

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM STRATEGY 2015-2019 SUMMARY



SUMMARY

Overview

Yarriambiack Shire is in the north east of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. The north of the Shire is characterised by the dunes of the Lowan Mallee and sandy plains of the Mallee, while the south of the Shire is part of the undulating plains of the Wimmera. Warracknabeal is the largest township in the Shire, followed by Murtoa, Hopetoun, Minyip, Rupanyup and Beulah. Warracknabeal is centrally located in the Shire; 57 kilometres north of Horsham and around 350 kilometres north east of Melbourne.

The Shire economy is highly dependent on broadacre farming and so are the Shire's urban centres, which have economies that have built their business bases to contribute to agribusiness supply chains and to provide services to farming communities. The agricultural activity is dominated by wheat, barley, lambs and wool, grain legumes, and oilseeds. This agricultural focus has given the Shire and its towns many distinctive features, strong resilience and connected communities, but it has also led to decades long population decline as farms have become bigger and more automated, and the financial returns from agricultural commodities have continued to decline in an increasingly competitive global environment.

The total resident population of Yarriambiack Shire has been decreasing by an annual average of 1.28% over the past decade. In 2013, the population was 7,018 (having declined from 7,982 in 2003)¹.

Economic Development Focus

Yarriambiack Shire Council does not currently have the financial resources to support a highly proactive economic development work program, and has determined that it is currently unable to support a dedicated economic development staff function. Despite this situation, Yarriambiack Shire will have a continuing role in economic development.

This strategy embraces Yarriambiack Shire's agreed economic development directions:

- ❖ Continuing to strongly support the broadacre farming industries in the Shire, which will always be a major fabric of the Yarriambiack economy: Grains, grain legumes and oilseeds, and sheep for wool and meat.
- ❖ Encouraging the expansion of intensive agricultural enterprises (which are more likely to establish) following the construction of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.
- ❖ Maximising local value adding to agricultural products. This will include marketing, logistics and unique relationships; not just adding value to products (through packing, grading, mixing, milling, etc).
- ❖ Being a rural Victorian leader in facilitating Community Enterprises, potentially as a 'model' municipality through alliances with philanthropic and/or social enterprise peak groups.
- ❖ Seeking investment and regular upgrades for critical town and rural assets (road, rail, airstrips, recreation areas, parks, waterways and storages, historic features and commercial and industrial precincts)
- ❖ Supporting the Shire's strong and caring communities in their efforts to retain and enhance services, attract visitors and new residents, and to implement innovations.
- ❖ Theming towns and providing a consistency in town entrances, streetscapes and interpretive information.

¹ ABS Regional Population Growth, Australia (April 2014)

- ❖ Considering the costs and benefits of Council incentive and support packages for new and expanding businesses.
- ❖ Valuing, promoting and supporting trade and recreational events and community festivals, and maximising the economic benefits flowing from these events.

Economic Development Strategies

Yarriambiack Shire Council's Vision is:

"In consultation with our community Yarriambiack Shire Council will provide a viable, sustainable and vibrant future"².

Yarriambiack's municipal strategic statement focuses on land use planning and development issues and initiatives which will be taken to implement and achieve an agreed vision. The vision embraces the concept of an active community with a diversified economic base integrated with a sustainable and productive agricultural industry. The proposed economic development strategies, and their associated actions, support Council's vision.

The strategies are designed to assist council staff to have an economic development focus across the organisation, without an explicit economic development staff unit. They assume Council will have an ongoing commitment to economic development facilitation and support in creating a climate for investment and innovation, and in being a proactive auspice (either alone or in partnership with community organisations) to attract economic development initiatives to the Shire.

Strategy 1: Planning Scheme Provisions and Council Policies

Use Council policies and planning provisions to recognise and enhance the contribution made by Yarriambiack's major and emerging industries, in order to

- *provide a supportive environment, and*
- *encourage new investment, job creation and innovation.*

Strategy 2: Economic Development as a Multi-Disciplinary Function across Council Departments

Implement a whole-of-Council/multidisciplinary team approach to funding, facilitating and delivering economic development infrastructure projects.

Strategy 3: Facilitate Investment in Priority Industry Sectors

Maximise the efficient use of Council resources to promote and coordinate support (across all Council staff areas including planning, building, community services, operations and administration) for the targeted and high priority industries for economic development investment over the next five years.

Strategy 4: Collaborative Tourism and Branding

Facilitate local and regional collaboration in tourism activities, and establish a new Yarriambiack tourism brand position.

Detailed actions for these strategies are summarised in Figure 1. A map of the Shire is shown in Figure 2

² Yarriambiack Shire Council Plan 2013-17

Figure 1 Economic Development Strategies and Actions

Strategy	Action	Description
Strategy 1: Planning Scheme Provisions and Council Policies. Use Council policies and planning provisions to recognise and enhance the contribution made by Yarriambiack's major and emerging industries, in order to: - Provide a supportive environment, and - Encourage new investment, job creation and innovation.	1.1 Economic Development Assets in Policy and the Planning Scheme	Recognise, through Council policy and the Council Planning Scheme, the ongoing assets associated with the Shire's agricultural, natural and heritage resources.
	1.2 Supply of Land for Economic Development	Recognise, through Council policy and the Council Planning Scheme, the needs of Yarriambiack's towns for availability and choice in rural living, residential, and commercial land to support their long term viability
	1.3 Agricultural Diversification	Support agricultural producers looking to diversify their farming operations, particularly those associated with: - Intensive and semi-intensive livestock, tree crops and row crops utilising water resources from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. - Broadacre crop rotations and other measures to improve soil health, reduce environmental degradation and adapt to climate change. - Differentiating Yarriambiack's agricultural products from commodities produced elsewhere in Australia and overseas
	1.4 Renewable Energy and Minerals	Support planning applications and major projects in renewable energy and sand mining which have overwhelmingly positive economic, social and environmental merit (in the short to medium term these are expected to include the Murra Warra Wind Farm development, and the extension of mineral sands logistics services by Kalari).
Strategy 2: Economic Development as a Multi-Disciplinary Function across Council Departments. Implement a whole-of-Council/multidisciplinary team approach to funding, facilitating and delivering economic development infrastructure projects.	2.1 Town Entrances, Streetscaping and Landscaping	Design and construct attractive and consistent signage, central activities area streetscaping, and landscaping for town entrances, on an achievable and prioritised rollout schedule (over 3 to 5 years), commencing with the Shire's largest centres (Warracknabeal, Murtoa, Hopetoun, Minyip and Rupanyup), including a review of the signage and standards at key tourist facilities in each town, as well as town entry boards that provide information about local attractions and facilities, their locations and trading times. For all significant towns in the Shire: - o Install town entry 'welcome' signage that indicates 3-4 major attractions in the town, eg. caravan park, lake reserve, heritage walk. - o Position on major access routes, along with directional signage to main streets (especially at Warracknabeal). - o Signage could have a common style across the shire (reflecting shire's tourism brand) but reflect a unique theme and image for each town. - o Audit signage to key tourist facilities in each town, such as toilets, and address improvements required. - o Install town entry boards that provide information about local attractions and facilities, and their locations and opening hours. - o Review the road entries to all major towns to identify opportunities for beautification, such as landscaping and street lighting. Complement the town entry signage with a staged streetscaping program in each central activities area.

Figure 1 Economic Development Strategies and Actions (continued)

Strategy	Action	Description
Strategy 2: Economic Development as a Multi-Disciplinary Function across Council Departments (continued).	2.2 Community Enterprises	Provide leadership in the implementation of community based retail, hospitality and recreation enterprises (by assisting community groups in assessing projects, forming relationships with potential venture partners, and securing funds and expand relationships with Reichstein Foundation and Sunshine Foundation).
	2.3 Industrial Land	Provide attractive industrially zoned areas and serviced industrial land to support efficient secondary and tertiary sector businesses (including manufacturing, construction, trades related, storage, wholesaling, warehousing and transport operations).
		Undertake a feasibility assessment of a Council owned industrial estate development, or a 'themed' industrial estate (eg based around grain or pulse value adding enterprises/activities) as part of the commitment to provide industrial development sites, in complement to urban growth plans and industrial zones in the Shire's five major towns
	2.4 Health and Social Services	Acknowledge that, while agriculture remains the mainstay of the Shire's economy, the health and social services industry needs to be a growth area for at least the next fifteen years in order to keep pace with increasing demand. To maximise this growth there must be proactive support for continued investment in health and aged care facilities providing independent, supported and full care residential and support services.
	2.5 Housing Development	Collaborate with Wimmera Development Association, neighbouring Shires and potential developers to establish innovative developments in new housing.
	2.6 Recreational Water Assets	"Release" residential properties where there are severe 'rates in arrears' issues. If these properties could be returned to the market for reoccupation, renovation, or demolition, it would significantly add to the stock of affordable housing in the Shire, and provide a new opportunity for both population and rates increases Promote the importance of the Shire's key creeks, weir pools, and lakes as major liveability assets of the Shire's towns, including Warracknabeal, Murtoa, Hopetoun, Beulah and Brim, and secure the highest possible priority for water allocation to ensure these water assets are maintained (requiring less than 1,000 megalitres per annum).

Figure 1 Economic Development Strategies and Actions (continued)

Strategy	Action	Description
Strategy 3: Facilitate Investment in Priority Industry Sectors. <i>Maximise the efficient use of Council resources to promote and coordinate support (across all Council staff areas including planning, building, community services, operations and administration) for the targeted and high priority industries for economic development investment over the next five years.</i>	3.1 to 3.4 Priority Industry Sectors	The specific actions for Strategy 3 are to ensure the Council team and Council stakeholders are aware of the high priority target areas, and have a cooperative approach in facilitating opportunities as they arise. The high priority economic development opportunity areas are: Primary industry sectors: Mainstream • Intensive livestock – Lamb finishing – Poultry meat, eggs and game – Pigs • Pulses Niche • Climate responsive systems • Local gourmet food. Secondary industry sectors: • Collaborative marketing and logistics in agriculture • Stock feed manufacture • Local agricultural product value adding/processing • Agricultural machinery and equipment • Housing for the services workforce Tertiary industry sectors: • Retail and integrated commercial community enterprises in town centres. Quinary industry sectors • Food services • Agritourism, agri-history tourism and tourism trails • Active aged care/retirement
	3.5 Professional Development for Businesses	Continue to provide professional development modules (through Council resources and linkages with Wimmera Development Association) for existing small businesses across all sectors, through - Mentoring sessions - Invigorating products/services - Business improvement workshops
	3.6 National Broadband Promotion	Promote the opportunities to Yarriambiack businesses, in conducting online and efficient communication links, from the relatively early access to the national broadband network (NBN) that is programmed for the Shire.

Figure 1 Economic Development Strategies and Actions (continued)

Strategy	Action	Description
Strategy 4: Collaborative Tourism and Branding <i>Facilitate local and regional collaboration in tourism activities and establish a new Yarriambiack tourism brand position</i>	4.1 Tourism Organisation Linkages	Continue to build tourism marketing relationships between Yarriambiack Tourism, Wimmera Mallee Tourism and Grampians Tourism, and use these relationships to help in monitoring and conducting visitor research to improve the understanding of visitor perceptions of the Shire's experiences, visitation trends and behaviours.
	4.2 Tourism Branding	Develop a clear brand positioning for Yarriambiack Shire based on local agricultural food production, and use it to guide promotional activities and the development of visitor experiences and events in the shire. The brand positioning should be informed by findings from the visitor research. Develop a clear brand positioning for Yarriambiack Shire based on local agricultural food production, and use it to guide promotional activities and the development of visitor experiences and events in the shire. The brand positioning should be informed by findings from the visitor research.
	4.3 Cabin and Camping Accommodation	Investigate the potential to develop more cabin accommodation in their caravan parks, and encourage the tourism industry to upgrade existing accommodation properties. Endorse the range of low-cost and designated free camping locations in the Shire, with access to power.
	4.4 Tourist Information	Conduct an audit of interpretive information available in each town. Identify opportunities to improve the telling of local stories, and develop additional interpretive signage and information. Install self-serve tourist information kiosks in each town at a location that is accessible seven days a week Conduct an audit of interpretive information available in each town. Identify opportunities to improve the telling of local stories, and develop additional interpretive signage and information. Install self-serve tourist information kiosks in each town at a location that is accessible seven days a week
	4.5 Tours and Themes	Package the agricultural heritage attractions into a visit experience for groups and independent travellers. The package would include The Murtoa Stick Shed, Wheatlands Museum, Wood's Farming and Heritage Museum and the William Farrer monument. Develop and promote other themed touring itineraries (which focus on natural attractions, tracks and trails, heritage, and agrifood).
	4.6 Professional Development for Tourism Business Operators	Continue to provide professional development learning opportunities for the local business community, including field trips, training sessions and networking nights
	4.7 Sport and Recreation Events	Promote the Shire's sport and recreation facilities and venues as locations for inter-regional competitions and events.

Figure 2 Yarriambiack Shire Map



Priority Economic Development Initiatives

Although it is recognised that specific new opportunities will emerge, and some may dissipate, over the next five years, the following specific initiatives have been selected by Council and Senior Staff as major priorities.

❖ **Murra Warra Wind Farm Project**

Renewable energy company RES Australia is working towards the establishment of a 110 to 117 turbines wind farm at Murra Warra in the south-west of Yarriambiack Shire (between Minyip and Horsham), and Council expects a planning application to be lodged within the next 12 months. Council hopes to be able to approve this application, and to encourage the Victorian Government to fast-track its approval of this important development. The Murra Warra project estimated to involve capital development expenditure of \$650 million (a larger project than the Wimmera Mallee pipeline project, at \$500 million) with a construction workforce impact of 610 jobs.

Once operational, the Murra Warra wind farm venture will create 60 new jobs. The turbines will provide a non-farm revenue stream for 17 farming families, increase Council rate revenue by \$850,000 per year (\$21.25 million over 25 years), and contribute \$340,000 per year to the Yarriambiack Shire Community fund.

❖ **Industrial Land Provision and Industrial Estate Feasibility**

Yarriambiack Shire has a shortage of serviced industrial land available for new or expanding businesses. Indeed, the Shire also has very limited areas, within the Planning Scheme, zoned for industrial use. An industrial estate feasibility assessment will be undertaken in order to make provision of serviced land, ahead of demand, in Warracknabeal, Hopetoun, Minyip and/or Murtoa. The feasibility assessment will be consistent with the urban growth plan for the selected town or towns.

❖ **Community Enterprises**

Yarriambiack Shire hopes to be a regional Victorian leader in establishing sustainable community enterprises. Arguably there is nowhere more likely for community enterprises to succeed than in Yarriambiack. *'We look after our own in the Wimmera'* has long been a local mantra, and there is an impressive track record to prove it. Council will provide leadership in the implementation of community based retail, hospitality and recreation enterprises (by assisting community groups in assessing projects, forming relationships with potential venture partners, and securing funds).

❖ **Town Entrances, Streetscaping and Landscaping**

Council will design and construct attractive and consistent signage, central activities area streetscaping, and landscaping for town entrances, on an achievable and prioritised rollout schedule (over 3 to 5 years), commencing with the Shire's largest centres (Warracknabeal, Murtoa, Hopetoun, Minyip and Rupanyup). These improvements are overwhelmingly consistent themes in the Yarriambiack towns current Community Plans and in feedback from the business community, to help in revitalising the towns.



Yarriambiack

SHIRE COUNCIL

