitment of highly skilled workers to fill employment gaps within the region.
- Identify the role WSM, all levels of Government and corporate partners can contribute to facilitating growth.
- Identify new and innovative ways to improve workforce growth, attraction, retention, and employer readiness across the region.
- Enable and accelerates migration (both domestically and internationally) and settlement.

IMPLEMENT

THE HOUSING BLUEPRINT

- Promote short-term housing opportunities to shift project employees and the tourism industry.
- Wimmera Housing Innovations Project (WHIP) is involved in facilitating 30% of housing commencements.
- Aim for ≤50% of homes with three or more bedrooms to have ≤2 people living in them.

PILLAR 3. BUILD RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

Foster a sustainable and problem-solving culture within the region and local communities.

KEY 2027 TARGETS

1. Increased investment into the region

2. Industry supported leadership training

3. Increased WSM revenues & investments

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

THE OPPORTUNITIES

LEAD

THE REGION'S EVIDENCE BASED
GOVERNMENT AND COMMERCIAL
ADVOCACY AGENDA

- Process development for collation of robust data analysis, evaluation, and presentation to guide strategic delivery.
- Community leaders utilise WSM as their first point of contact for regional advocacy
- Build the WSM's innovation brand through key major 'shovel ready' investment opportunities

BUILD

THE COMMUNITY'S NEXT GENERATION OF
ENTREPRENEURS AND LEADERS

- Building and developing regional leadership and governance capacity through place-based development programs in partnership with nationally recognised facilitators and mentors.
- Successful incubation of start-up's, including some youth based, food-based entrepreneurs, and supported establishment of social enterprises.
- The WSM is nationally known as possessing a successful wealth building culture.

CREATE

OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMERCIALISE
TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES AND LEARNINGS

- Lead and support adaptation initiatives reducing economic risks from climate change, recognising our region's ageing population within project strategies.
- Establish a WSM Regional Innovation Group - identify five opportunities and nurture to the point of investment readiness.
- Ensure the region has effective governance models in place for efficient delivery of essential services and advocacy which involve multiple government agencies and private sector support including:
 - o ByFive
 - o Wimmera Mallee Tourism
 - o Settlement Services

OUR PLANNED DELIVERY

OUR PLANNED DELIVERY

Our unified strategic plan is nimble and ambitious and has been collaboratively developed through consultation with our valued stakeholders. Implementation and delivery require regional dedication and cooperation and together we will secure a prosperous future for our region.

Our plan defines and delivers cohesive regional priorities and critical advocacy targets to ensure future liveability and enhanced economic growth. Our strategic pillars and priorities have been co-designed with a local lens, are inclusive, diverse and are aimed at supporting all community members and our communities. We value connection to country and look forward to continued collaboration with our local first nations organisations as we deliver this plan.

Accountability is at the heart of our plan's success. We will closely monitor annual deliverables against the 5-year strategy and communicate outcomes broadly. Assessing annual progress in alignment with the strategic vision enables us to refine our deliverables and ensure all potential opportunities are captured, paving the way for the exciting future which lies ahead for our region.

OUR COLLABORATORS



FOR MORE INFORMATION

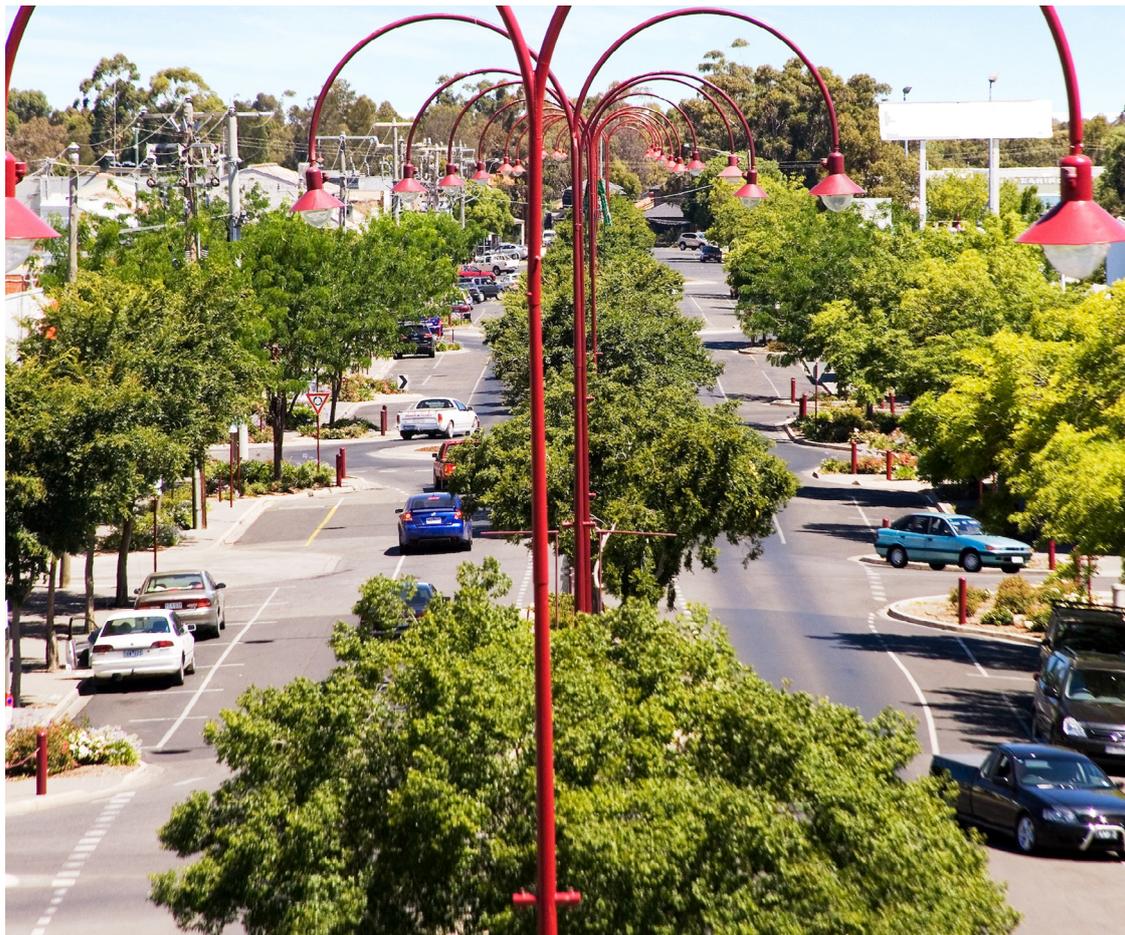
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