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# COVID -19

## Recovery & Revitalisation Strategy



PLANS



STRATEGIES



GROWTH

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This community-led strategy will guide the investment of resources by local, state and federal governments to drive a coordinated, collaborative, and sustainable recovery in the region.

01

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) COVID-19 Recovery and Revitalisation Strategy (the strategy) is to review existing regional plans and priority projects through the lens of the new world ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic, and outline a coordinated, responsive path ahead for the region.

An analysis of existing regional reviews, plans and strategies that identify the challenges, strengths, opportunities and priorities for the region, provide a starting point for this strategy. A resource developed by Regional Development Victoria is drawn upon for evidence-based insight to building resilience in the region. A discussion of the impact of COVID-19 in the region is provided, along with the state and federal governments' indicated recovery plans relevant to the region.

Drawing on the existing information, overlaid with critical insights provided by the local stakeholder COVID Community Advisory Committee (CCAC), a strategy for recovery and revitalisation of the region is set out. The

strategy identifies those sectors and projects that will assist the region to recover from the impact of the pandemic and the measures put in place to protect the lives of people in the region. The identified areas have been mapped to the key sectors identified for the region: infrastructure and transport; economic development; education and training; health and wellbeing; tourism, arts and culture; sport and recreation; and environment, energy and water.

Immediate projects and programs will respond to the economic and social crisis challenges being faced by communities in the region.

Longer-term revitalisation projects will build resilience in the region and reduce the vulnerabilities and challenges that the region faces, to ensure a sustainable future.

A community-led response to recovery and revitalisation in the WSM will enable the community to take ownership of their recovery journey and their future.

**For the WSM to transition to a dynamic contemporary society, it will need to diversify its economy; improve service delivery and systems; and reduce its dependence on government. This can be achieved through:**



Increased investment in critical infrastructure such as housing, digital access and energy, as well as integrated town and regional planning.



Diversifying the economy through value adding to existing regional strengths such as building on the agricultural industry to develop food manufacturing, increasing tourism product to enhance the existing visitor economy, and the potential mining resources sector.



Building capacity through development of skills, training and a knowledge economy. Key projects include the attraction of health professionals, increased apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities, improved financial literacy of sporting clubs, and governance training in key organisations across the region.



## Vision – A dynamic and contemporary society

### STRATEGY

- A more resilient local economy
- More cost efficient and effective service delivery
- Reduce household and societal dependence on government

### CHALLENGES

- Inability to attract a fair share of investment in critical community infrastructure stymies efforts to improve liveability in the region
- The region is often unprepared or unwilling to take up opportunities resulting in reliance on traditional industries and ways of operating
- Inflexible and often overly complex service delivery and administration impacts on the availability and suitability of those services

SECTORS	Health and wellbeing	Tourism, arts and culture	Sport and recreation	Environment, water and energy	Infrastructure and transport	Economic development	Education and training
PRIORITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attraction and retention of health professionals</li> <li>▪ Paediatric health</li> <li>▪ Mental health services</li> <li>▪ Community strategy</li> <li>▪ Aging Population</li> <li>▪ Family Violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tourism product development</li> <li>▪ Community events</li> <li>▪ Cultural heritage and indigenous tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community sports governance</li> <li>▪ Youth sports development</li> <li>▪ Recreational waterways strategy</li> <li>▪ Regional walking trails development</li> <li>▪ Regional cycling trails development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Water security</li> <li>▪ Affordable, reliable and sustainable energy</li> <li>▪ Enhancing environmental assets</li> <li>▪ Adaption to climate change</li> <li>▪ Roadmap to zero emissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional housing and accommodation strategy</li> <li>▪ Regional infrastructure strategy</li> <li>▪ Digital connectivity</li> <li>▪ Integrated town planning</li> <li>▪ Sustainable local Government</li> <li>▪ Investment in electricity grid and supply</li> <li>▪ Regional transport strategy</li> <li>▪ Mobile phone global roaming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Value adding to agriculture</li> <li>▪ Growing manufacturing (particularly food manufacturing)</li> <li>▪ Migrant attraction and support</li> <li>▪ Economic diversification (inc. mining)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workforce skills and readiness</li> <li>▪ Increased investment in local education delivery</li> <li>▪ Leadership development</li> <li>▪ Lifelong learning</li> </ul>
PRIORITY PROGRAMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Victorian Grains Innovation Hub</li> <li>▪ ByFive Project</li> <li>▪ Settlement services</li> <li>▪ CALD driving regional growth (CALDRG)</li> <li>▪ Leadership Wimmera</li> <li>▪ Roadmap to zero emissions implementation</li> </ul>						
PRIORITY PROJECTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attraction and retention of professionals strategy</li> <li>▪ Horsham Hospital upgrade</li> <li>▪ Telehealth expansion including ByFive paediatric telehealth</li> <li>▪ Mental health services</li> <li>▪ Family Violence Orange Door</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increasing tourism product</li> <li>▪ Regional events calendar</li> <li>▪ ‘Unearth Amazing’ Campaign</li> <li>▪ BGLCAC Cultural Centre and native foods project</li> <li>▪ Halls Gap development</li> <li>▪ Wildlife Art Museum of Australia (WAMA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Governance and finance training of clubs (AFL program)</li> <li>▪ Integrated community facility planning</li> <li>▪ Sporting events attraction</li> <li>▪ Youth sport development strategy</li> <li>▪ Horsham Motorcross events</li> <li>▪ Great Lakes of the Grampians Strategy</li> <li>▪ Attraction and retention of Stawell Gift sponsorship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Western Victorian transmission upgrade (500kV) and stage 2 and 3</li> <li>▪ Community energy</li> <li>▪ Regional Purchase Power Agreements</li> <li>▪ East Grampians and WW Water pipeline</li> <li>▪ Grampians Regional Energy Implementation Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WSM Digital Plan implementation</li> <li>▪ Strategy and investment for increased housing at all market points</li> <li>▪ Roads upgrades – council capital planning and shared services</li> <li>▪ WIFT upgrade</li> <li>▪ Murray Basin Rail completion</li> <li>▪ Quality accommodation for tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Food manufacturing and processing industry development</li> <li>▪ Business expansion support and attraction strategy</li> <li>▪ Community wealth building strategy</li> <li>▪ Migrant and refugee attraction strategy</li> <li>▪ HR network</li> <li>▪ Overcoming Energy Poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apprenticeship and training strategy</li> <li>▪ ByFive early years innovation hub</li> <li>▪ Warracknabeal Education Precinct integrated service delivery</li> <li>▪ AgTIDE implementation</li> <li>▪ Agricultural Drought Resilience Hub</li> <li>▪ Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre (APRETC)</li> </ul>

The purpose of the Wimmera Southern Mallee COVID-19 Recovery and Revitalisation Strategy is to review existing regional plans and priority projects through the lens of the new world ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic, and outline a coordinated, responsive path ahead for the region.

02

# BACKGROUND

**The aim is to identify those sectors and projects that will assist the WSM to recover from the shock of COVID-19 and the measures put in place to protect the lives of people in the region, and to identify the longer-term revitalisation projects that will build resilience in the region and reduce the vulnerabilities and challenges that the region is facing.**

The Wimmera Southern Mallee's Gross Regional Product (GRP) is estimated at \$3.601 billion. The Wimmera Southern Mallee represents 25.4% of Grampians region GRP of \$14.152 billion, 0.8% of Victoria's Gross State Product (GSP) of \$454.590 billion, and 0.2% of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$1.947 trillion.<sup>1</sup>

The COVID-19 Community Advisory Committee (CCAC) comprises 10 community members, representing a cross section of the region, including geographic, skill, gender and age diversity. COVID response groups already established in Victoria include representatives mainly from government service delivery agencies. This community-led committee ensures that key community and business sectors are involved in planning for recovery and revitalisation in region, and that businesses and individuals do not suffer from 'consultation fatigue' with multiple groups trying to access information from the ground.

**... to identify the longer-term revitalisation projects that will build resilience in the region...**

1. [www.wda.org.au](http://www.wda.org.au)





THE WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE'S  
**GROSS REGIONAL  
PRODUCT (GRP)  
IS ESTIMATED AT**

**\$3.601**  
**BILLION**

Understanding the

# WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE REGION



A number of key reports about the Wimmera Southern Mallee region have been published in recent years including: **The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Profile<sup>2</sup>** (Infrastructure Victoria, March 2019); **Addressing Regional Disadvantage Wimmera Southern Mallee Factsheet<sup>3</sup>** (Infrastructure Victoria, 2019); and **Wimmera Development Association Strategic Plan<sup>4</sup> 2017 – 2021**.

— Drawing on those reports, following is a summary of the challenges faced by the region and the strengths and attributes that will be central to the region's post COVID-19 recovery.



## Regional Challenges

- **Structural change in agriculture** (28% GVA in the region – 62% in West Wimmera LGA, 42% in Yarriambiack and Hindmarsh LGAs) including becoming more skill and capital-intensive, changes to systems and practices, and responding to climate change impacts.
- **Employment in agriculture is forecast to continue to decline.**
- Ensuring that expected diversification into intensive agriculture (derived from Wimmera Mallee Pipeline opportunities) and tourism are sustainable and of sufficient economic impact to support the region's future needs.
- **Skills and labour shortages** to meet emerging areas of demand.
- Access to the latest **communications technology**, broadband and satellite positioning systems, in order to stay connected to community services and the global economy. Household access to the internet is poor across the region, as an example almost a third of households in St Arnaud do not have internet.
- **Climate change** represents a risk to social wellbeing and cohesion, public health from higher temperatures, uncertainty about water resource availability, degradation of environmental amenity assets, and a potential increase in the frequency and severity of natural hazards such as bushfires, droughts and floods.
- **Ageing and declining population** outside of Horsham.
- **Agglomeration of services** to regional hubs and meeting threshold demand levels to justify provision of **essential and lifestyle services** and infrastructure, particularly to meet the needs of the region's ageing population.
- The Aboriginal population across Victoria is **growing rapidly creating significant demand pressures** on Aboriginal and other services in the region.<sup>5</sup> Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) play a central role in the provision of services and the promotion and protection of Aboriginal people's rights. This includes health, housing, law and justice, child and family welfare, child development, education, land management and heritage protection services and assistance.
- **High relative disadvantage** in Horsham, all rural towns and south east areas including Northern Grampians and Yarriambiack, which are the 3rd and 4th most disadvantaged LGAs in Victoria. Small towns across the region are experiencing disadvantage (eg Nhill, Rainbow, Dimboola, Kaniva, Halls Gap, Stawell, St Arnaud, Hopetown, Murtoa, Warracknabeal). The proportion of people on a disability pension living in these towns is much higher than the state average. For example, Yarriambiack has three times the state average of people receiving the disability pension.
- A range of indicators also show **poor health outcomes** in most of these towns.
- Across most towns approximately **one third of school leavers aged under 30 years did not complete year 12.**

2. <https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Aither-Wimmera-Southern-Mallee-Regional-Profile-March-2019.pdf>

3. [https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Addressing-Regional-Disadvantage\\_Wimmera-Southern-Mallee-Fact-Sheet.pdf](https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Addressing-Regional-Disadvantage_Wimmera-Southern-Mallee-Fact-Sheet.pdf)

4. <https://www.wda.org.au/resources/file/Regional%20Strategic%20Planning/WDA%20Strategic%20Plan%202017-2021.pdf>

5. [https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Addressing-Regional-Disadvantage\\_Wimmera-Southern-Mallee-Fact-Sheet.pdf](https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Addressing-Regional-Disadvantage_Wimmera-Southern-Mallee-Fact-Sheet.pdf)





## REGIONAL STRENGTHS

- **Agriculture** (28%), healthcare (11%) and manufacturing (10%) comprise 49% of GRP with agriculture being of regional importance (with LQ of 6.5).
- Relative **advantage in the farmlands**, outside of the rural towns, except in the south east areas.
- Natural resources including **solar, geothermal and wind energy; gold and mineral sands** (including 75% of Victoria's deposits by area).
- Environmental assets include **Grampians National Park, Little Desert National Park and the Silo Art Trail**.



- Important **freight transport infrastructure** supports the regional economy including the Western Highway, Henty Highway and the western rail line.
- **Horsham** provides economic diversity, services and employment opportunities to the region, and supports low to moderate **population growth**, including being the only LGA where the working age population is projected to increase.
- Projected **employment growth in healthcare and social assistance**.
- **Lower unemployment** than the Victorian average in rural areas.
- Higher levels of **self-reported wellbeing** than the Victorian average.



## Contributors to disadvantage<sup>6</sup>

- The region has some of the **poorest results for early childhood development** benchmarks in Victoria, with a lack of access to early years programs.
- **Digital infrastructure** is not equally provided across the region. Outside Horsham the access, speed and cost of internet is often poor.
- The lack of access to, and frequency of, **public transport** in Western Victoria is contributing to negative health and safety outcomes, social isolation, limited access for young people to health and welfare services, and compromises economic development in rural areas.
- **Small rural councils** are unable to provide adequate services or maintain infrastructure to adequate standards due to **declining populations and ageing infrastructure**.
- Households have limited access to **affordable energy**, with energy sector growth limited by grid capacity, regulation and poorly integrated development.
- The region does not have specific **housing for families escaping family violence**, transitional and crisis housing is fully occupied and does not meet the essential needs for protection.
- The **lack of social housing** in the region means pathways to sustainable and long-term housing for women and families are absent.

“Digital infrastructure is not equally provided across the region. Outside Horsham the access, speed and cost of internet is often poor.”

6. [https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Addressing-Regional-Disadvantage\\_Wimmera-Southern-Mallee-Fact-Sheet.pdf](https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Addressing-Regional-Disadvantage_Wimmera-Southern-Mallee-Fact-Sheet.pdf)



# EXISTING PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH IN THE REGION



## GOALS FOR REGIONAL GROWTH

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership Outcomes Roadmap<sup>7</sup> set out the following long-term outcomes that the WSM Regional Partnership is striving to achieve (as at May 2019).

**Economic Diversification** A vibrant economy with a thriving, innovative agriculture industry and emerging tourism opportunities

**Telecommunications** High quality, reliable digital connectivity and services

**Connectivity** Public transport and safe, accessible and connected roads and rail

**Strong Local Government** Sustainable, connected and change-ready local government

**Energy** Affordable, sustainable and renewable energy

**Rural and Remote Funding** Focused funding that drives infrastructure investment and business growth in rural areas

**Early Years** Equity of access to early years education and care

**Family Violence** WSM Families are safe and supported

**Workforce** A high performing, valued and empowered workforce

**Health and Education** Quality health and education for all

**Youth Disadvantage** Young people in WSM reach their full potential



### TOURISM GROWTH



### EXTENDED FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS



### HOUSING CHOICE AND DENSITY



### MOBILE AND DATA CONNECTIVITY

## ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR LONG-TERM GROWTH

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan<sup>8</sup> published in 2014 identified a series of actions to encourage growth in the region over the next 30 years. Some of these projects have since commenced.

- Greater diversity of **housing** choice and density, particularly around Horsham and district towns in locations close to shops, transport networks and other community services and facilities
- Dooen promoted as a **freight and logistics** gateway
- Protection of agriculture from inappropriate urban development and **land use** change
- Establishment of **intensive agriculture** uses in appropriate areas
- **Halls Gap** promoted as a major regional tourism asset
- Provision of **flexible public transport** options, including bus services between towns and rural communities on demand as well as increased rail capacity
- Development of more locally generated **renewable energy** solutions
- Improved **community facilities, services and networks** that enhance and promote liveability in small towns facing economic and population challenges
- Protection and enhancement of **environmental and cultural heritage** assets

## ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR MEDIUM-TERM GROWTH

The Wimmera Development Association Strategic Plan<sup>9</sup> 2017 – 2021 has a medium-term focus and identifies key actions by sector as follows to improve jobs and industry; infrastructure and transport; community infrastructure and liveability; visitation; and human capital, in the region. The plan reflects the longer-term regional growth plan priorities outlined above and builds upon many of the actions.

- **Agriculture** including Grains Network Centre of Excellence (training, agri-technologies, research, niche and mainstream product development and tourism) and agricultural diversification to complement broadacre cropping, which can be enhanced by water security.
- **Communications** including mobile and data connectivity improvements.
- **Education** including early childhood and vocational education and training, particularly in the key sectors of agriculture (and agricultural value adding), health and social services, mining, and tourism.
- **Energy** adoption of renewable energy and support for a new interconnector in the grid between Vic and SA.
- **Health** planning for healthy and ageing population, including for adequate and flexible aged care services (in-home, active retirement, and institutional) and personal and community services that support lifestyle choices, such as fitness and health services, continuing viability of the region's sporting and recreation clubs, diet and nutrition specialists, mental health, etc.
- **Settlement** management through the Settlement Services Grant function to support humanitarian entrants and eligible migrants including provision of English language classes, supported playgroups, homework clubs and knowing legal rights services.
- **Tourism** growth through growing number of visitors and increased length of stay by offering diverse and high-quality experiences supported by a destination management plan and tourism organisation.
- **Transport** including extended freight and logistics facilities, roads recovery funding, and improved passenger rail connectivity.
- **Mining** industry liaison.
- **Community infrastructure** to improve liveability and social housing options.

7. <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/wimmera-southern-mallee/priorities>

8. <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/regional-growth-plans/wimmera-southern-mallee-regional-growth-plan>

9. <https://www.wda.org.au/resources/file/Regional%20Strategic%20Planning/WDA%20Strategic%20Plan%202017-2021.pdf>

# Priorities identified by Councils

The WSM region incorporates five local councils, Hindmarsh Shire Council, Horsham Rural City Council, Northern Grampians Shire Council, West Wimmera Shire Council and Yarriambiack Shire Council.



Upon review of the current plans for the five councils, many of the priorities and actions identified are unsurprisingly consistent across all or most of the councils, and reflect the medium and long term actions identified above in other plans.

Themes include:

- **Hindmarsh:** liveability, built and natural environment, economy
- **Horsham:** community and cultural development, economy, asset management, governance, natural and built environment
- **Northern Grampians:** economy, community and environment, emergency management, technology, waste, assets, red tape reduction, financial sustainability
- **West Wimmera:** organisation performance, partnerships, community infrastructure, economic development, thriving communities, health and wellbeing, natural environment
- **Yarriambiack:** good governance, a place to live and grow, community and environment, economy, health and wellbeing

Drawing on the plans, consistent priorities according to local councils in the WSM are:

- **Infrastructure and transport** including land use and urban planning, multi-use community facilities and assets, re-development of street spaces and public spaces, housing supply, roads, digital connectivity and transport options
- **Economic development** including diversification and promotion of regional living
- **Health and wellbeing** including health education, family violence reduction, emergency response, 'sense' of community and engagement, accessible services and facilities, opportunities for young people, support for aging population, and early years services
- **Tourism, arts and culture** including tourism trails, indigenous tourism, eco-tourism, arts and cultural activities, and events
- **Sport and recreation** including recreation facilities, facilities at lakes and waterways, and cycling and walking paths
- **Environment, water and energy** including renewable energy, water security, and waste management





## Current projects and programs for regional growth

Through the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership a number of key projects<sup>10</sup> promoting regional growth and addressing regional challenges and disadvantage are now up and running.

**Education: ByFive** improving early years services in the region including through research and training.

**Communications: New mobile blackspot towers** six new towers are to be built at Bellfield, Langkoop, Telopea Downs, Toolondo, Yanac and on the Grampians Road (Halls Gap to Dunkeld) and a digital plan has been developed for the region.

**Agriculture: AgTIDE** digitally enabled AgTech demonstration farm at Longerenong College near Horsham, and the AgTIDE education and training package, a collaboration with Birchip Cropping Group, Skillinvest, Federation University and the University of Melbourne.

**Health: Domestic and family violence response** secured more than \$1.3 million in Victorian Government funding in 2018/19 in part to purchase properties across the region which can be used as emergency accommodation.

**Tourism projects: Destination Management Plan** progressing the Grampians region cycle brand, and supporting investment in the first section of the Wimmera River Discovery Trail.

**Local Government: Rural councils transformation program** \$5 million to deliver a suite of regionally shared finance and payroll services.

**The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership also identified Workforce Attraction, Retention and Training, and Health Services Coordination as key longer-term focus areas.**

A workforce attraction and retention workshop was held in November 2019 with key community stakeholders. The group identified a number of solution ideas including the following particularly relevant actions:

- Ensure career teachers are aware of regional job opportunities, create a new work experience model and engage students before year 9
- Formalised way for local business to advertise jobs, particularly targeting partners
- Retain current employees through improving community pride and confidence
- Evidence-based learning through exit surveys to understand the problem
- Improve training quality and accessibility in region that matches skills needed
- Marketing our region through promoting benefits and lifestyle (linked to tourism)
- Improve liveability through assets and community engagement
- Plan for the future by improving equity of infrastructure to reduce regional disadvantage
- Social infrastructure and incentives to live in the region
- Leverage regional strengths



10. <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/wimmera-southern-mallee/priorities>

Guiding principles for

# RESPONDING TO ECONOMIC SHOCK



Regional Development Victoria compiled a paper titled 'Strengthening resilience in regional Victoria' in 2018.

While the paper focuses on government structural adjustment interventions in response to economic shocks, the resilience principles identified could not be more pertinent for planning the response to COVID-19.

The paper posits a 'response and recovery' focus on economic outcomes in isolation of community

and environment does little to build capacity and resilience. Building community capacity in the long-term will mitigate the impacts of future economic shocks, creating a more resilient community and region.

The resilience principles outlined in the paper provide a good starting point for considering the longer-term focus areas for revitalisation of the WSM.



**BUILDING RESILIENCE WITHIN THE REGION TO EXTERNAL SHOCKS MEANS THE REGION WILL BE BETTER PLACED TO RECOVER IN THE FUTURE FROM UNEXPECTED CHANGE.**

# Resilience principles

1. **Develop a complexity perspective** by understanding the interactions between social, economic and environmental factors.
2. **Govern for change** by being flexible, adaptable, responsive and collaborative.
3. **Foster cohesion, self-organisation and local responsibility** to prepare for and recover from shocks more easily and capitalise on opportunities.
4. **Design for flexibility** including designing institutions, processes, programs, projects, and infrastructure to be flexible and responsive.
5. **Manage connectivity** including flows of resources, knowledge and information, social norms and emotions and genetic material.
6. **Value, retain and build diversity and redundancy** to provide options and potential for different responses under stress.
7. **Orientate towards slow variables, leverage and tipping points** because while shocks and natural disasters grab our attention and of course require immediate focus to assist people to recover, it is the slow background changes that make systems more or less vulnerable.
8. **Learn for change** because hindsight and past experience are of limited value in times of high uncertainty and change, a 'learning-by-doing' approach whereby small-scale innovations are developed, tested, refined, spread and institutionalised becomes a critical way of moving toward desired futures.



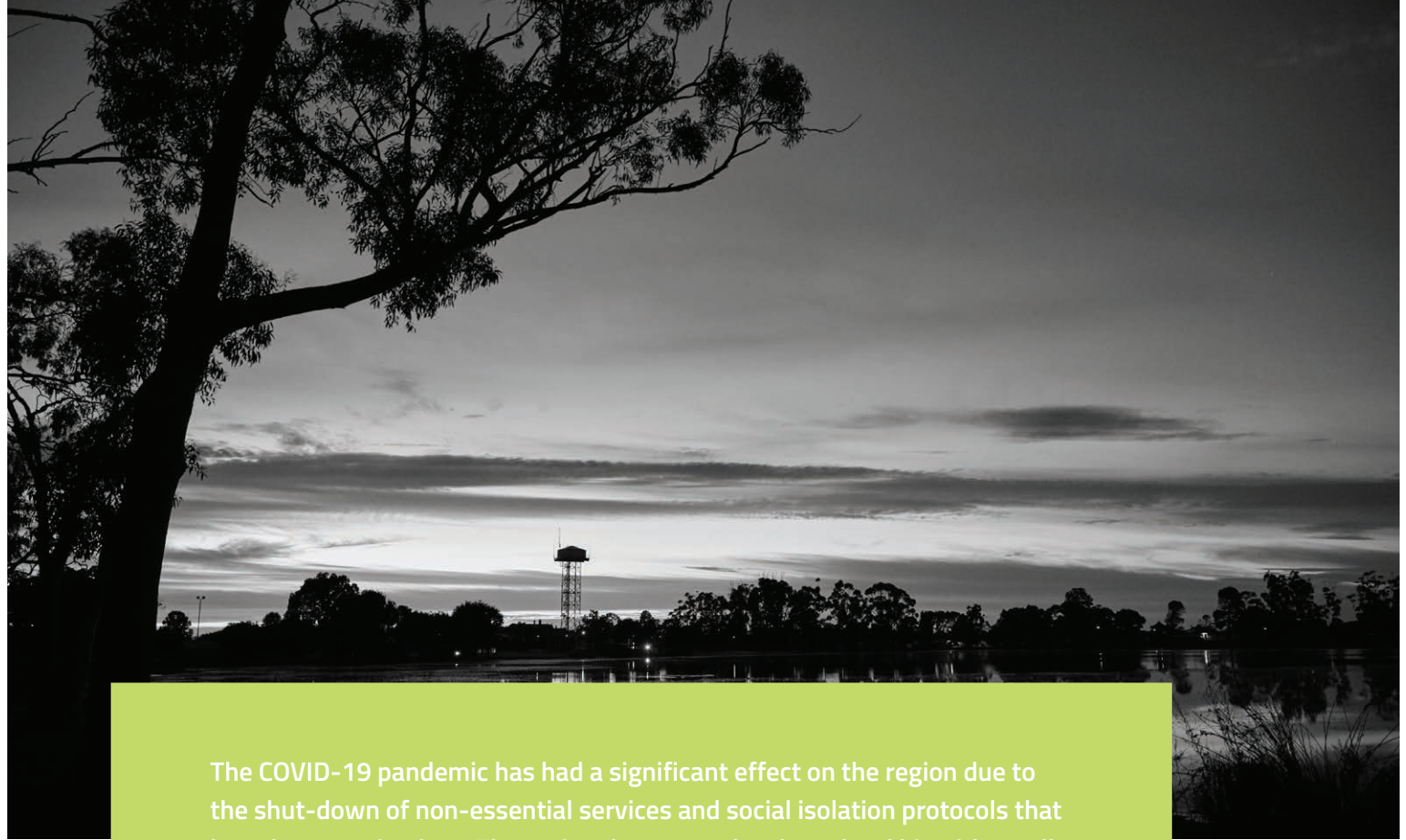
Based on OECD research<sup>11</sup> about effectiveness of responses to the global financial crisis, Regional Development Australia recommends post COVID-19 responses focus on:

Regional Development Australia also singles out **immediate opportunities** to improve: digital connectivity; linkages between regional Universities and industry through research; and support for research projects in regional areas; as well as ensuring responses are built on local strengths and support place-based developments

 <p>Improving <b>productivity</b> to support employment, wage growth and living standards.</p>	 <p><b>Alignment</b> to state and federal policy interventions.</p>	 <p>Supporting key <b>tradeable sectors</b> such as manufacturing, mining and agriculture.</p>
 <p><b>Innovation</b>, knowledge creation, diffusion and transmission.</p>	 <p><b>Removing barriers</b> to innovation, growth and development.</p>	 <p><b>Place-based</b> and tailored responses.</p>

11. <https://www.oecd.org/publications/productivity-and-jobs-in-a-globalised-world-9789264293137-en.htm>





The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the region due to the shut-down of non-essential services and social isolation protocols that have been put in place. The regional economy has been hard hit with small businesses in the retail, tourism and hospitality industries experiencing a potentially catastrophic loss of trade.

## 06 — COVID-19 IMPACT

### Threats

Modelling released by the Victorian Government in April 2020 predicted the coronavirus pandemic would have a devastating and unprecedented impact on Victoria's economy, including unemployment as high as 11%, gross state product decline of 14%, and falls in property prices. Victorian modelling aligned with forecasts by the Federal Treasury and Reserve Bank of Australia, predicting the economic consequences of coronavirus will be unlike anything most Australians have seen in their lifetimes.<sup>12</sup>

- “One of the outcomes from the outbreak of COVID-19 will be a significant economic shock to national and regional economies. The magnitude of the shock is likely to be unparalleled in terms of its impact on regional Victoria.”  
– Regional Development Australia

12. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/new-modelling-confirms-hit-to-economy-unemployment-spike/>

## COVID-19 as a catalyst for revitalisation

The WSM region lags urban areas in key service delivery areas and outcomes for individuals in the community. The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and social impacts of containment measures are having a continuing significant negative impact on the region. However, the opportunity is there to use the crisis as a catalyst for regional revitalisation.

Agriculture will continue to be the central economic industry for the region, but there is a critical need for development of off-farm opportunities to support the broader population of the region. Revitalisation will require blue-sky thinking, innovation and embracing the latest technology in industry and individual applications.

We have seen the importance of regional areas in food security emerge during the crisis. The WSM must now capitalise on the appetite for change and investment in key industries within Australia.



**The key to achieving sustainable revitalisation of the region** is for the change to be guided by local community and industry representatives that understand the unique opportunities for development in the region, the skills, the infrastructure and the emerging industry growth areas that match the region's capabilities.

## COVID-19 Stimulus

State and federal governments have both released targeted stimulus packages to financially support and assist individuals and businesses through the crisis. On 24 April 2020, the Victorian Government announced emergency measures had passed Parliament securing "\$24.5 billion in emergency funding to save lives, support jobs and businesses, and set Victoria up to recover from the pandemic over the next two years. This additional funding is vital to ensuring Victoria can respond swiftly and significantly to this crisis, and is on top of \$35.9 billion for the ordinary, ongoing operations of Government – like wages for our vital healthcare workers and other public sector staff."<sup>13</sup>

On 18 May 2020, the Victorian Government announced the first part of their Building Works package, providing **\$2.7 billion toward shovel-ready projects** (big and small).<sup>14</sup> The funding targeted job creation through infrastructure projects with a key focus on education infrastructure projects.

In November 2020, the Victorian Government announced more than \$8 billion for regional Victoria in this year's budget.

**\$3.8  
BILLION**  
**IN REGIONAL ROAD  
& RAIL UPGRADES**



**\$2.8 billion in health spending**



**\$626 million for eradicating mobile blackspots and upgrading internet speeds**



**\$385 million to upgrade 44 regional schools and 10 regional special schools**



**\$50 million for upgrades at the state's agricultural colleges**



and **3,000**  
new social  
housing homes

There are multiple agencies currently deploying resources across the region to provide a short-term response to local communities, within their jurisdictional responsibilities, for example health, regional development, human services.

**A co-ordinated and collaborative approach across the region is key to ensuring communities and businesses recover as quickly as possible and economic stimulus drives sustainable recovery and revitalisation of the WSM region.**

13. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/legislation-to-support-jobs-services-and-victorians-passes/>

14. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/building-works-more-jobs-for-victorians/>

15. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/building-works-more-jobs-for-victorians/>



# EMERGING THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Threats

- Loss of trade in retail, hospitality and tourism
- Job losses, high unemployment (11%)
- Reduced productivity (gross state product falls of 6.7%)
- Drop in domestic and global demand for tradeable goods including agriculture products
- Falling property prices (-9%)
- Social impact (mental health, domestic and family violence)



According to the Department of Treasury and Finance the economic outlook is challenging to say the least.<sup>16</sup>

## Opportunities

- Importance of agriculture in food security (intensive farming and diversification opportunities)
- Importance of innovation and embracing technology
- Government funding for shovel ready infrastructure projects, particularly education (Building Works package)
- Government funding for public and community housing
- Government funding for tourism upgrades
- Government funding for sports facilities and community environment projects
- Government funding for roads
- Government funding for mental health and aged care facilities

16. <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/Coronavirus%20Economic%20Outlook%20-%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>





07

# STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES FOR REGIONAL VICTORIA

Regional Development Australia (RDA) released 'A Double Triple Vision for Victoria' in February 2020 centred around delivering positive productivity outcomes in regional Victoria by 2040. The report acknowledges the particular importance of improving productivity and living standards in regional Victoria in response to COVID-19 impacts.



The RDA Committee's vision for regional Victoria is that by 2040 the population will double to over 3 million and economic output of regional Victoria will triple. Importantly this vision is consistent with the Victorian Government's policy in relation to regional Victoria.

## ■ Priorities relevant to WSM region

Many of the priority projects identified by Regional Development Australia are relevant to the WSM region.



Intervention	Priority Projects relevant to WSM
Improve digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of digital plans</li> </ul>
Population management and decentralisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Regional Growth Plans</li> <li>• Decentralisation population targets</li> <li>• Support private sector involvement in infrastructure development</li> <li>• Equity of access to services</li> </ul>
Improve business competitiveness and labour mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support lower tax base for regional business through policy</li> <li>• Mining and environmental bond scheme review</li> <li>• Platform to support labour mobility</li> </ul>
Improve skills and workforce accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build workforce planning capacity of regions</li> <li>• Work with educational providers to adopt place-based approaches</li> <li>• Visa reform</li> </ul>
Capture the benefits of new energy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Victoria's Renewable Energy Roadmaps</li> <li>• Renewable energy research and development and training capability</li> <li>• Transmission network improvements</li> </ul>
Support place-based developments across regional Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing initiatives</li> <li>• Regional innovation hubs</li> </ul>

# REGIONAL RESPONSE

## COVID Community Advisory Committee (CCAC)

The Wimmera Development Association (WDA) identified in April of 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that the region rapidly needed a vehicle to identify community priorities, test response mechanisms and develop a plan for the region's recovery and revitalisation post pandemic. The COVID-19 Community Advisory Committee was formed and comprises 10 community members, representing a cross section of the region, including geographic, skill, gender and age diversity.



The CCAC met monthly until October 2020, to establish recovery and revitalisation priorities post pandemic. Workshops were held on each identified priority to further refine issues and opportunities. The following is a summary of the outcomes from each of the workshops conducted with the CCAC.



**Improving infrastructure and transport, including telecommunications**, in the region is central to addressing many of the challenges in the region, and ensuring sustainable revitalisation of the region for the future.

## Infrastructure and transport

Key identified activities and opportunities include:

- Address digital connectivity to support service delivery, education and health program improvements.
- Invest in flexible community and sporting infrastructure including meeting spaces and community hubs, sport change rooms and canteens. Work with local clubs to develop capital plans to ensure infrastructure projects are shovel ready.
- Develop consolidated shopping and community hubs in small towns to improve connectivity and liveability (for example Rupanyup community shopping precinct). Improved facilities will encourage domestic travellers to stop in small towns, with upgrades to parks, public spaces, public toilets and parking required.
- Encourage rethinking of town planning to drive innovative responses to affordable housing developments, for example mixed retail and housing environment. Affordable housing is an issue in the region and there is likely to be an increase in demand for affordable housing due to COVID-19.
- Innovative thinking to boost community housing stock is required such as existing motel and accommodation reinvigoration.
- Longerenong College has a shovel ready project to improve accommodation for international students, which would contribute to revitalisation in the longer-term.
- West Wimmera water pipeline infrastructure.





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION

including in agriculture will drive growth in the region, supporting jobs, investment, training and indirectly improved social outcomes.

## Economic development

Key identified activities and opportunities include:

- Locally generated, cheap, renewable energy makes it possible to consider a **local manufacturing (food) hub** in the WSM. Further development of energy infrastructure will be required to ensure cost competitiveness but the possibilities are there with the location, space and road and rail infrastructure. Learn from past successes including Clynes, The Lentil Company, Luv a Duck and Australian Pulse Protein. **Expanding and growing local food microbusinesses** is also an opportunity. Assisting them in marketing and supply chain navigation.
- **Ensure investment in community infrastructure and local skills and jobs** as part of large project development such as mineral sands projects.
- Invest in community **capability in governance and risk management**, improve local financial literacy and develop local capability to represent the region on boards and commissions. Consider how community boards may be used to streamline local governing bodies.
- Build on existing **agriculture capability** within the region through **research and training**, for example the Grains Innovation Hub and AgTIDE projects, and capability for paddock to plate supply chain traceability in commodity industries such as pulses and grains.
- **Access to suitable housing** is by far the biggest pressure point for disadvantage in the region. Housing availability is also impacting business development with businesses unable to find suitable housing for staff. There is a particular lack of accommodation in the middle range due to lack of investment over the last 10-30 years. Government are looking for shovel-ready projects to fund, **identifying shovel ready land for development** in the region will improve the region's funding opportunities. Public housing needs to be a consideration by council when **planning new developments** such as sporting precincts and stadiums. Organisations such as WDA or the Councils collectively have an important **advocacy** role to play with government, rather than letting it fall to the service delivery organisations such as Uniting Wimmera. Review the Central Highlands **'Housing First' project** to understand how it could be transferred in to the WSM. Crucial to encourage **private sector investment** in regional housing with a fair and reasonable return. The potential for a developer concierge role could be investigated. A **housing study is currently underway by WDA** to understand the barriers and opportunities for improved housing affordability in the region.

## Education and training

Key identified activities and opportunities include:

- **Address digital connectivity** to ensure equal access to online education for everyone in the region. Wimmera students are already behind their peers in academic achievement; disadvantage and disengagement will be exacerbated by schools being closed and the move to online learning.
- Opportunity for **Federation University to offer more online courses** targeted toward rural and regional skills gaps.

Education and training opportunities will address local skills shortages, improve productivity and also represent an opportunity for economic growth through increasing training delivery in the region.



Supporting health and wellbeing, including through social services, will be critical in the response to rising family and domestic violence and suicide rates due to the pandemic responses put in place, along with increasing health care requirements due to illness.



## Health and wellbeing

Key identified activities and opportunities include:

- Horsham Hospital is the major health centre in the region and needs a major upgrade to meet the health care needs of the community. Master planning has been completed for the estimated \$400 million infrastructure project. Completion of a **business case for a major upgrade to Horsham Hospital** is required to ensure it is shovel ready to access funding. The project would support local tradespeople, project service providers and local jobs.
- Access to specialised health professionals in early childhood to have effective outcomes before attending school is critical. The rapid uptake of telehealth due to COVID-19 presents an opportunity to **increase primary and secondary health services in the region through telehealth**, building on the existing paediatric telehealth trial and providing coordination support to transition local providers to telehealth.
- The Warracknabeal Education Precinct infrastructure is now under development. There is an opportunity to run an **integrated service delivery trial at the Warracknabeal Education Precinct**, for example with Uniting Care and DHHS, to provide a range of required services for disadvantaged families in one location. This has been trialled in Doveton Victoria with great success.
- The WSM has high family violence rates relative to the rest of the state and rates are expected to grow due to COVID-19, as has been seen in other locations. The only service currently available is out of Warrnambool. A **domestic and family violence hub in Horsham** is needed (now funded).
- Community services organisations are concerned about the impact of **JobKeeper/ Seeker payment reductions**. Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows Northwest Victoria and Gippsland are the two leading areas with a decline in payroll.
- For the migrant and settlement community, language barriers, internet connection and computer literacy issues have been highlighted due to COVID. **Resources and programs for the migrant and settlement community** to support them with increasingly complex issues are required.



## TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tourism, arts and culture will bring domestic travellers to the region and improve the wellbeing of residents.

### KEY IDENTIFIED ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- A **review of destination management plans to identify and prioritise key projects that are shovel ready is required**. Shovel ready projects (e.g. Horsham Motor Cross Track) are key to moving quickly in response to the pandemic and creating local jobs in the process. Designing for flexibility and fostering local leadership will ensure any response will not only support a short-term recovery but add to long-term revitalisation.
- **Recreational waterways** play a key role in the region for local community connectivity and liveability of the region, and have the potential to improve tourism in the region. The value of recreational waterways could be improved by **infrastructure such as accessible accommodation, boat ramps, kayak points and fishing pontoons**. This is the focus of an existing Wimmera Development Association study.
- A **coordinated regional event plan** that is focused on attracting domestic visitors to the region would contribute to social connections, liveability and economic outcomes.



### COMMUNITY SPORTS AND LEISURE CLUBS ARE UNDER INCREASING FINANCIAL STRAIN.

These clubs form the backbone of community connectivity in many small towns.

## Sport and recreation

Key identified activities and opportunities include:

- **Short term financial support and structural reforms to save sports and leisure clubs** from going under may be required.
- The Wimmera Development Association recently completed a report titled 'Wimmera Southern Mallee Community Sport – securing the future of community sport through Covid-19 and beyond'<sup>17</sup> which outlines in detail the role of volunteers in community sport, the \$18m contribution sport makes to the WSM economy and the strong sense of community, social connection and positive mental and physical health benefits of community sport. The report recommends that sporting clubs take the time to develop a **three-year strategic plan**, **secure professional financial management** support, consider ways to **diversify their income**, and find ways to celebrate the contribution of their **volunteers** and welcome new volunteers.



## Environment, water and energy

A number of priorities and projects coming out of the R2Z are currently being developed by stakeholders and partners including:

- Energy as an economic enabler including Western Victoria grid upgrade, GWM Water Solar Project, Power Purchase Agreements, Renewable industry growth
- Agriculture including Mosaic farming research and trials
- Electric vehicle fast-charging network
- Circular economy including waste to energy
- Microgrids development by identifying communities that meet requirements
- Building community capacity including jobs and training.

The Grampians New Energy Taskforce (GNET) received State Government funding to undertake a Roadmap to Zero Emissions (R2Z) for the Grampians Region. GNET led an extensive body of work throughout 2019 including research, technical investigation, and expert and public consultations. The roadmap<sup>18</sup> published in early 2020 is the culmination of this work and is Australia's first regional net zero emissions strategy.

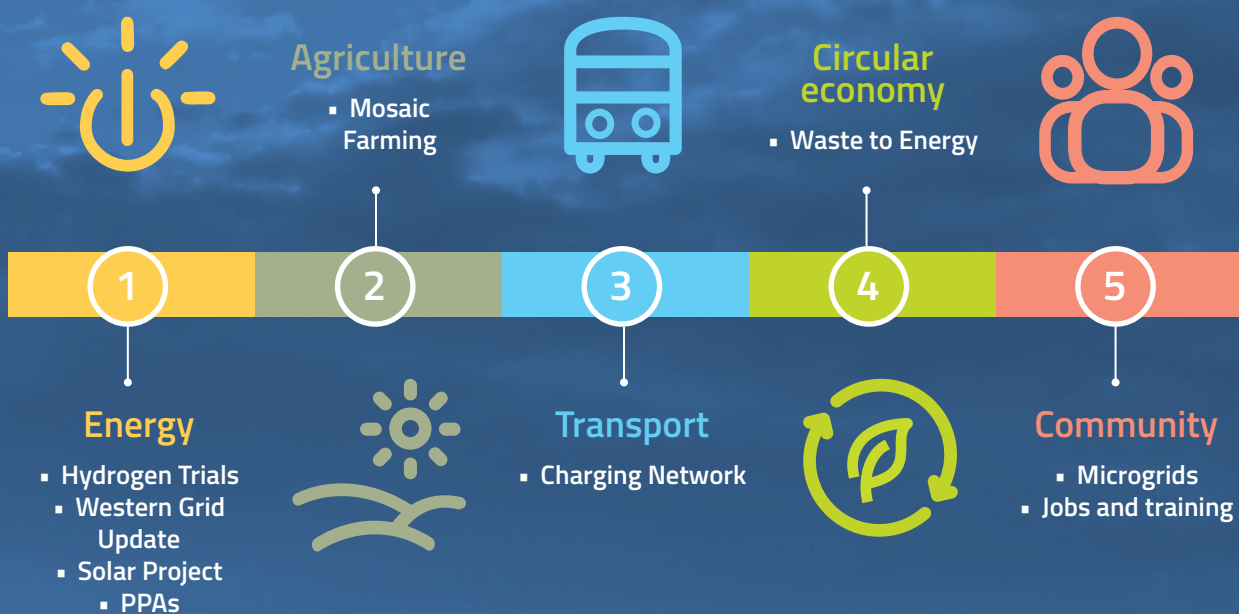
17. [www.wda.org.au](http://www.wda.org.au)

18. <https://www.gnet.org.au/roadmap-to-zero-page>



If successfully implemented, these projects will see the region become a leader in the net zero emissions economy.

## R2Z Implementation (5 Domains of Action)



The Grampians New Energy Taskforce (GNET) received State Government funding to undertake a Roadmap to Zero Emissions (R2Z) for the Grampians Region.

Drawing on previous plans and strategies for the region and the unanticipated impact of COVID-19 on globalisation, tourism, employment, services and many other areas of the economic, social and regulatory environment, it is clear that priorities for action within the region will need to shift in response to COVID-19.

# MAPPING CHANGING PRIORITIES IN THE REGION

30 year plan (2014)	5 year plans (2017-2021)	Current activity (2019-2020)	Emerging actions and themes from state and federal governments	Regional priorities emerging from COVID
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT</b>				
<b>HOUSING</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing diversity, particularly around Horsham</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve housing supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wimmera Development Association Housing supply and demand review (complete)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable housing initiatives</li> <li>Government funding for public and community housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed housing and retail developments and innovative ways to boost community housing stock</li> <li>Town planning review</li> <li>Shovel ready land for development</li> <li>Private sector investment</li> <li>Advocacy to government</li> </ul>
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freight and logistics gateway at Dooen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended freight and logistics facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wimmera Regional Intermodal Freight Hub – Business Case and Financial Analysis Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal Budget to include further work on Murray Basin Rail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of WIFT, upgrades to rail</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible public transport options (bus and rail)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passenger rail Western Rail Scoping Study</li> </ul>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roads recovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roads to Recovery program</li> <li>Local Roads to Market program</li> <li>Fixing Country Roads program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government funding for roads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roads continue to be a focus for local government to ensure safe roads and reduce operating costs for businesses</li> </ul>
<b>DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile and digital connectivity improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 new mobile blackspot towers</li> <li>WSM Digital Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of Digital Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital connectivity impacting all aspects of private and professional life, and industry productivity</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITIES AND ASSETS</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain existing facilities and assets</li> <li>Develop multi-use community facilities</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage private sector investment and involvement in infrastructure development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible sporting and community facilities</li> <li>Consolidated shopping and community hubs in small towns</li> <li>Streetscape and public space renewal</li> </ul>
<b>LOCAL COUNCILS</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land-use and urban planning</li> <li>Governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Councils Transformation Program</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council governance and risk management capability</li> <li>Shared services and greater regional planning for LGA's</li> </ul>

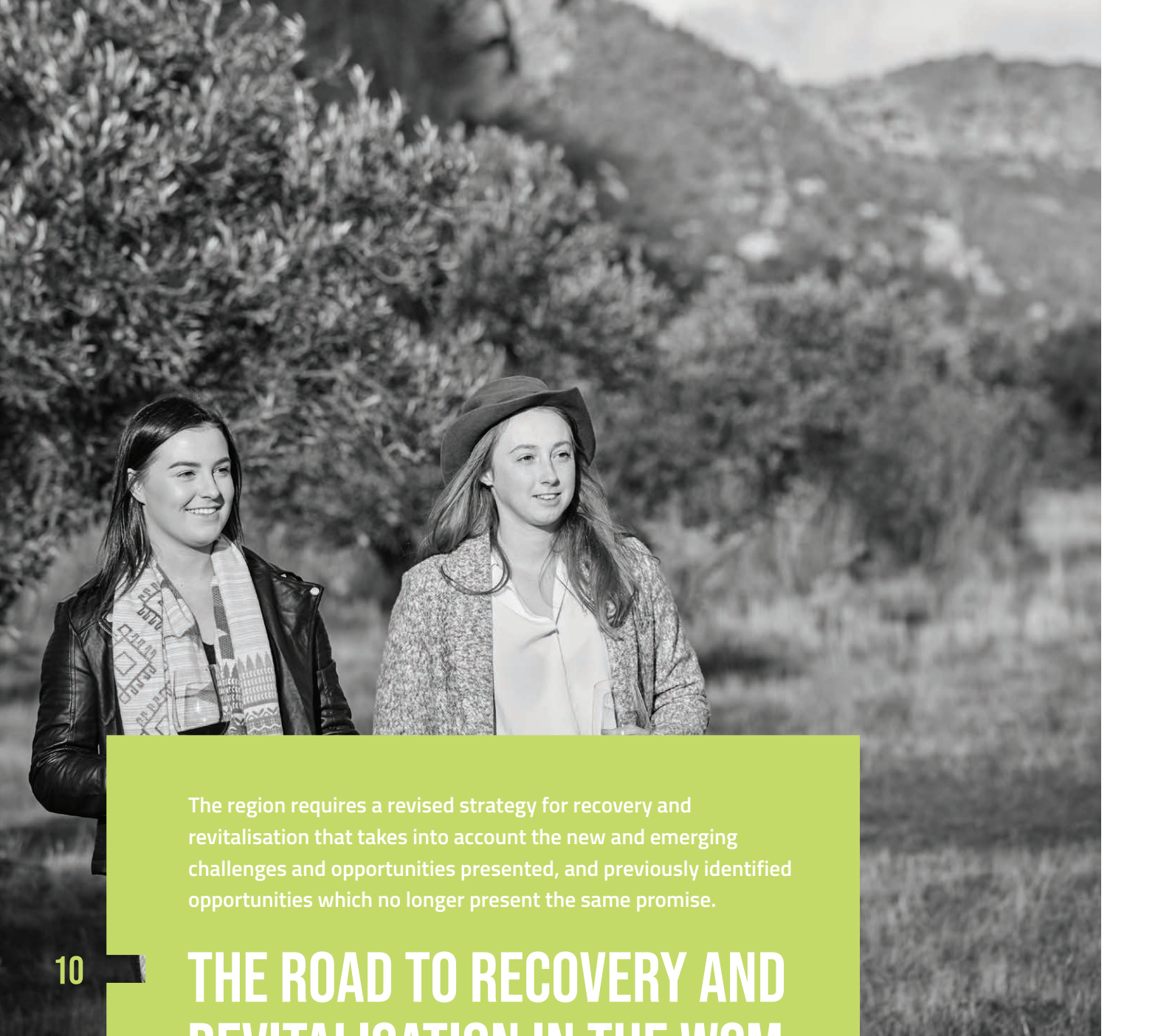


30 year plan (2014)	5 year plans (2017-2021)	Current activity (2019-2020)	Emerging actions and themes from state and federal governments	Regional priorities emerging from COVID
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>				
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Land-use changes</li> <li>▪ Intensive agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Grains Network Centre of Excellence (Ag-Tech)</li> <li>▪ Agriculture diversification and value add</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AgTIDE (digitally enabled demonstration farm at Longerenong College)</li> <li>▪ Victorian Grains Innovation Hub (VGIH) – research and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Food security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workforce availability</li> <li>▪ Importance of agriculture in food security</li> <li>▪ Intensive farming and diversification opportunities</li> <li>▪ Value-add to locally produced product</li> <li>▪ Agriculture research and training</li> </ul>
<b>DIVERSIFICATION</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote regional living</li> <li>▪ Develop regional brand</li> <li>▪ Mining industry liaison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workforce attraction, retention and training (emerging)</li> <li>▪ Development of knowledge economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Population decentralisation</li> <li>▪ Regional innovation hubs</li> <li>▪ Regional Growth Plan update</li> <li>▪ Lower tax rates for regional businesses</li> <li>▪ Labour mobility</li> <li>▪ Workforce planning capability</li> <li>▪ Visa reform</li> <li>▪ Mining and environmental bond scheme review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Importance of innovation and embracing technology</li> <li>▪ Knowledge economy (research projects e.g. VGIH and ByFive)</li> <li>▪ Ensure local skills and jobs are part of new industry development (e.g. mining)</li> <li>▪ Local manufacturing (food) hub</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>				
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Early childhood education</li> <li>▪ VET solutions that meet the needs of the region (agriculture, health and social services, mining, and tourism)</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for young people that lead to jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AgTIDE education and training package</li> <li>▪ ByFive (improving early years services)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place-based responses by education providers</li> <li>▪ Government funding for shovel ready infrastructure projects, particularly education (Building Works package)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remote learning challenges</li> <li>▪ Federation Uni to offer more online courses that meet WSM skill requirements</li> <li>▪ Shovel ready projects</li> </ul>



30 year plan (2014)	5 year plans (2017-2021)	Current activity (2019-2020)	Emerging actions and themes from state and federal governments	Regional priorities emerging from COVID
<b>HEALTH AND WELLBEING</b>				
<b>HEALTH</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early years services</li> <li>Plan for aged-care services and support for aging population</li> <li>Health education programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ByFive project (improving early years services)</li> <li>Health services coordination (emerging)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity of access to services</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aged care facility and service improvements</li> <li>Telehealth capability</li> <li>More cost efficient and effective service delivery</li> <li>Improved regional health facilities</li> </ul>
<b>WELLBEING</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve community facilities, services and networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve liveability</li> <li>Opportunities for young people</li> <li>Family violence reduction programs</li> <li>Emergency response improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic and family violence response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government funding for mental health programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic and family violence victim support services and awareness</li> <li>Mental health programs and support services</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal and community services which support lifestyle choices</li> <li>Build sense of community, civic pride and social connection</li> <li>Support humanitarian entrants and eligible migrants</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of community groups and social interaction</li> <li>Support migrant and settlement communities</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE</b>				
<b>TOURISM</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand regional tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination management plans and dedicated tourism organisation</li> <li>Combine tourism attractions to form tourism trails (nature-based, indigenous tourism and art tourism)</li> <li>Streetscape and public space redevelopment</li> <li>Facilities at lakes, waterways and natural attractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination Management Plan</li> <li>Grampians region cycle brand</li> <li>Grampians Peaks Trail</li> <li>Wimmera River Discovery Trail</li> <li>'Unearth Amazing' campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism is going to be a key part of Victorian Government recovery strategy</li> <li>Victoria Government funding for tourism upgrades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shovel ready projects</li> <li>Recreational waterways improvements</li> <li>Nature-based tourism opportunities</li> <li>Build tourism product around Grampians Peaks Trail</li> </ul>
<b>ARTS AND CULTURE</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect cultural heritage assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support events, festivals, arts and culture activities</li> <li>Indigenous tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BGLCAC Indigenous Centre at Wail</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated regional events program</li> <li>Develop indigenous culture projects to support tourism and local visitors</li> <li>Support BGLCAC native food innovation concept</li> </ul>

30 year plan (2014)	5 year plans (2017-2021)	Current activity (2019-2020)	Emerging actions and themes from state and federal governments	Regional priorities emerging from COVID
<b>SPORT AND RECREATION</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreation facilities</li> <li>Cycling and walking paths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wimmera Development Association study: 'Wimmera Southern Mallee Community Sport – securing the future of community sport through Covid-19 and beyond' (complete)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government funding for sports facilities and community projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short term financial support and structural reforms to save sports and leisure clubs</li> <li>Support for clubs to develop strategic plans, access financial management expertise, and identify diversification opportunities</li> <li>Celebrate and encourage volunteers</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND ENERGY</b>				
<b>NATURAL ENVIRONMENT</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect environmental assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain natural assets</li> <li>Waste management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GNET Roadmap to Zero Emissions</li> <li>Agriculture - Mosaic farming research and trials</li> <li>Circular economy – waste to energy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate resource and land use changes consistent with a changing climate</li> <li>Indigenous crops research and trials</li> <li>Building community capacity including jobs and training</li> <li>Mosaic farming trial in region</li> </ul>
<b>WATER</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water pipeline</li> <li>Value of recreational water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water security for agriculture diversification and recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wimmera Development Association Recreational Waterways study</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of recreational water for wellbeing and tourism</li> <li>Water availability to support economic diversification</li> </ul>
<b>ENERGY</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grid improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energy as an economic enabler - Western Victoria grid upgrade, GWM Water Solar Project, Power Purchase Agreements, Renewable industry growth</li> <li>Microgrids – identifying communities that meet requirements</li> <li>Electric vehicle fast-charging network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transmission network improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve energy network capacity and redundancy</li> <li>Microgrids for small communities</li> <li>Western Transmission upgrade extension to Horsham and Mildura</li> </ul>
<b>RENEWABLE ENERGY</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewable energy development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption of renewable energy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capture the benefits of new energy development</li> <li>Renewable energy roadmap</li> <li>Renewable energy research and development and training capability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversify sources of energy</li> <li>Regional PPA's</li> <li>Support for renewable energy development</li> </ul>



The region requires a revised strategy for recovery and revitalisation that takes into account the new and emerging challenges and opportunities presented, and previously identified opportunities which no longer present the same promise.

# THE ROAD TO RECOVERY AND REVITALISATION IN THE WSM

While the region, state and country face an unprecedented period of change and uncertainty, the strengths and attributes of the region remain a critical starting point for action to drive growth, as do the identified place-based challenges and areas of disadvantage that must be addressed in the region.

The cross-sector recovery and revitalisation strategy developed with community input will be used to inform government investment and applicable service delivery agency response activities to ensure a coordinated and community-led approach.

The strategy outlines priorities for implementation by sector:



Infrastructure and transport



Economic development



Education and training



Health and wellbeing



Tourism, arts and culture



Sport and recreation



Environment, water and energy



## ■ Priority projects and programs

Each sector within the region has been reviewed and priority projects, programs, resources and information that will support the region’s short-term recovery and longer-term revitalisation have been identified.



Sector	Recovery Priorities		Revitalisation Priorities
	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Infrastructure and transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Digital connectivity (New mobile towers, domestic roaming and digital plan) to address industry needs, education, health and general disadvantage</li> <li>▪ Identify and invest in flexible, multi-use community and sporting facilities and infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Integrated town planning and Council capital plans update</li> <li>▪ Identify shovel ready land for housing development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing diversity and affordability</li> <li>▪ Community housing development</li> <li>▪ Innovative town planning approaches, including increased land supply</li> <li>▪ Local Government service delivery reform</li> <li>▪ Local Government governance and risk management capability development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public transport and passenger rail</li> <li>▪ Roads</li> <li>▪ Extend freight and logistics facilities</li> <li>▪ Consolidated shopping, housing and community hubs</li> </ul>
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update Regional Growth Plans</li> <li>▪ Develop knowledge economy opportunities (e.g. research and development VGIH and AgTIDE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop local manufacturing opportunities particularly around food security and value adding to agriculture</li> <li>▪ Agriculture diversification and intensive agriculture development</li> <li>▪ Workforce attraction, retention and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A more resilient local economy that embraces innovation and technology</li> <li>▪ Mining industry development</li> </ul>



Sector	Recovery Priorities	Medium term	Revitalisation Priorities
	Short term		Long term
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to education through digital connectivity and online courses through Federation University</li> <li>Vocational education and training, especially in agriculture (AgTIDE, Grains Innovation Hub), health and social services (ByFive), mining and tourism</li> <li>Identify shovel ready projects, e.g. improvements to Longerenong College infrastructure (access Building Works funding)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fed Uni Renewable Energy Training Centre (APRETC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global leader in agriculture and early years innovation</li> <li>Increasing learning opportunities through digital technology</li> <li>Rural Children's CRC</li> </ul>
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early childhood development (ByFive project extension)</li> <li>Health and social services coordination (integrated service delivery trial at Warracknabeal Education Precinct)</li> <li>Telehealth improvements and trial expansions</li> <li>Domestic and family violence hub in Horsham</li> <li>Mental health outreach services</li> <li>Services for aging population</li> <li>Community groups and social connection (build volunteer and group capability in governance and risk management)</li> <li>Support for migrant and settlement communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business case for a major upgrade to Horsham Hospital</li> <li>Aged care facility improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More cost efficient and effective service delivery</li> <li>Wrap around health and wellbeing servicing</li> <li>Telehealth across all medical specialities widely used</li> <li>Reduce household and societal dependence on government</li> </ul>

“Business case for a major upgrade to Horsham Hospital”



Sector	Recovery Priorities		Revitalisation Priorities
	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Tourism, arts and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Destination Management Plans for shovel ready tourism infrastructure projects (e.g. improve facilities at recreational lakes, waterways and other natural attractions)</li> <li>Develop nature-based tourism opportunities building on the 'unearth amazing' campaign</li> <li>Develop a coordinated Regional Event Plan</li> <li>Support BGLCAC Indigenous Centre at Wail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreational Waterways project delivery</li> <li>Great Lakes of the Grampians Infrastructure and Product Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A contemporary, dynamic society with improved liveability for residents and a better experience for visitors</li> <li>Cultural asset protection</li> </ul>
Sport and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short term financial support</li> <li>Sport and recreation club capability and financial resilience program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer program</li> </ul>	
Environment, water and energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mosaic farming research and trials</li> <li>Grid and transmission improvements</li> <li>Renewable energy roadmap</li> <li>Renewable energy research and training</li> <li>Indigenous crops research and trials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewable energy industry growth</li> <li>Microgrids research</li> <li>Facilitate resource and land use changes</li> <li>Community education programs</li> <li>Water security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental asset protection</li> <li>Waste management improvements</li> <li>Net zero regional emissions by 2050</li> </ul>







Wimmera Southern Mallee

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# RECOVERY AND REVITALISATION FRAMEWORK

The following Wimmera Southern Mallee Recovery and Revitalisation Framework brings together the strengths, challenges, pillars and priorities from existing regional plans, overlaid with relevant state and federal regional plans, and COVID response strategies. The community-led committee, CCAC, considered this background information and identified priority projects that will support the recovery of the region from the immediate impacts of COVID and contribute to long-term revitalisation and growth.



## Vision – A dynamic and contemporary society

### STRATEGY

- A more resilient local economy
- More cost efficient and effective service delivery
- Reduce household and societal dependence on government

### CHALLENGES

- Inability to attract a fair share of investment in critical community infrastructure stymies efforts to improve liveability in the region
- The region is often unprepared or unwilling to take up opportunities resulting in reliance on traditional industries and ways of operating
- Inflexible and often overly complex service delivery and administration impacts on the availability and suitability of those services

SECTORS	Health and wellbeing	Tourism, arts and culture	Sport and recreation	Environment, water and energy	Infrastructure and transport	Economic development	Education and training
PRIORITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attraction and retention of health professionals</li> <li>▪ Paediatric health</li> <li>▪ Mental health services</li> <li>▪ Community strategy</li> <li>▪ Aging Population</li> <li>▪ Family Violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tourism product development</li> <li>▪ Community events</li> <li>▪ Cultural heritage and indigenous tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community sports governance</li> <li>▪ Youth sports development</li> <li>▪ Recreational waterways strategy</li> <li>▪ Regional walking trails development</li> <li>▪ Regional cycling trails development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Water security</li> <li>▪ Affordable, reliable and sustainable energy</li> <li>▪ Enhancing environmental assets</li> <li>▪ Adaption to climate change</li> <li>▪ Roadmap to zero emissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional housing and accommodation strategy</li> <li>▪ Regional infrastructure strategy</li> <li>▪ Digital connectivity</li> <li>▪ Integrated town planning</li> <li>▪ Sustainable local Government</li> <li>▪ Investment in electricity grid and supply</li> <li>▪ Regional transport strategy</li> <li>▪ Mobile phone global roaming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Value adding to agriculture</li> <li>▪ Growing manufacturing (particularly food manufacturing)</li> <li>▪ Migrant attraction and support</li> <li>▪ Economic diversification (inc. mining)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workforce skills and readiness</li> <li>▪ Increased investment in local education delivery</li> <li>▪ Leadership development</li> <li>▪ Lifelong learning</li> </ul>
PRIORITY PROGRAMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Victorian Grains Innovation Hub</li> <li>▪ ByFive Project</li> <li>▪ Settlement services</li> <li>▪ CALD driving regional growth (CALDRG)</li> <li>▪ Leadership Wimmera</li> <li>▪ Roadmap to zero emissions implementation</li> </ul>						
PRIORITY PROJECTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attraction and retention of professionals strategy</li> <li>▪ Horsham Hospital upgrade</li> <li>▪ Telehealth expansion including ByFive paediatric telehealth</li> <li>▪ Mental health services</li> <li>▪ Family Violence Orange Door</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increasing tourism product</li> <li>▪ Regional events calendar</li> <li>▪ ‘Unearth Amazing’ Campaign</li> <li>▪ BGLCAC Cultural Centre and native foods project</li> <li>▪ Halls Gap development</li> <li>▪ Wildlife Art Museum of Australia (WAMA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Governance and finance training of clubs (AFL program)</li> <li>▪ Integrated community facility planning</li> <li>▪ Sporting events attraction</li> <li>▪ Youth sport development strategy</li> <li>▪ Horsham Motorcross events</li> <li>▪ Great Lakes of the Grampians Strategy</li> <li>▪ Attraction and retention of Stawell Gift sponsorship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Western Victorian transmission upgrade (500kV) and stage 2 and 3</li> <li>▪ Community energy</li> <li>▪ Regional Purchase Power Agreements</li> <li>▪ East Grampians and WW Water pipeline</li> <li>▪ Grampians Regional Energy Implementation Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WSM Digital Plan implementation</li> <li>▪ Strategy and investment for increased housing at all market points</li> <li>▪ Roads upgrades – council capital planning and shared services</li> <li>▪ WIFT upgrade</li> <li>▪ Murray Basin Rail completion</li> <li>▪ Quality accommodation for tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Food manufacturing and processing industry development</li> <li>▪ Business expansion support and attraction strategy</li> <li>▪ Community wealth building strategy</li> <li>▪ Migrant and refugee attraction strategy</li> <li>▪ HR network</li> <li>▪ Overcoming Energy Poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apprenticeship and training strategy</li> <li>▪ ByFive early years innovation hub</li> <li>▪ Warracknabeal Education Precinct integrated service delivery</li> <li>▪ AgTIDE implementation</li> <li>▪ Agricultural Drought Resilience Hub</li> <li>▪ Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre (APRETC)</li> </ul>



The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and social impacts of containment measures are having a continuing significant negative impact on the region. However, the opportunity is there to use the crisis as a catalyst for regional revitalisation.

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# CONCLUSION

**The WSM Recovery and Revitalisation Strategy will guide the investment of resources by local, state and federal governments to drive a coordinated, collaborative, and sustainable recovery in the region post COVID-19.**

The strategy identifies those sectors and projects that will assist the region to recover from the shock of COVID-19 and the measures put in place to protect the lives of people in the region. Longer-term revitalisation projects that will build resilience in the region and reduce the vulnerabilities and challenges that the region is facing are also identified to ensure a sustainable future for the region.

Improving infrastructure and transport, including telecommunications, in the region is central to addressing many of the challenges in the region, and ensuring sustainable revitalisation of the region for the future.

■ The key to achieving sustainable revitalisation of the region is for the change to be guided by local community and industry representatives that understand the unique opportunities for development in the region, the skills, the infrastructure and the emerging industry growth areas that match the region's capabilities.

Economic development and diversification, including in agriculture, will drive growth in the region, supporting jobs, investment, training and indirectly improved social outcomes. Agriculture will continue to be the central economic industry for the region, but there is a critical need for development of off-farm opportunities to support the broader population of the region. Revitalisation will require blue-sky thinking, innovation and embracing the latest technology in industry and individual applications.

Education and training opportunities will address local skills shortages, improve productivity and represent an opportunity for economic growth.

Supporting health and wellbeing, including through social services, will be critical in the response to rising family and domestic violence and suicide rates due to the pandemic responses put in place, along with increasing health care requirements due to illness.

Tourism, arts and culture opportunities will bring domestic travellers to the region and improve the wellbeing of residents.

While community sports and leisure clubs are the backbone of community connectivity in many small towns, but will require support to survive the increasing financial strain.

Environment, water and energy opportunities are critical to secure affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for the region, while protecting and enhancing environmental assets and supporting adaptation to climate change and the region's net zero emissions strategy.