

# WARRNAMBOOL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-28

**FINAL REPORT**

WARRNAMBOOL CITY COUNCIL | SEPTEMBER 2023



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## **AUTHORS**

Jonathan Rochwerger (Director)

Julia Cretan (Senior Consultant)

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L1 302-304 Barkly St, Brunswick VIC 3056

+61 3 9482 3888 [urbanenterprise.com.au](http://urbanenterprise.com.au)

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## ACRONYMS

AAGR	Annual Average Growth Rate
ABR	Australian Business Register
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
GORRT	Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism
LGA	Local Government Area
PA	Per Annum
SA2	Statistical Area Level 2
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Index for Areas
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
TRA	Tourism Research Australia

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Economic Output	Represents the gross revenue generated by businesses in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Gross revenue is also referred to as total sales or total income.
Regional Exports	Represents the value of goods and services exported outside of the defined region that have been generated by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors within the region.
Employment	Employment data represents the number of people employed by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Employment data presented in this report is destination of work data. That is, no inference is made as to where people in a defined region reside.

## Daytrip Visitor

Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.

## Overnight Visitor

People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope of the NVS.

## International Visitor

A person is defined as an international visitor to Australia if they are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia for less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.

## SEIFA

Developed by the ABS, this measures the relative level of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage for a defined area. The index score is based on a weighted combination of census variables that reflect disadvantage (e.g. income, education, employment, etc.), which is then standardised around the national average score of 1,000. Therefore, a score above 1,000 indicates a lower level of disadvantage relative to the national average, while a score below 1,000 indicates a higher level of disadvantage relative to the national average.

## Small to Medium Enterprise

The ABS defines a business entity employing less than 20 employees as a Small to Medium Enterprise

## Non-Employing Business

A type of that does not have employees. This may include a range of entity types, such as non-employing sole traders or any other businesses without employees

## Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2)

SA2s are medium-sized, general-purpose, geographical areas. Their purpose is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically. Data from the ABS is available at an SA2 level, noting that the SA2 is the smallest area for the release of data.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OVERVIEW

The Warrnambool Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028 (Strategy or EDS) guides economic growth priorities and actions for Warrnambool City Council (Council) over the next five years. The purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that Warrnambool continues to be a thriving and sustainable Regional City that serves as the key population, employment and tourism hub for the region.

The information in this Strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, residents, local businesses, Council and Government stakeholders.

## CITY OF WARRNAMBOOL DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

Warrnambool is the designated Regional City for south-west Victoria (and located at the western-most point of the Great Ocean Road), providing a hub for retail, services and industry. It is the region's primary location for employment (18,518 jobs) and businesses (2,916) and provides key amenity and services that cater to surrounding residents, workers and visitors.

With a local population of over 35,000 residents, and a broader regional population catchment of over 100,000 residents in surrounding municipalities, the future growth of Warrnambool will have significant implications across the region.

The profile of the Warrnambool economy highlights that there are a number of industries that are driving employment in the local economy. These include:

- **Knowledge & Public Sector Industries** – Health and Education;
- **Primary Industries and Trade** – Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities; and
- **Population and Tourism Services** – Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Services, Personal Services.

These sectors, which provide important amenity to residents, generate local consumption and also represent key pillars of Warrnambool's visitor economy offering.

## STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The Strategy responds to the strengths and challenges for the local economy and identifies relevant economic opportunities for Council and other external stakeholders to achieve economic development. These are summarised below (and explored in greater detail in the report).

- ✓ **Advocate for major public infrastructure investment (transport, community, digital, etc.) to service the residents, employees, visitors and businesses within the broader regional catchment.**
- ✓ **Support more efficient commercial and residential land use to support business expansion and attract business investment.**
- ✓ **Increase housing diversity and supply to accommodate residents and workers.**
- ✓ **Support business diversity and sustainability to create a more viable economy and expand the jobs base.**
- ✓ **Investment in renewable energy, including research and development, ensuring Warrnambool is a key regional contributor to this sector.**
- ✓ **Development and activation of key economic areas, activity centres and the foreshore, for the purposes of promoting investment and consumption.**
- ✓ **Attracting large scale tourism events, as well as tourism product and infrastructure development, to maintain growth in the visitor economy.**
- ✓ **Improve destination branding and increase destination awareness as a key visitor attraction within the Great Ocean Road.**
- ✓ **Workforce pathways for key growth industries, such as food and fibre, supporting business needs for skilled workers.**

- ✓ Investment in population services and amenity to support worker attraction and retention, as well as catering to the broader regional catchment.
- ✓ Build regional collaborations and partnerships across Council, industry and government to achieve economic development outcomes.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The following outlines the strategic framework for Warrnambool City Council to guide economic development and sustainable growth.

### Vision

The vision for economic development in Warrnambool is informed by the Warrnambool 2040 Community Vision and Council Plan and considers Warrnambool's role in the broader region.

*"Warrnambool is a productive, prosperous Regional City that is a national leader in sustainability and innovation"*

### Objectives

The Strategy and vision are supported by the following objectives:



## Themes and Strategic Directions

The following economic development framework includes the key themes and focus areas for the Warrnambool Shire economy. This is used to identify the project opportunities – including priority projects – and future actions for Council to achieve desired economic outcomes, which are presented later in this report.

### T1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

#### Theme and Description



#### Theme 1: Planning for Sustainable Regional City Growth

Achieve growth through strategic investments and land use planning that enhances Warrnambool's role as the regional hub for business activity, employment and tourism.



#### Theme 2: A Collaborative, Productive and Diverse Industry

Develop a resilient and sustainable business community that supports growth in existing industry specialisations and encourages diversity in business investment



#### Theme 3: Workforce Attraction and Skills Development

Attract a skilled and engaged workforce that contributes to service provision, business activity and a productive economy.



#### Theme 4: A Successful and High-Value Visitor Economy

Drive visitor growth through destination awareness and support a high-yielding visitor base through high-quality products and experiences.

The role of Council and other stakeholders in the delivery and implementation of this framework and identified project opportunities is detailed in the Action Plan document.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. OVERVIEW

The Warrnambool Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028 (Strategy or EDS) guides economic growth priorities and actions for Warrnambool City Council (Council) over the next five years.

The Strategy has been designed to support the needs and aspirations of the community, workers and local businesses, in alignment with the *Warrnambool 2040* Community Vision, as well as the Council Plan 2021-25 and other strategies which underpin Council's direction.

The information in this document is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, residents, local businesses, Council and Government stakeholders.



<sup>1</sup> Annual Performance Measures of Local Economic Development in Victoria, Urban Enterprise and EDA, 2016

## 1.2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to the Victorian Government, the role of local economic development is to:

*"Build up the economic capacity of a local area to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all. It is a process by which public, business and non-government sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation (Victorian Government, 2016)"*

This is supported by the the following core economic development functions that are typically adopted across Local Government:

1. Supporting the Existing Business Base
2. Attracting New Businesses and Jobs
3. Promoting Liveable and Sustainable Communities
4. Growing the Visitor Economy<sup>1</sup>

Economic development requires a holistic, whole of government approach that can be achieved through an overarching Economic Development Strategy with clear objectives and measurable actions that align with community and industry needs.

## 1.4. LOCAL INSIGHTS

This Strategy was prepared in close consultation with Council, community and industry, to reflect local values and identify the unique challenges and opportunities for Warrnambool. The consultation undertaken to support this Strategy is summarised in Table T2 below.

### T2. CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Engagement Activity	Description	Participants
Industry and community survey	An online survey for members of the community and local operators, distributed by Council.	39
Targeted interviews	7 interviews with local businesses, government agencies and community groups.	14
Industry workshops	10 workshops with representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dairy</li><li>• Education</li><li>• Healthcare and Social Assistance</li><li>• Developers and Industrial Estate</li><li>• Construction</li><li>• Retailers</li><li>• Tourism and Hospitality</li><li>• Financial</li><li>• Employment Services</li></ul>	32
Council	3 workshops with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Councillors</li><li>• Executive Management Team</li><li>• Council Officers</li></ul>	25

## 1.5. REPORT STRUCTURE

This Strategy includes the following structure to demonstrate the research and analysis undertaken to inform the recommendations for economic development.

Strategic Context	An overview of the key factors influencing Warrnambool's economy, including its locational context, existing infrastructure and investment, supporting policies and external economic trends.
Population and Demographics	A profile of Warrnambool's population, key socio-economic indicators and future trends.
The Warrnambool Economy	A profile of Warrnambool's economy, including key industry specialisations, employment indicators and the local business base.
Strategic Considerations	A summary of the key issues and opportunities for Warrnambool's economy, drawing on background research and stakeholder consultation.
Economic Development Framework	A strategic framework that sets the future directions and recommendations to support economic growth, including a vision, key themes and priority projects for the Warrnambool economy.
Action Plan	A guide for Council and relevant stakeholders to implement the projects and recommendations identified in the Strategy.



## 2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### 2.1. WARRNAMBOOL

The Warrnambool Local Government Area (LGA) is located 256km south-west of Melbourne along Victoria's coastline. As a Regional City it is strategically positioned to cater to the south-west corner of the state, servicing a specific catchment area that is distinct from surrounding regional cities (including Geelong, Ballarat and Horsham).

Accessibility is provided via major road transport routes, including the Great Ocean Road, Princes and Hamilton Highways, rail transport (freight and passenger) and Warrnambool Airport. In addition, the municipality is proximate to the Port of Portland, making the area highly advantageous for industry and the community.

From a tourism perspective, the western-most point of the Great Ocean Road is located within the municipal boundaries, with Warrnambool serving as the main service centre and visitor hub for the Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism area.

Warrnambool's pristine coastline stretches approximately 13km from Levy's Point Coastal Reserve in the west, to Logan's Beach in the east, acting as a key contributor to resident lifestyle and a major driver of visitation to the City.

The municipality, which has an estimated resident population of 35,406<sup>2</sup>, is supported by a high level of amenity and services, including public open spaces, a central business area, health and education facilities.

These attributes provide economic opportunity for Warrnambool, including business investment, workforce growth and resident attraction.

Warrnambool's strategic location and positioning as the main service centre for the broader regional area is illustrated in Figure F1.

F1. WARRNAMBOOL REGIONAL CONTEXT



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2023

<sup>2</sup> ABS Census of Population & Housing, 2021

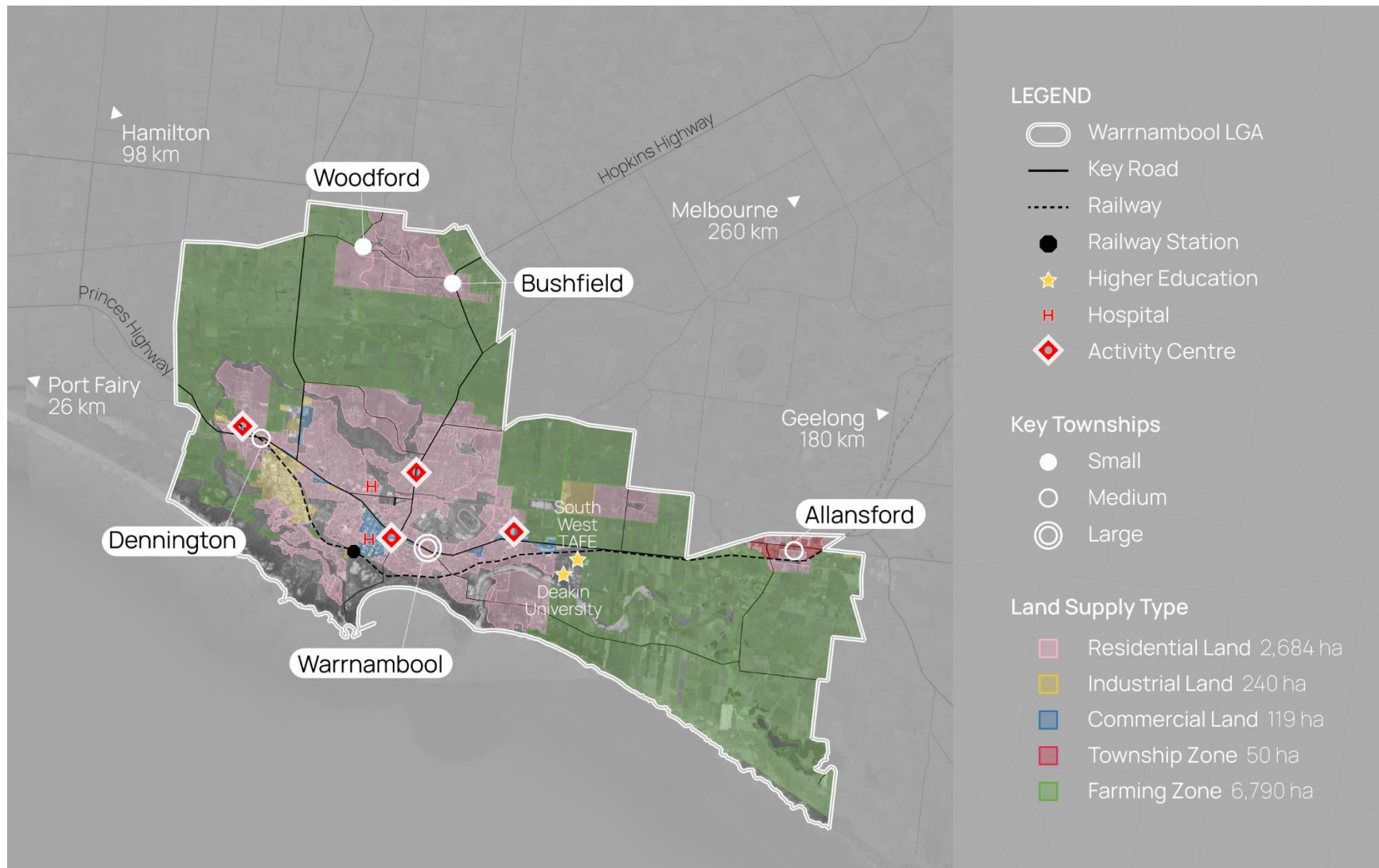
### 2.1.1. KEY ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT AREAS

The figure overleaf illustrates the key economic and employment areas across the municipality. These areas provide key services and amenity to residents, workers and visitors, as well as supporting business activity, local consumption and economic development opportunities in Warrnambool. This includes:

- **Activity Centres** in the municipality, including Warrnambool City Centre, Eastern Activity Precinct, two Neighbourhood Activity Centres at Northpoint and Dennington, as well as several strip shops. These commercially zoned areas largely support retail and hospitality businesses to service surrounding residents, employees and visitors.
- **Industrial precincts** in Warrnambool, Dennington and Allansford, which supports larger scale business investment, employment and industry activity in the municipality.
- **Farming-zoned land** across the municipality, which supports agriculture and associated uses that can add value to the economy.
- **Township zone land** in Allansford. This is a dynamic and flexible zone that can accommodate both employment and residential uses. However, existing residential character is prioritised over employment uses.
- **Health precincts** surrounding the major hospitals including South-West Healthcare and St John of God Hospital.
- **Education and training precincts** located east of the town centre around the Deakin University and South-West TAFE campuses.
- Key **road and rail transport** nodes to support accessibility and connectivity.



## F2. WARRNAMBOOL KEY ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT AREAS



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2023

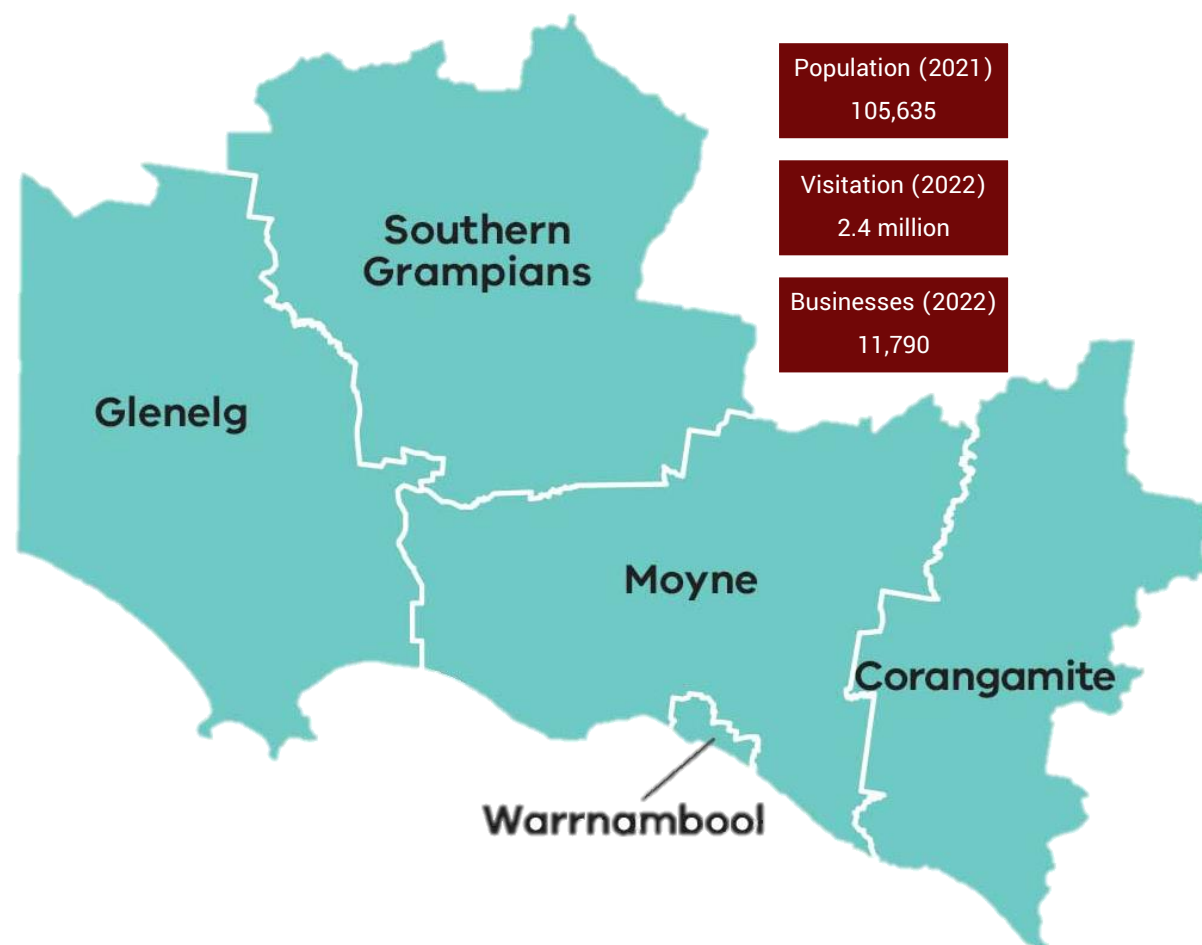
## 2.2. GREAT SOUTH COAST REGION

Warrnambool is one of five municipalities that forms part of the *Great South Coast regional partnership* (see Figure F3). The partnership is a representative body for the region to support Government policies and strategies to effectively service the region. Overall, the region totals over 100,000 residents and almost 12,000 businesses, as well as attracting around 2.4 million visitors each year.

Warrnambool is the designated Regional City for the Great South Coast, making it the region's primary location for retail, services and employment. This ensures Warrnambool has strong links with surrounding municipalities and plays a major role by providing health, education, retail and business services to the broader region.

The *Great South Coast Regional Growth Plan (2014)* recognises that the ongoing growth of Warrnambool benefits the whole region and increases access to retail, healthcare, education and professional services. For Warrnambool to continue providing effective support to the broader region, it is vital that there is sufficient investment in quality infrastructure, services and amenity.

F3. GREAT SOUTH COAST REGION



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021; Tourism Research Australia (TRA), YE March 2022, Counts of Australian Businesses, June 2022

## 2.3. POLICY CONTEXT

Economic development in Warrnambool will support the broader policy and strategic environment as outlined in relevant local, regional and state-wide documents. Key documents are summarised below.

### Warrnambool 2040 Community Vision

W2040 is a community vision for Warrnambool that was developed through an extensive community engagement process. The vision for Warrnambool in 2040 includes four components as detailed below:



W2040 sets the following goals relate for the local economy:

- Warrnambool will embrace digital innovation and technical change;
- Warrnambool grows its resilient an diverse economy;
- Warrnambool fosters a creative and collaborative culture;
- Warrnambool thinks globally; and
- Warrnambool invests in its liveability to grow the economy.

These goals help to establish the areas of focus and strategic priorities for economic development in the City.

### Warrnambool City Council Plan (2021-2025)

The Warrnambool City Council Plan is the key strategic document for Council that guides the work Council performs on behalf of the community. The vision for Warrnambool, as outlined in the plan, is as follows:

*A thriving city at the heart of coast and country.*

*Warrnambool is the bright beacon at the western edge of the Great Ocean Road.*

*Within the Warrnambool municipality are beautiful beaches, parks, buildings and pathways. The city of Warrnambool is the South West's professional, commercial, retail, education, sporting and health capital and our attractive townships of Allansford, Bushfield and Woodford enhance our liveability.*

The Council Plan outlines the following four strategic objectives that were developed in response to visions and goals in Warrnambool 2040: **A healthy community, A sustainable environment, A strong economy, A connected, inclusive place.**

This vision and objectives will help to inform the development of Council actions included in this EDS.

### **Great South Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy (2022)**

The Great South Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy is one of nine regional strategies aimed at making regional Victoria a resilient and thriving place to live, work and do business.

This report recognises the city of Warrnambool as the economic hub for employment and service provision in the Great South Coast and identifies the following strategic directions for driving economic growth in Warrnambool and the broader region:

- Add value to and diversify within the agri-food supply chain
- Maximise the potential of the region's energy resources
- Grow and equip the workforce needed to enable future economic opportunities
- Expand existing strengths in cultural and nature-based visitation
- Capture the greater potential of the 'Green Triangle' cross-border economic zone

A range of other state, regional and local documents relevant to economic development were also reviewed and assessed. These help to identify the relevant strategic directions and areas of focus for economic development in the region, as well as capitalise on existing work to achieve growth outcomes.

These documents are listed in Appendix A.



## 2.5. MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT

The following external economic influences will require Council consideration as it will have significant implications for economic development in Warrnambool.



### COVID-19 and business recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has already had a significant impact on the global and national economy. Industries that are consumer facing and rely on population movements (i.e. retail, food and hospitality) have been more significantly impacted in terms of revenue reductions and job loss. While other industries have had to transition to more innovative business practices in response to shifting consumer trends.



### Rise of remote and flexible working arrangements

The rise in remote working (which accelerated with the onset of the pandemic) will provide opportunity for residents to be more flexible in choosing a place of residence.



### Workforce shortages in key service sectors

Skills and workforce shortages are being experienced across most industries in regional areas, including primary industries (i.e. manufacturing, agriculture) and service industries (i.e. childcare, aged care, retail and hospitality). This has had a substantial impact on business operations and service provision for residents.



### Global economic uncertainty

Global supply side shortages and commodity price volatility have been exacerbated by the external economic and environmental shocks. The trajectory and duration of these events remain unpredictable, leading to global economic uncertainty in the short term, impacting consumer and business confidence.



### Rising inflation and cost of living pressures

Price pressures from supply chain issues, as well as rising interest rates have led to an increase in the cost of daily essentials and basic services, which has the potential to affect business activity and local consumption levels in the short term.



### Growth of advanced manufacturing

Manufacturing has been a key part of Australia's COVID-19 response, particularly in responding to the global supply chain impacts, and the need to produce goods locally. There is an opportunity for manufacturing businesses to scale up and become more competitive and resilient, through investment in more advanced and emerging manufacturing activities.



### Shifting agricultural practices

The industry is experiencing change, with agricultural businesses facing new challenges and opportunities, including increasing global demand for food, adopting more sustainable practices to combat climate change and harnessing innovative technologies to increase productivity.



### Climate resilience and environmental sustainability

Given the recent government commitments to reducing emissions, environmental sustainability is playing an increasing role within local government and influencing business and consumer decisions. As a result, there is increased demand for investment in new, clean energy technologies to increase energy efficiency and reduce emissions, as well as transition to more sustainable circular economy practices.



### Growing demand for health care

As the population ages, demand for health care will increase and significantly grow healthcare related spending, demand for public health facilities and workforce requirements to meet demand.

### 3. DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

- Warrnambool has a large population base and also services over 100,000 residents across the Great South Coast Region. The population is expected to grow by over 2,300 residents p.a. to 2036, which represents three-quarters of projected growth across the region. To ensure sustainable population growth, it will be critical that investment in services, amenity and infrastructure keeps pace with local growth, and considers the growth of the broader region.
- With a high median age, combined with an ageing population, this reflects a relatively low supply of local labour and will impact demand for health care and aged care services. Therefore, an area of focus should be on attracting working-aged residents and young families to support the local workforce and help sustain the economy.
- House prices in Warrnambool are relatively more expensive than the regional Victorian average, which has affected the ability to attract new residents, particularly in periods of major workforce shortages. Ensuring there is an adequate supply of diverse and affordable housing is a key driver of resident (and worker) attraction.

#### POPULATION AND DWELLINGS

2021 to 2036



Population

**35,419**

105,283 Great South Coast



**2,360 p.a.** growth to 2036

3,164 p.a. Great South Coast



Dwellings

**16,025**

50,936 Great South Coast



**842 p.a.** growth to 2036

1,964 p.a. Great South Coast

#### AGE PROFILE

2021 to 2036



**42**

Median Age

38 Median Age  
in Victoria

	2021		Change to 2036
0 to 9 years	3,190 11%		▼ 430 -11%
10 to 19 years	4,373 12%		▲ 401 +9%
20 to 29 years	4,212 12%		▼ 716 -17%
30 to 39 years	4,368 12%		▲ 1,952 +45%
40 to 49 years	4,297 12%		▲ 45 +1%
50 to 59 years	4,544 13%		▲ 523 +12%
60 to 69 years	4,639 12%		▲ 2,372 +54%
70 to 79 years	3,211 9%		▲ 4,498 +140%
80 years or more	2,063 6%		▲ 902 +44%

#### PROPERTY MARKET INDICATORS

2021

	Houses	Apartments	Vacant Blocks
Median Property Prices	<b>\$515k</b> \$506k Regional Victoria	<b>\$380k</b> \$380k Regional Victoria	<b>\$190k</b> \$245k Regional Victoria
5-year Growth 2017-2021	<b>+\$185k</b> +11.8%	<b>+\$122k</b> +10.2%	<b>+\$40k</b> +6.1%

Note: The data included in this section has been compiled by Urban Enterprise from a combination of sources, including: Profile REMPLAN, ABS Census data and the Victorian Valuer-General.



## 4. ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

- The following represent areas of economic specialisation for Warrnambool. These sectors contribute significantly to output, exports and employment :

- Knowledge & Public Sector Industries** (health and education);
- Primary Industries and Trade** (manufacturing, construction and utilities); and
- Population & Tourism Services** (retail trade, accommodation & food services, personal services).

These represent the existing strengths that can be supported to drive economic and employment outcomes.

- As Warrnambool is the key service centre for the Great South Coast Region and attracts a significant amount of economic activity from outside the municipality, with 19% of total spend derived from non-Warrnambool Great South Coast Region residents.
- Almost all registered businesses in Warrnambool are 'non-employing' or 'small' businesses. Supporting business growth and development will help small businesses capitalise on growth opportunities and help generate economic and employment outcomes for the municipality.
- With relatively low unemployment and high job containment levels (residents that both live and work in the municipality), Warrnambool is a key employment centre for the region.
- Warrnambool is a popular visitor destination, with visitation driven by visiting friends and relatives, nature-based activities, in addition to wellness, heritage and cultural attractions. Warrnambool's role as a service centre for the broader region means it attracts a high number of visitors for access to amenity and infrastructure, including accommodation, retail and hospitality, which is a key driver of visitor spend.

### KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

2022

Local Jobs  
**18,518**  
30% of Great South Coast

Total Output  
**\$5.0B**  
25% of Great South Coast

Total GRP  
**\$2.6B**  
20% of Great South Coast

Total Exports  
**\$1.5B**  
29% of Great South Coast

Local Consumption  
**\$1.3B**

**\$1B**  
Warrnambool Residents 78%

**\$247M**  
Great South Coast Residents 19%

**\$44M**  
Other Visitors 3%

### TOP INDUSTRIES

2021

By Employment

1. **Health Care & Social Assistance** 23%
2. **Retail Trade** 13%
3. **Education & Training** 10%

By Output

1. **Manufacturing** 13%
2. **Construction** 13%
3. **Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services** 10%

By Regional Export

1. **Manufacturing** 30%
2. **Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services** 12%
3. **Health Care & Social Assistance** 12%

### EMPLOYMENT

2021

 **2.8%**  
Unemployment Rate June 2022

**+1,743** +2.1% p.a.  
Local Jobs Growth 2016-2021

**81%**  
Job Containment Rate

### BUSINESSES

2022

 **2,916**  
Registered Businesses  
11,790 Great South Coast

**56%** Non-Employing Businesses  
**41%** SMEs 1-19 employees


Business Count by Industry

1. **Construction** 20%
2. **Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services** 12%
3. **Health Care & Social Assistance** 10%

### DOMESTIC VISITOR ECONOMY

2022

 **452K**  
Visitors  
 Day trip 53%  
 Overnight 47%

 **\$266M**  
Visitor Spend  
 Day trip 32%  
 Overnight 68%

**\$141** Average spend per day trip visitor  
\$107 Great South Coast  
**\$379** Average spend per overnight visitor  
\$383 Great South Coast

Note: The data included in this section has been compiled by Urban Enterprise from a combination of sources, including REMPLAN, ABS Census data, Spendmapp and Tourism Research Australia.

## 5. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

### 5.1. OVERVIEW

The following examines the strategic strengths, challenges and subsequent economic opportunities for the local economy, which guides future decision-making for Council.

This information, which is drawn from a combination of background research, policy review and stakeholder consultation, is used to inform the strategic framework and recommendations in this Strategy.

### 5.2. STRENGTHS

The following outlines Warrnambool's strengths, including the competitive advantages that could be leveraged to achieve economic growth.



#### Role as a Regional City (population and employment centre)

Warrnambool is the designated regional City for the Great South Coast, making it the region's primary location for retail, services and employment. As such, a large proportion of the municipality's employment is concentrated in service sectors, such as health, education, retail trade, hospitality and personal services. These sectors, which provide important amenity to residents, generate local consumption and also represent key pillars of Warrnambool's visitor economy offering.



#### Large Business Base and Population

Warrnambool has the largest population and business base of the Great South Coast region, which can be leveraged to drive future economic growth, as well as resident and visitor attraction.



#### Competitive Advantages in Food and Fibre

South West Victoria is one of Australia's top agricultural regions, largely attributable to its temperate climate, reliable rainfall and established business base. Warrnambool supports primary production in surrounding Local Government Areas, including through food processing, distribution and transport of produce.



#### Manufacturing (Food Processing)

Manufacturing is the largest contributor to Warrnambool's regional exports and output, and is driven the meat, dairy and other food manufacturing sub-sectors. Opportunities to leverage this sector and add value to food processing should be a key consideration for the municipality.



#### Hycel Hydrogen Program (Deakin)

Hycel's technology hub at Deakin University's Warrnambool Campus is one of Australia's first facilities for safely testing, manufacturing, optimising and training in new hydrogen technologies, with a specific focus on hydrogen usage in heavy vehicle transport and natural gas industries. This provides significant opportunities for research, training and investment in the renewable energy sector, ensuring Warrnambool contributes to a more sustainable economy.



#### Popular Visitor Destination

Warrnambool is a well-established visitor destination, with strengths in its beaches, coastal views, nature-based activities and whale watching. Warrnambool's role as a service centre provides opportunities to attract visitors from across the Great Ocean Road region and drive visitor yield.



#### Lifestyle Attributes

Warrnambool has a number of attributes that make it an attractive and highly liveable location for residents, including natural amenity and coastline, high quality health and education services, a wide range of retail and services, and a strong sense of community. These natural assets also contributing to resident amenity, as well as community pride, liveability outcomes and wellbeing.



#### DAMA (Designated Area Migration Agreements) Program

Warrnambool City Council has a DAMA agreement with the Australian Government, providing the municipality with access to more overseas skilled workers than the standard skilled migration program.

### 5.3. CHALLENGES

The following economic development challenges require Council consideration and response to realise identified economic opportunities.



#### Lack of Affordable and Available Housing Stock

Warrnambool is experiencing a shortage of housing, including affordable housing stock and rentals. Provision of affordable and diverse housing is needed to support residents and workers, which will help support businesses and contribute to economic growth.



#### Workforce and Skills Shortages

Warrnambool is experiencing significant workforce shortages in almost all sectors, including healthcare, construction, manufacturing and hospitality. As such, it will be critical to ensure there is sufficient availability of skilled labour to meet industry needs and ensure key services are provided to residents.



#### Infrastructure Not Reflective of 'Regional City' Status to Service Larger Regional Catchment Population

Warrnambool contains high quality infrastructure, including hospitals, retail, education facilities and transportation assets. However, the size and scale of Warrnambool's community infrastructure doesn't reflect the large population catchment it services across the Great South Coast.



#### Transport Connectivity – Including Public Transport and Road Infrastructure

Although Warrnambool is well-connected to Melbourne via road and rail, there are a number of transport-related issues constraining growth, including poor provision of internal public transport, low frequency of rail services to Melbourne, and the lack of a dual carriageway between Warrnambool and Colac.



#### Lack of Industry Representation

Warrnambool lacks industry peak bodies, such as a Chamber of Commerce, which support local businesses. These organisations are particularly important for the small business base, which requires ongoing support to capitalise on growth opportunities and overcome external shocks.



#### Ageing Population

An ageing workforce is likely to increase demand for health and aged-care services, which places pressure on costs and subsequent demand for relevant labour to support residents. In addition, it diminishes the pool of local labour supply, which impacts industry growth and development.



#### Lack of Foreshore Development and Connectivity

There has historically been very little development along the Warrnambool foreshore to date. This represents a missed opportunity to provide product and experience that leverages the area's pristine coastal views. Additionally, Warrnambool's foreshore is somewhat divorced from the City Centre, discouraging connectivity between these two major precincts.



#### Lack of Commercial Accommodation

Much of Warrnambool's existing accommodation stock is dated and reaches capacity in peak periods. There is a need to provide large-scale, contemporary commercial accommodation in Warrnambool that leverages coastal views.

## 5.4. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The following summarises the range of economic opportunities that Warrnambool could pursue to leverage its strengths, overcome key challenges and achieve economic development outcomes. These are used to identify future priorities and actions for Council in subsequent sections of this report.

- ✓ Advocate for major public infrastructure investment (transport, community, digital, etc.) to service the residents, employees, visitors and businesses within the broader regional catchment.
- ✓ Support more efficient commercial and residential land use to support business expansion and attract business investment.
- ✓ Increase housing diversity and supply to accommodate residents and workers.
- ✓ Support business diversity and sustainability to create a more viable economy and expand the jobs base.
- ✓ Investment in renewable energy, including research and development, ensuring Warrnambool is a key regional contributor to this sector.
- ✓ Development and activation of key economic areas, activity centres and the foreshore, for the purposes of promoting investment and consumption.
- ✓ Attracting large scale tourism events, as well as tourism product and infrastructure development, to maintain growth in the visitor economy.
- ✓ Improve destination branding and increase destination awareness as a key visitor attraction within the Great Ocean Road.
- ✓ Workforce pathways for key growth industries, such as food and fibre, supporting business needs for skilled workers.
- ✓ Investment in population services and amenity to support worker attraction and retention, as well as catering to the broader regional catchment.
- ✓ Build regional collaborations and partnerships across Council, industry and government to achieve economic development outcomes.



## 6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### 6.1. OVERVIEW

The following outlines the strategic framework for Warrnambool City Council to guide economic development and sustainable growth. This information is drawn from a combination of background research, policy review and stakeholder consultation outcomes.

### 6.2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

The vision for economic development in Warrnambool is informed by the Warrnambool 2040 Community Vision and Council Plan and considers Warrnambool's role in the broader region.

*“Warrnambool is a productive, prosperous Regional City that is a national leader in sustainability and innovation”*

### 6.3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are intended as measures of success for Council to support the economic development vision and help frame the future priorities and directions for the municipality.

Service the needs of  
the regional  
population and  
workforce

Create a more  
diverse and resilient  
economic base

Improve the social  
and economic  
prosperity of all  
residents

Attract investment  
in public and private  
infrastructure

Increase visitation  
and visitor spend

Increase jobs  
growth and  
workforce  
participation

Support an  
environmentally  
sustainable  
economy

## 6.5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THEMES

The following economic development framework includes the key themes and focus areas for the Warrnambool economy. These align with the objectives and vision for the economy, and include relevant project priorities and other opportunities for Council, which are explored throughout this section.

Council's role in delivery and implementation of the framework and the proposed projects (which can range from delivery, partner, to advocate), is detailed in the Action Plan.

### T3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Theme and Description	Focus Areas
 <p><b>Theme 1: Planning for Sustainable Regional City Growth</b></p> <p>Achieve growth through strategic investments and land use planning that enhances Warrnambool's role as the regional hub for business activity, employment and tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding advocacy.</li> <li>• Innovative and sustainable infrastructure investment</li> <li>• Efficient land-use planning for residential, and employment uses.</li> <li>• Regional lead in economic development.</li> <li>• Warrnambool Foreshore Framework Plan.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Theme 2: A Collaborative, Productive and Diverse Industry</b></p> <p>Develop a resilient and sustainable business community that supports growth in existing industry specialisations and encourages diversity in business investment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food and Fibre.</li> <li>• Business collaboration and networking.</li> <li>• Business support and resilience.</li> <li>• Industry diversification.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Theme 3: Workforce Attraction and Skills Development</b></p> <p>Attract a skilled and engaged workforce that contributes to service provision, business activity and a productive economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce growth and skills development through local participation.</li> <li>• Workforce attraction to meet industry needs.</li> <li>• Provision of available and affordable worker accommodation.</li> <li>• Liveable communities to support resident workers and working families.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Theme 4: A Successful and High-Value Visitor Economy</b></p> <p>Drive visitor growth through destination awareness and support a high-yielding visitor base through high-quality products and experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination branding and awareness.</li> <li>• Investment in quality tourism products and experiences.</li> <li>• Accommodation investment.</li> <li>• Festivals and Events.</li> </ul>

The following sections expands on each theme, areas of focus, as well as potential project opportunities.





## THEME 1: PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL CITY GROWTH

Achieve sustainable growth through strategic investments and land use planning that enhances Warrnambool's role as the regional hub for business activity, employment and tourism.

### OVERVIEW

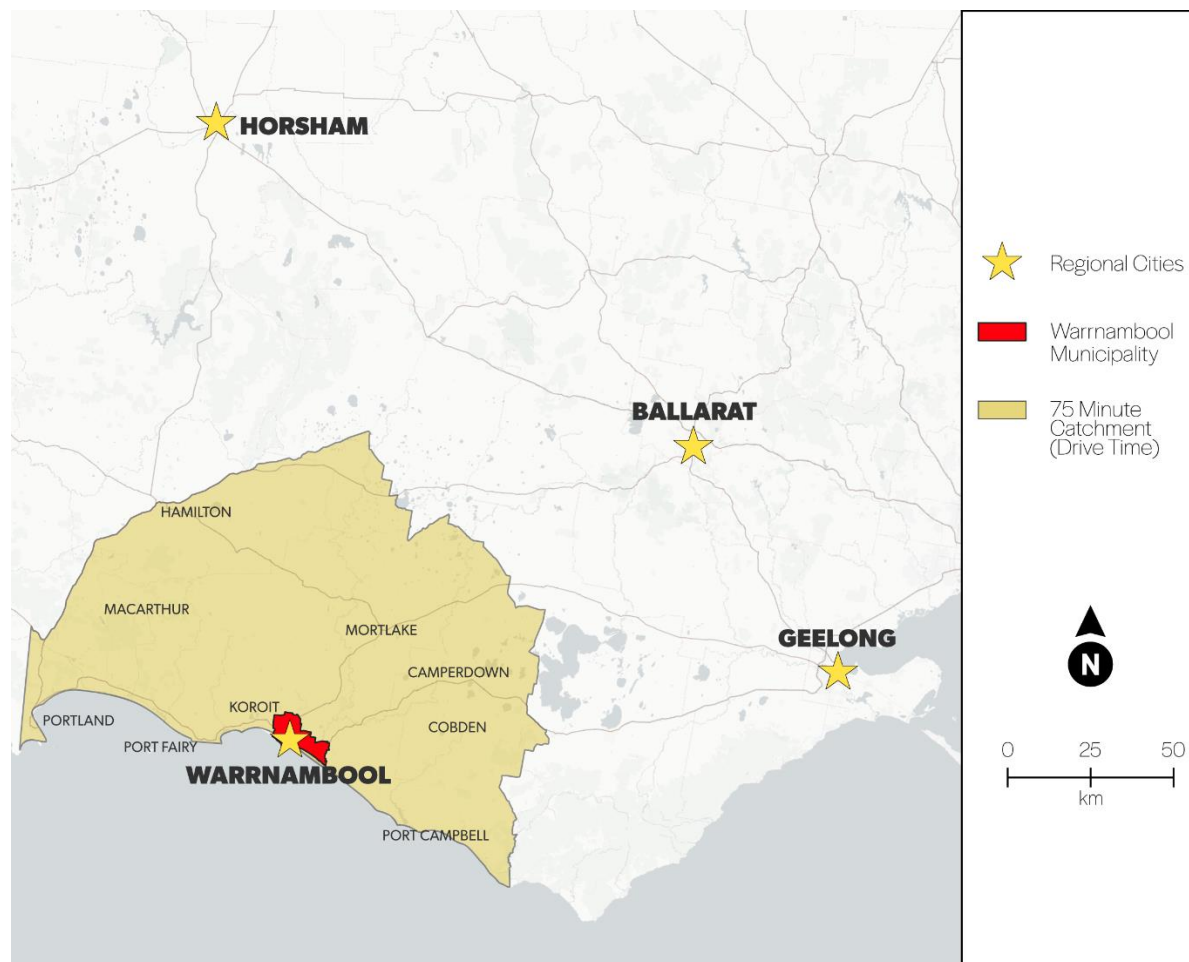
Warrnambool provides a critical role as the service centre for the regional population (105,635), visitors (2.4 million) and business base (11,790) for south-west Victoria.

As shown in Figure F4, measuring the regional catchment by travel time demonstrates Warrnambool's role as the regional hub for key regional centres and district towns across the Great South Coast Region – including Hamilton, Portland, Port Fairy, Cobden and Camperdown.

To ensure Warrnambool captures the economic activity from within this catchment, and avoid 'leakages' to a surrounding Regional City, it is vital that the quality of infrastructure, services and amenity reflects its status as a key regional hub. In addition, ensuring efficient land use will stimulate investment in the City and promote growth.

Below are a list of focus areas and potential project opportunities to enable Warrnambool to achieve its full potential as a Regional City and support economic growth outcomes.

### F4. WARRNAMBOOL REGIONAL CATCHMENT (KEY TOWNS)



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2023

## FOCUS AREAS

- **Funding Advocacy.** Advocate for large-scale infrastructure funding to support the needs of a Regional City.
- **Innovative and Sustainable Infrastructure Investment.** Support new and emerging technologies to promote a sustainable economy.
- **Efficient Land-Use Planning for Residential and Employment Uses.** Encourage business investment and residential growth through optimal planning mechanisms.
- **Regional Lead in Economic Development.** Foster regional competitiveness through engagement and collaboration with regional partners.



## PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

### Major Investment Attraction Strategy and Prospectus

Prepare an advocacy document that identifies and supports major infrastructure priorities to support the regional catchment, including residents, visitors and businesses. This will include significant infrastructure priorities that require government and/or private contributions to foster economic growth, liveability and employment outcomes, including:

- Community and recreation infrastructure to support the increasing regional population (e.g. Regional-scale conference facility; Regional-scale indoor sporting centre);
- Transport infrastructure improvements to promote accessibility to and within Warrnambool (e.g. Dual carriageway between Warrnambool and Colac, improvements to public transport services, shared pathways/trails – active transport);
- Digital infrastructure improvements to support businesses and remote workers; and
- Renewable energy investments to support sustainable economic growth.

The Investment Attraction Prospectus will promote living, working and investing in Warrnambool to potential investors, developers, businesses, workers and families.

### Strengthen Strategic Partnerships and Encourage Regional Collaboration.

Encourage continued collaboration and engagement with regional bodies, local government and industry partners to support regional priorities. As the Regional City, Warrnambool should play a lead role in representing the Great South Coast (and other regional organisations) to promote awareness and advocate for public and private funding.



### **Warrnambool Airport Masterplan**

The Warrnambool Airport is a major economic asset for the region that should be leveraged to facilitate private business investment, support trade as well as air travel.

A well-utilised airport will support connectivity to surrounding regional areas and metropolitan centres, which could transform the asset into a key economic and investment driver for the region.

Development of an airport masterplan is needed to identify the constraints, opportunities and investment priorities to enhance the role of the airport and surrounding land to support growth and employment.

### **Renewable Energy Study**

Given the state, regional and local targets in reducing emissions, as well as the increasing investment and research into renewables, an appropriate study could support renewable energy investment as follows:

- Improve the 'readiness' of Warrnambool to support renewable energy investments, through appropriate land, accommodation and infrastructure;
- Identify the types of renewable energy best suited to the municipality (e.g. hydrogen, wind, solar, etc.);
- Confirm the ability of Warrnambool to support renewable energy investments across the region, through service provision, as well as collaboration with research, training and development institutions (e.g. Deakin).

### **Residential and Employment Land Strategies**

Ensure appropriate land supply to support key industry sectors and residential expansion, which will help accommodate business investment and population growth. This could be achieved through delivery and implementation of appropriate planning strategies, focusing on the efficient and productive use of employment and residential land to attract business and housing investment.

### **Warrnambool Livestock Exchange Strategic Land Use Plan**

The closure of the livestock exchange (north-west of the Warrnambool town centre) represents an opportunity to deliver 'a strategic land use plan for the site and adjacent buffer zone landholdings. This could foster future business investment and employment outcomes for the municipality.

### **Streamline Planning Processes**

Improve and streamline planning processes (e.g. Better Approvals Process) to help businesses overcome regulatory barriers, improve the efficiency of planning permits and support future investment opportunities

### **Warrnambool Foreshore Framework Plan**

An overarching planning framework for the Warrnambool Foreshore precinct is under development, with the aim to integrate previous planning projects and set the objectives and funding priorities for the area. This will support future investment into the precinct and activate the area to increase utilisation.

The Framework Plan should have regard to social, economic and environmental values. It will help improve the amenity of the asset to enhance Warrnambool's role as a Regional City and meet the needs of residents and visitors.



## THEME 2: A COLLABORATIVE, PRODUCTIVE AND DIVERSE INDUSTRY

Develop a resilient and sustainable business community that supports growth in existing industry specialisations and encourages diversity in business investment.

### OVERVIEW

Supporting existing businesses, as well as attracting new business investment, is critical to achieving economic development outcomes, as it fosters increased economic activity and employment growth.

Therefore, this core theme is designed to:

- Support industry strengths to maintain competitive advantages in key industries such as food and fibre (inc. food processing), health and education;
- Attract new investment in diverse, emerging and complementary industries suited to Warrnambool; and
- Provide business support and encourage business growth and development.

Achieving these functions will help create a more productive and resilient business base that will help sustain the economy and support the workforce and community.

### FOCUS AREAS

- **Food and Fibre.** Support a competitive and high-value food and fibre industry.
- **Business Collaboration and Networking.** Encourage business growth and development.
- **Business Support and Resilience.** Provide targeted and ongoing support to the business base to increase resilience against future shocks.
- **Industry Diversification.** Support growth in new and emerging industries to expand the jobs base.

### PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

#### Support the Development of a Local Chamber of Commerce

The lack of industry representation is a clear gap in business support and development, particularly for the high proportion of non-employing and small businesses in the municipality (96%).

Therefore, supporting the establishment of an industry peak body, such as a Warrnambool Chamber of Commerce, will help provide a support system for businesses that encourages resilience and supports business growth and development.

#### Industry Attraction Plan

Development of an Industry Attraction Plan to identify actions and initiatives that could attract a diverse range of industries, focusing on:

- Leveraging existing manufacturing base;
- Research and development facilities provided by tertiary institutions; and
- 'Green economy', including clean technology, renewable energy, carbon renewal and other circular economy practices.

This Plan could promote the advantages of Warrnambool, identify incentives for business attraction/re-location, as well as opportunities to create industry clusters.

### **Circular Economy Initiatives**

Due to recent government commitments to reducing emissions, as well as the growing role of the environment in Council and industry decision-making, there is an increasing need to provide strategic direction in this space.

Investigate circular economy opportunities and actions for business to promote environmental sustainability, use resources more efficiently and reduce costs. Existing measures adopted in other regional areas include:

- The Advisory Stream for Process Innovation and Resource Exchange (ASPIRE): an online marketplace for businesses to exchange their waste as a resource; and
- Business Development Program: Council and industry collaborate to build business capacity to identify and implement circular economy activities, including actions to help businesses reduce and re-use waste.

### **Support the Great South Coast Food & Fibre Strategy**

Supporting this regional document and delivering on the actions will help maintain the region's competitive advantages in Food and Fibre, which will contribute to ongoing investment and employment in Warrnambool.

### **Food and Fibre Value-Add Opportunities**

Identify other opportunities to add value to the food and fibre sector, specifically food processing, to generate additional income for the sector (through diversification) and support complementary industries (e.g. storage and distribution).

### **Support Indigenous Businesses + Social Enterprises**

Explore opportunities to support local Indigenous businesses/social enterprises. This could include the following initiatives, delivered in collaboration with industry and community groups:

- Prioritisation of Indigenous businesses through procurement policies;
- Business incubation and capacity building programs;
- Marketing and promotion; and
- Cultural awareness training programs.

By actively supporting Indigenous businesses and social enterprises, Council can contribute to the economic empowerment and wellbeing of First Nations and all diverse communities.

### **Facilitate Growth in Professional, Financial and Creative Industries**

Capitalise on the rise in remote working, as well as growth in home-based businesses, to support other professional businesses and digital enterprises. This could include provision of business facilities, infrastructure, as well as ongoing mentoring and support.

### **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Database**

Develop or subscribe to an up-to-date CRM software that identifies all registered businesses in Warrnambool, facilitates ongoing communication and tracks the frequency of engagement with local businesses.

This tool will be utilised across whole-of-government and increase Council's efficiency to engage with industry and monitor business performance.



## THEME 3: WORKFORCE ATTRACTION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Attract a skilled and engaged workforce that contributes to service provision, business activity and a productive economy.

### OVERVIEW

Ensuring industry labour needs are met, through increased participation, skills development and training, is critical to business growth, delivery of services and overall economic development.

This is a key risk for Warrnambool, with many industries facing workforce and skills shortages, as well as a slow growing and ageing population. In particular, attracting working-aged residents, including young professionals and families, as well as ensuring existing workers have relevant skills, will help overcome these shortages and create a more productive economy.

As Warrnambool is the major employment centre in the region, key to supporting further workforce attraction and growth is the provision of suitable accommodation, infrastructure, services and amenity to create liveable communities that support resident workers.

### FOCUS AREAS

- **Workforce Growth and Skills Development through Local Participation.** Capitalise on the local labour force to provide relevant skills and experience for businesses.
- **Workforce Attraction to Meet Industry Needs.** Grow the workforce and ensure industry labour needs are met through.
- **Provision of Available and Affordable Worker Accommodation.** Sufficient housing availability and affordability to accommodate new and existing workers within the municipality.
- **Liveable Communities to Support Resident Workers and Working Families.** Provision of high-quality services and amenity to support workforce attraction and retention.

### PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

#### Housing Strategy

A lack of housing stock, including rental properties, as well as increasing house prices (above the Regional Victoria average), has led to housing shortages and priced working aged residents and families out of the housing market.

This has created a lack of suitable accommodation needed to attract and house workers, which requires housing strategies and policies to focus on:

- Increasing housing diversity, particularly medium to high density housing in urban areas to support young professionals;
- Increasing overall housing supply (through provision of 'investment-ready' residential land); and
- Delivering the Affordable Housing Strategy (underway), with support of an affordable housing 'think tank' responsible for conducting consultation activities with the community and ensure the outcomes meet community needs.

#### Short-Term Worker Housing Program

A solution to alleviate immediate issues with workforce accommodation is Council supporting the development of short-term worker housing on Council-owned land. This could include re-purposing existing accommodation (i.e. caravan parks) and/or developing mobile housing options at suitable locations.

### **Workforce and Skills Attraction Strategy**

The preparation of a Workforce and Skills Attraction Strategy is critical to address workforce and skills shortages in Warrnambool. In collaboration with industry, education and training institutes, as well as employment providers, this project could support workforce attraction through:

- Identifying employment and skills gaps, by industry type and location;
- Opportunities for workforce attraction and skills development, including supporting businesses as well as jobseekers; and
- Developing marketing collateral for businesses to promote and showcase Warrnambool as a destination to live and work.

The development of a dedicated Workforce Attraction Taskforce, comprising key stakeholders from Council, local businesses and local employment providers, could be established to oversee delivery of the strategy.

### **Public Realm Investment and Placemaking Initiatives**

Encourage activation and investment in key commercial areas and town centres to support visitation, increase dwell time, promote local consumption and business investment.

This should include investments and initiatives that improve the public realm and open spaces, and enhance the level of amenity for residents, employees and visitors.

### **Expand DAMA Program and Community Integration**

The DAMA program has been essential to supporting skilled migrant workers in Warrnambool to meet industry needs. As such, the ongoing expansion of this program will help to alleviate further workforce and skills shortages.

Community programs aimed at helping new migrants integrate into the local community (outside the place of employment) should be delivered to support the workers and families. Cultural awareness education and interaction with other migrants will help foster a sense of social inclusion and encourage worker/resident retention.

### **Support the Delivery of the Retail Strategy**

The prime retail centre in Warrnambool, the Warrnambool CBD, is currently at 94% occupancy. Implementing the actions identified in the Warrnambool Retail Strategy to support the sector, which provides important amenity and services for residents, visitors and businesses across the region.

A thriving retail sector is important for economic growth through supporting employment opportunities, as well as local consumption.

### **Regional Jobs Expo**

As a regional city, Warrnambool is the business and employment centre for the region. This provides opportunities to collaborate with major employers, employment providers and industry to deliver an event that focuses on career development, training and skills for prospective workers from across the region to help meet the needs of local industry.



## THEME 4: A SUCCESSFUL AND HIGH VALUE VISITOR ECONOMY

Drive visitor growth through destination awareness and support a high-yielding visitor base through high-quality products and experiences.

### OVERVIEW

Warrnambool is a popular and successful visitor destination. Situated along the coastline and bookending the western edge of the Great Ocean Road, the Warrnambool visitor economy is supported by:

- Nature-based assets (e.g. beaches) and activities (e.g. whale watching);
- Hospitality services, including retail; accommodation, food and beverage, which supports visitors across the region; and
- Regional festivals and events, which showcases Warrnambool and attracts repeat visitation.

Strengthening the value of the visitor economy is important for economic growth as it stimulates business investment, promotes local consumption and supports new local jobs. The benefits from tourism, which are derived from visitor yield, flows through the economy and impacts retail, service, hospitality and transport sectors (amongst others).

### FOCUS AREAS

- **Destination Branding and Awareness.** Support the promotion and awareness of the Warrnambool tourism industry.
- **Investment in Quality Tourism Products and Experiences.** Grow visitor yield through a high-quality visitor experience.
- **Accommodation Investment.** Encourage high-yielding overnight visits through development of contemporary commercial accommodation.
- **Festivals and Events.** Support a diverse calendar of events to promote Warrnambool's assets and encourage ongoing visitation across peak and off-peak periods, including initiatives to maximise the night time economy.

### PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

#### Local Product Development Plan (Tourism Strategy)

The development of a local product development plan will focus on Warrnambool's strengths, as well as identify gaps in commissionable tourism product and supporting infrastructure that meets the needs of visitors and drives visitor yield.

Key product and investment potential includes the following:

- Indigenous tourism activation, leveraging growth in Indigenous cultural tourism and promoting the history and heritage of First Nations;
- Arts and cultural investment, including public art installations, light-up experiences, etc.
- Foreshore development and activation, in line with the Foreshore Framework Plan (in progress), through investment that activates the area, supports visitation and drives yield.
- Expand the tracks and trails network for shared paths to leverage existing natural assets, attract cycling and walking visitors and promote visitor dispersal across the municipality;
- Off-peak/winter product and activities, with a focus on the night time economy, to encourage year-round visitation; and
- Develop packaged itineraries on unique experiences within Warrnambool to support longer dwell time and spend.

### **Support the Implementation of the Great Ocean Road Visitor Economy Masterplan**

The Great Ocean Road Visitor Economy Masterplan (2021), prepared by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism (GORRT) is a key regional document designed to guide the growth of the visitor economy. The Warrnambool Action Plan should be supported by Council as it is designed to capitalise on existing amenity and infrastructure to make Warrnambool 'the ideal hub for visitors to stay and explore the wider region'.

### **Branding and Digital Marketing Strategy**

Promoting destination awareness is crucial to visitor attraction and driving visitor yield. Therefore, the development and delivery of a Branding and Digital Marketing Strategy will help to promote the destination, leverage the Great Ocean Road branding, and establish a unique market position/brand for Warrnambool.

### **Accommodation Audit and Investment Plan**

To attract high-yielding overnight visitors and increase its competitiveness as a visitor destination, it is important that Warrnambool provides a sufficient stock of commercial, contemporary accommodation that caters to a range of target markets. Issues with the quality and capacity of existing stock was identified as a barrier to growth, therefore, the preparation of a Commercial Accommodation Audit and Investment Plan will:

- Identify current and future gaps in accommodation by size, quality, type and location;
- Confirm investment and development needs; and
- Help create a targeted investment (i.e. advocacy) plan that can attract suitable private investment.

### **Delivery of Warrnambool Event Strategy (refresh)**

Support the delivery of the Warrnambool Events Strategy (2023) to identify:

- The current state of events and event infrastructure in Warrnambool;
- Key event stakeholder issues and opportunities for improvements;
- Provide strategic direction to guide the future of the events sector, including event attraction and infrastructure priorities; and
- Opportunities for events focussed on Warrnambool's food and fibre industry.

### **Flagstaff Hill Re-Imagined**

Support the delivery of the Business Case and Masterplan for Flagstaff Hill, that will guide the future direction and investment into the precinct. This will include supporting public and private investment opportunities into suitable product and experiences, designed to grow visitation and yield.

### **Deliver Arts and Culture Strategy**

Finalise and implement the Warrnambool Arts and Culture Strategy, which will help achieve economic development through increasing arts and culture consumption, investment, employment and community engagement.

### **Warrnambool Art Gallery Revitalisation**

Support the development of Warrnambool's creative economy by investing in key creative and cultural assets such as the Warrnambool Art Gallery.

A 2021 feasibility study found that a new art gallery in Warrnambool could provide a major tourist and educational attraction that would provide stimulus for economic investment in the region. This would also help develop Warrnambool's market position as a regional destination for cultural tourism.



## 7. ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan provides a guide for the delivery of the project opportunities identified in this Strategy. It includes relevant actions, responsible stakeholders, priority status (high/medium/low)<sup>3</sup> and indicative timeframes categorised as follows:

- Short-term (1 year);
- Medium-term (2-3 years);
- Long-term (4-5 years); and
- Ongoing.

Strategy delivery is expected to occur over the next five years, over 2023- 2028, through Council and relevant government, industry and community stakeholders.

It is intended that Council may be required to **lead**, **support** or **advocate** identified projects, which may be delivered in partnership with government and/or the private sector. In addition, funding contributions (either in full or part) may be required to deliver certain projects.

Implementation of the Strategy should be monitored on an ongoing basis using the key performance measures and monitoring tools outlined throughout the Action Plan.



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<sup>3</sup> Projects are identified as 'priorities' based on alignment to the economic development objectives. This was undertaken using a qualitative assessment framework.



## THEME 1: PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL CITY GROWTH

No.	Project	Action/s	Stakeholder/s		Priority Status	Timeframe
			Lead	Partner		
1.1	Major Investment Attraction Strategy and Prospectus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and prioritise major capital projects that require additional government and/or private contributions.</li> <li>Prepare an advocacy plan and pitch document to promote investment and funding requirements to support Warrnambool as a Regional City, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community infrastructure priorities (e.g. regional-scale conference facility; regional-scale indoor sporting centre);</li> <li>Transport infrastructure priorities (e.g. dual carriageway between Warrnambool and Colac, improvements to public transport services, shared pathways/trails);</li> <li>Digital infrastructure priorities; and</li> <li>Renewable energy investment priorities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Council		High	Short-term
1.2	Strengthen Strategic Partnerships and Encourage Regional Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an engagement plan that guides Council's interactions and partnerships with Government and industry.</li> <li>Encourage regular meetings with relevant regional and state organisations, including: Great South Coast Regional Partnerships, GORRT, Industry Representatives, etc.</li> </ul>	Council	Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee State Government Agencies (RDV, GORRT, etc.)	Medium	Ongoing
1.3	Warrnambool Airport Masterplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery and implementation of a Warrnambool Airport Masterplan, focusing on investment priorities and recommendations to support growth and development.</li> </ul>	Warrnambool Airport	Council	Medium	Medium-term

No.	Project	Action/s	Lead	Stakeholder/s Partner	Priority Status	Timeframe
1.4	Residential and Employment Land Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure appropriate land supply to support key industry sectors, as well as promote business investment and residential expansion, through delivery and implementation of land strategies. This should comprise a multi-faceted focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industrial and Commercial land use strategies; and</li> <li>Residential land use strategies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Incorporate key outcomes of the EDS and subsequent land-use strategies into local planning policy. This will help support the identification of future employment and residential land requirements to accommodate business investment and population growth.</li> </ul>	Council		Medium	Medium-term
1.5	Streamline Planning Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue the delivery of the 'Better Business Approvals' process undertaken by Council, to help businesses overcome regulatory barriers and support business growth and investment.</li> </ul>	Council		Medium	Ongoing
1.6	Renewable Energy Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the potential to prepare a study into renewable energy investment in Warrnambool, including Council and other stakeholder's roles in facilitating investment.</li> <li>Develop and deliver a study, in collaboration with key stakeholders.</li> </ul>	Council	Deakin Hycel Project  State Government (Energy, Environment and Climate Change)  Renewable Energy Proponents	Medium	Medium-term
1.7	Warrnambool Livestock Exchange Strategic Land Use Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery and implementation of a land use plan for the Livestock Exchange, focusing on achieving business investment and employment outcomes.</li> </ul>	Council		High	Short-term
1.8	Warrnambool Foreshore Framework Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery of an overarching planning framework for the Warrnambool Foreshore precinct to set the long-term objectives and funding priorities for the area.</li> </ul>	Council		High	Short term

### Progress Measures and Monitoring Tools

Measure	Monitor	Frequency
Increase in supply of zoned land (residential, commercial and industrial).	Council's Property Rates Database and Building Permit Data.	Annually
Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits relating to residential, commercial and industrial properties.	Council databases	Annually
Decrease in vacancy rates for commercial and industrial properties	Council's Property Rates Database	Annually
Increase in infrastructure funding received from the public sector.	Council databases	Annually
Reduce the average time taken to provide a planning permit decision.	'Know Your Council' website	Annually

## THEME 2: A COLLABORATIVE, PRODUCTIVE AND DIVERSE INDUSTRY

No.	Project	Action/s	Stakeholder/s		Priority Status	Timeframe
			Lead	Partner		
2.1	Support the Development of a Local Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In collaboration with industry, identify the opportunities and feasibility of supporting the establishment of a Local Chamber of Commerce/Business Committee for Warrnambool.</li> <li>Consideration should be given to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role of Council and businesses;</li> <li>Governance and membership structure</li> <li>Funding mechanisms;</li> <li>Responsibilities and KPIs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Council	<p>Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee</p> <p>Local Industry Representatives</p>	High	Short-term
2.2	Industry Attraction Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare an Industry Attraction Plan focusing on attraction of new and emerging industries suited to Warrnambool, in collaboration with industry, government agencies and educational institutions.</li> <li>Develop prospectus materials to promote investment opportunities and benefits of investing in Warrnambool, to be provided through marketing and communication channels.</li> </ul>	Council	Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee	Medium	Medium-term
2.3	Circular Economy Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and campaign for the promotion and adoption of circular economy initiatives to promote sustainable practices across Warrnambool. This should focus on current industry, community and Council practices, as well as opportunities to reduce waste, re-use resources and reduce the environmental impact of the Shire.</li> </ul>	Council	Local Industry Representatives	High	Medium-term
2.4	Support the Great South Coast Food & Fibre Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the implementation of recommendations included in the Great South Coast Food &amp; Fibre Strategy, focusing on strengthening and growing this sector across Warrnambool.</li> </ul>	RDV (Great South Coast Regional Partnership)	Council	High	Ongoing

No.	Project	Action/s	Stakeholder/s		Priority Status	Timeframe
			Lead	Partner		
2.5	Food and Fibre Value-Add Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support food and fibre as a competitive sector in Warrnambool by identifying value-add opportunities to increase sectoral output, employment as benefit complementary industries.</li> <li>Opportunities and initiatives should focus on increasing value of production and exports, enhancing the supply-chain and identifying business diversification measures.</li> </ul>	Council	Local Industry Representatives	Low	Medium-term
2.6	Support Indigenous Businesses + Social Enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In collaboration with First Nations groups, identify opportunities to better support Indigenous businesses and social enterprises.</li> <li>Consideration should be given to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement practices;</li> <li>Business support;</li> <li>Marketing and Promotion; and</li> <li>Cultural Awareness Training</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Council	First Nations Representative Groups Community Groups Private Sector	High	Ongoing
2.7	Facilitate Growth in Professional, Financial and Creative Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate opportunities to attract professional businesses, digital enterprises and home-based businesses, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the opportunity for a co-working space; and</li> <li>Start-up Program/Business Accelerator.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Council	Local Industry Representatives	Low	Long-term
2.8	Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish or subscribe to a CRM database for business to improve Council's ability to engage with the business base and monitor business performance.</li> </ul>	Council		High	Short-term

## Progress Measures and Monitoring Tools

Measure	Monitor	Frequency
<b>Increase in industry peak bodies/memberships.</b>	Local business organisations or industry representatives.	Annually
<b>Increase the number and frequency of business engagements.</b>	Council and industry peak bodies tracking and recording events and/or a CRM database	Annually
<b>Increases in business investment (i.e. number of businesses within Warrnambool), including for Indigenous businesses/social enterprises.</b>	Economic databases (e.g. REMPLAN), a CRM software and/or the ABR database.	Annually
<b>Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits.</b>	Council databases and/or CRM software (inc. recording the investment enquiries by business type and industry)	Annually
<b>Reduction in waste generated by businesses.</b>	Council's existing databases and waste management systems	Annually
<b>Increased uptake of renewable energy sources (e.g. solar).</b>	Business surveys	Annually
<b>An increase in the number of co-working spaces and facilities.</b>	Council's Property Rates Database and Building Permit Data	Annually

### THEME 3: WORKFORCE ATTRACTION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

No.	Project	Action/s	Stakeholder/s		Priority Status	Timeframe
			Lead	Partner		
3.1	Housing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver a Housing Strategy for Warrnambool, focusing on affordability, availability and diversity of stock in strategic locations.</li> </ul>	Council	Real Estate Agents Property Developers	High	Medium-term
3.2	Short-Term Worker Housing Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate opportunities to develop short-term/mobile housing on Council-owned assets to increase the immediate supply of workforce accommodation.</li> </ul>	Council		High	Short-term
3.3	Workforce and Skills Attraction Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver a strategy that addresses workforce shortages, industry needs and opportunities/incentives to attract and retain a skilled and unskilled labour force.</li> <li>Investigate the potential to oversee the strategy through a dedicated <i>Workforce Attraction Taskforce</i>, comprising key stakeholders from Council, local businesses and local employment providers.</li> </ul>	Council	Local Industry Representatives Local Employment Providers State Government	High	Short-term
3.4	Public Realm Investment and Placemaking Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities for public realm improvements and placemaking activities to stimulate business investment and economic growth.</li> <li>Advocate for investment to improve public realm and deliver placemaking initiatives to promote activation of the main streets and improve amenity.</li> </ul>	Council		Low	Long-term
3.5	Expand DAMA Program and Community Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for an expansion of annual DAMA placements in Warrnambool to combat workforce and skills shortages.</li> <li>Collaborate with local community groups to establish an integration support program for new DAMA migrants.</li> </ul>	Council	State Government Local Community Groups	High	Ongoing
3.6	Support the Delivery of the Retail Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the recommendations of the Warrnambool Retail Strategy to support growth and innovation in the retail sector.</li> </ul>	Council		Low	Ongoing

No.	Project	Action/s	Stakeholder/s		Priority Status	Timeframe
			Lead	Partner		
3.7	Regional Jobs Expo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with industry peak bodies, major employers and employment providers to deliver a Regional Jobs Expo event (for the Great South Coast Region) that matches prospective employees with skills and jobs providers.</li> </ul>	Council  RDV (Great South Coast Regional Partnership)	Local Industry Representatives  Major employers (health, education)	Low	Short-term

### Progress Measures and Monitoring Tools

Measure	Monitor	Frequency
<b>Increases in number of local jobs and/or job containment levels</b>	Economic databases (e.g. REMPLAN) and every four years via ABS census data	Annually and every four years
<b>Increase in the proportion of working-aged residents</b>	Economic databases (e.g. REMPLAN) and every four years via ABS census data	Annually and every four years
<b>Increase in the number of dwellings</b>	Economic databases (e.g. REMPLAN) and every four years via ABS census data	Annually and every four years
<b>Increases in local consumption (reduced expenditure leakage)</b>	Industry surveys and/or consumption databases (e.g. Spendmapp)	Annually
<b>Decrease in vacancy rates for commercial properties in town centres</b>	Council's Property Rates Database	Annually
<b>Increases in number of local tertiary qualifications and training apprenticeships</b>	Population databases (e.g. REMPLAN) and every four years via ABS census data.	Annually and every four years



#### THEME 4: A SUCCESSFUL AND HIGH VALUE VISITOR ECONOMY

No.	Project	Action/s	Stakeholder/s		Priority Status	Timeframe
			Lead	Partner		
4.1	Local Product Development Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver a Local Product Development Plan for Warrnambool, focusing on investment priorities of key tourism products, experiences and infrastructure to support visitation and yield.</li> <li>The focus of investment should be on addressing product gaps, leveraging regional strengths and promoting commissionable product.</li> </ul>	Council	GORRT	Medium	Long-term
4.2	Support the Implementation of the Great Ocean Road Visitor Economy Masterplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery of the relevant recommendations outlined in the visitor economy masterplan for the Great Ocean Road</li> </ul>	GORRT	Council	High	Ongoing
4.3	Branding and Digital Marketing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver a Branding and Marketing Strategy for Warrnambool to enhance destination awareness and promote the key destinations and product strengths.</li> </ul>	Council	GORRT	High	Medium-term
4.4	Accommodation Audit and Investment Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a commercial accommodation audit for Warrnambool, identifying gaps in stock and opportunities for future accommodation investment.</li> <li>This work should be supported by an investment and advocacy plan to be used as collateral for private investors and accommodation operators, to attract accommodation investment.</li> </ul>	Council	Private sector Accommodation Providers	Medium	Medium-term
4.5	Delivery of Warrnambool Event Strategy (refresh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery of the Warrnambool Event Strategy (refresh), focusing on enhancing the events calendar to support growth in the visitor economy.</li> </ul>	Council	Event Operators	Medium	Short-term
4.6	Flagstaff Hill Re-Imagined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery of the recommendations and investment priorities outlined in the Business Case and Masterplan for Flagstaff Hill, focusing on growing visitation to the precinct and yield.</li> </ul>	Council	State Government Traditional Owners Private sector	Medium	Long-term

No.	Project	Action/s	Stakeholder/s		Priority Status	Timeframe
			Lead	Partner		
4.7	Deliver Arts and Cultural Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery of the Warrnambool Arts and Cultural Strategy, focussing on growing arts and culture employment and investment.</li> </ul>	Council	Local Industry Representatives	Medium	Short-term
4.8	Warrnambool Art Gallery Revitalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the planned reinvestment in the Warrnambool Art Gallery to help establish the region as a destination for cultural tourism</li> </ul>	Council	WAG	Medium	Medium-term

### Progress Measures and Monitoring Tools

Measure	Monitor	Frequency
<b>Increases in visitation (inc. daytrip, overnight and international visitors).</b>	Tourism Research Australia data and other economic databases (e.g, REMPLAN)	Annually
<b>Increases in direct visitor expenditure.</b>	Tourism Research Australia data and other economic databases (e.g, REMPLAN)	Annually
<b>Increases in the number and frequency of tourism events.</b>	Council's events database	Annually
<b>Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits (for accommodation and tourism products).</b>	Council databases and/or CRM software	Annually
<b>Growth in direct tourism jobs (i.e. accommodation, hospitality).</b>	Economic databases (e.g. REMPLAN)	Annually
<b>Increased visitor satisfaction with the tourism offerings.</b>	Visitor intercept surveys	Annually

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A POLICY DOCUMENT REVIEW

State-wide Documents	Regional Documents	City-Wide Documents	Local Documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DJPR Strategic Plan (2021-2025);</li> <li>Infrastructure Victoria 30-year Strategy;</li> <li>Creative State (2025);</li> <li>Victorian Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan, (2021); and</li> <li>Victorian Visitor Economy Masterplan Directions Paper (2022).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great South Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy (2022);</li> <li>Great South Coast Regional Growth Plan (2014);</li> <li>Regional Cities Victoria Advocacy Priorities (2022-2025);</li> <li>Great South Coast Economic Futures (2020);</li> <li>Visitor Economy Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region (2021-2030);</li> <li>Great South Coast Food &amp; Fibre Strategy &amp; Action Plan (2015-2020);</li> <li>Economic Analysis of Food and Fibre in the Great South Coast (2021); and</li> <li>Barwon South West Regional Trails Masterplan (2009).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Warrnambool City Council Plan (2021-2025);</li> <li>Warrnambool 2040 (W2040) Community Vision;</li> <li>Economic Development &amp; Investment Strategy (2015-2020);</li> <li>Warrnambool Destination Action Plan (2015-2017);</li> <li>Green Warrnambool Plan (2018);</li> <li>Warrnambool Events Strategy (2018-2022);</li> <li>Get Around Warrnambool: COVID-19 Business Support Plan;</li> <li>Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response and Recovery Strategy;</li> <li>Warrnambool City-Wide Housing Strategy (2013);</li> <li>Warrnambool City Centre Revitalisation Structure Plan (2012);</li> <li>Healthy Warrnambool Plan (2021-2025);</li> <li>Sustainable Transport Strategy (2010-2020);</li> <li>Community Services and Infrastructure Plan (2013);</li> <li>Resource Recovery, Waste Minimisation and Management Strategy (2017-2021);</li> <li>Warrnambool City Council Social Housing Planning Project (2020);</li> <li>Warrnambool Harbour Masterplan (2018);</li> <li>Warrnambool Land Use Strategy (2004);</li> <li>Moyne Warrnambool Rural Housing and Settlement Strategy (2010); and</li> <li>Warrnambool Eastern Activity Centre Structure Plan (2016);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Warrnambool Eastern Activity Centre Structure Plan (2016);</li> <li>North of the Merri Structure Plan (2011);</li> <li>North East Warrnambool Structure Plan (2008);</li> <li>Coastal/Hopkins River Environment Structure Plan (2008);</li> <li>Bushfield-Woodford Strategic Framework Plan; and</li> <li>North Dennington Structure Plan (2014).</li> </ul>



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