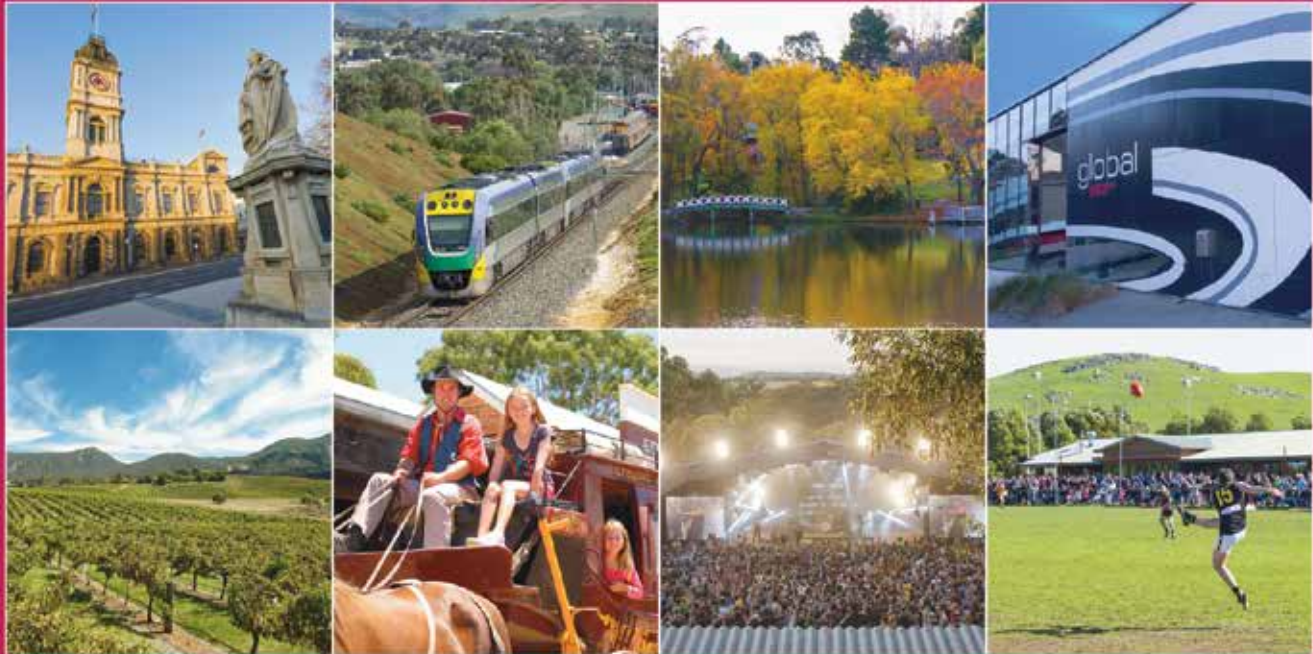


CENTRAL HIGHLANDS



REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

SUMMARY



This document is a summary of the Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan. **The full plan is available at www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans**

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May 2014

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE



In 2011 the Victorian Government, through the \$17.2 million Regional Centres of the Future Program, advanced work across the state to support councils, communities and government authorities in planning for the future growth of their regions.

The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan is one of eight prepared across the state to help guide a coordinated regional response to population growth and regional change over the next 30 years.

In the May budget I announced a commitment of \$12.3 million for regional Victoria towards the implementation of regional growth plans and continuation of the Rural Council Planning Flying Squad that plays such a valued role in assisting councils with major projects, developments and statutory planning support.

Victoria's population has been projected to grow by around three million people between 2011 and 2041. It is projected that 20 to 25 per cent of that growth will be in regional Victoria – more than double the amount of growth over the previous 30 years.

In order to accommodate this growth, provide lifestyle choice and share job opportunities, we need to become a 'state of cities'.

In developing these growth plans, councils have worked with their regional counterparts and the State Government to identify key environmental, cultural, recreational, economic, tourism and natural resources of value, which will be preserved, maintained or developed.

The work has already assisted councils in providing strategic information and mapping. The plans will deliver immediate outcomes, while also providing a planning framework to assist rural and regional councils to plan for population growth and ensure long-term regional land supply.

The regional growth plans will be key instruments in helping to identify future infrastructure investment needs to support local education and health services and employment opportunities.

I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of the Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan including our local government partners and the Project Steering Committee that put the plan together. I look forward to the plan helping to shape a more prosperous future for the region.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Guy'.

The Hon Matthew Guy MLC
Minister for Planning

WHY WE NEED A PLAN

The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan has been developed over two years in partnership between local government and state agencies and authorities. The plan covers the municipal areas of Ararat, Ballarat, Hepburn, Moorabool, Pyrenees and part of Golden Plains.

The region is forecast to experience ongoing population growth that needs to be carefully managed to ensure desirable social, economic and environmental outcomes.

The plan considers a range of land uses including agriculture, tourism, environmental assets, commercial and residential. It recommends checks and balances that need to be applied when considering future growth.

As areas change over time infrastructure and service needs also change. Long-term planning is the best way to ensure these needs are met. A regional approach to planning enables coordinated responses across municipal borders.

The plan's key land use planning directions will be implemented through the state planning system. This will provide a regional context to guide and inform councils in planning for their municipalities and support decision making at a local level.

"The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan provides a vision for long-term prosperity and sustainable growth."

The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan:

- establishes a framework for strategic land use and settlement planning that can sustainably accommodate growth
- identifies important economic, environmental, social and cultural resources to be preserved, maintained or developed
- provides direction for accommodating growth and change including residential, employment, industrial, commercial, agricultural and other rural activities
- shows which areas of land can accommodate growth and which are to be maintained for other uses
- identifies opportunities for supporting regional level infrastructure, providing an essential contribution to the long-term sustainability of the region.

STATE OF CITIES

“We will maximise the growth potential of Victoria by developing a state of cities which delivers choice, opportunity and global competitiveness.”



The State Government’s new metropolitan planning strategy, *Plan Melbourne*, provides a land use and transport plan to 2050.

The regional growth plans are aligned with *Plan Melbourne* through the following directions.

Plan Melbourne directions:

- 6.1. Deliver a permanent boundary around Melbourne
- 6.2. Rebalance Victoria’s population growth from Melbourne to rural and regional Victoria over the life of the strategy
- 6.3. Integrate metropolitan, peri-urban and regional planning implementation
- 6.4. Improve connections between cities



SNAPSHOT OF CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The region

13,900 sq km

- ▶ located in central western Victoria
- ▶ extends from Melbourne's western boundary to the Grampians in western Victoria
- ▶ contains 8 main river catchments – Avoca, Wimmera, Hopkins, Barwon, Moorabool, Loddon, Werribee and Campaspe

Employment (top 5)

17%

Manufacturing

10%

Health Care and Social Assistance

10%

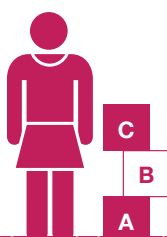
Construction

7%

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

7%

Education and training



Employment

Over **60,000** jobs in the region.

Around **39,000**

jobs in Ballarat and over 3600 businesses.

Has a more diversified industry structure than most other non-metropolitan regions.



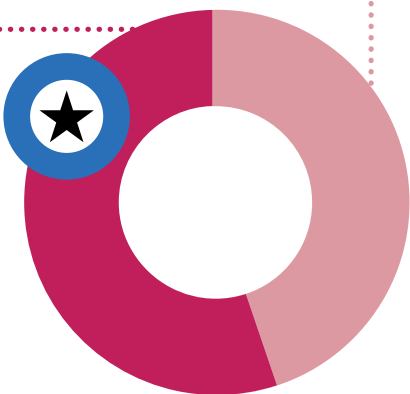
Living in the region

AROUND 169,300 PEOPLE LIVE IN THE REGION

Almost 98,000 people live in Ballarat, which is Victoria's 3rd largest urban area

By 2041, 247,500 people are expected to live in the region

Large areas of the region are within Melbourne's peri-urban region



Quiz questions

1. What event in the development of Australian democracy occurred in Ballarat in 1854?
2. Which town is Australia's only international booktown and hosts an annual Booktown Festival, Victoria's largest literary celebration?

Answers page 4

Amazing fact

The town of Hepburn Springs is home to Australia's largest concentration of mineral springs. When gold was found the area attracted immigrants from the Ticino region in Switzerland whose main language is Italian. The Swiss-Italian heritage of the area is evident in the many beautiful buildings and stunning gardens.

Amazing fact

Ararat is the only town in Australia founded by Chinese people. In 1857, 700 Chinese miners travelling to the Victorian goldfields discovered the Canton Lead, one of the world's richest shallow alluvial goldfields. The find marked the beginning of the Ararat goldfield which grew to a population of more than 30,000 within a few weeks.

Heritage

Gold was discovered in 1851 leading to the Victorian gold rush. The "Welcome Nugget", found at Ballarat in 1858 contained an estimated 68,272 grams of pure gold. Its value is approximately \$3 million in today's money.



68,272 grams



Education

BALLARAT HAS FOUR UNIVERSITIES



Federation University Australia (Ballarat University), Australian Catholic University (Aquinas) and rural clinical schools for Deakin University and Melbourne University.

\$500 million – annual contribution of Federation University Australia to Ballarat's economy.

Transport



FOUR RAIL CORRIDORS CONNECT THE REGION TO MELBOURNE, ADELAIDE, GEELONG AND MILDURA

C294

Mt Clear	4
Mt Helen	7
Buninyong	10

There are 5 major highway corridors within the region: Western, Midland, Glenelg, Sunraysia and Pyrenees

Industry and Business

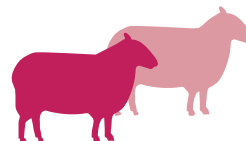
\$2.3 billion

the gross value of manufacturing exports in 2011



Ballarat saleyards

1.3 million sheep and 56,000 cattle is the 10-year throughput average



Regional Victoria's strongest concentration of business specialising in information and communications technology
Major food manufacturers include Mars (confectionery), McCain (food products), and Hakubaku (high quality noodles for the Japanese market)



Quiz answers
1. The Eureka Rebellion
2. Clunes
(or Eureka Stockade)

THE VISION FOR CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The vision for the Central Highlands region towards 2030 and beyond is to provide a productive, sustainable and liveable region for its people.

PRINCIPLES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION



ABOUT CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The Central Highlands region is situated in the state's central west along the corridor that stretches from the outskirts of Melbourne, along the Western Highway, to the Grampians National Park. Over the past decade the region, particularly its eastern areas of Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh, has experienced population growth.

Accessibility and quality lifestyle opportunities have proven to be two of the region's competitive strengths, along with its well-developed business, higher education and training networks. Road and rail access to major markets and proximity to supply chains, raw materials and agricultural products are likely to serve the region well into the future.

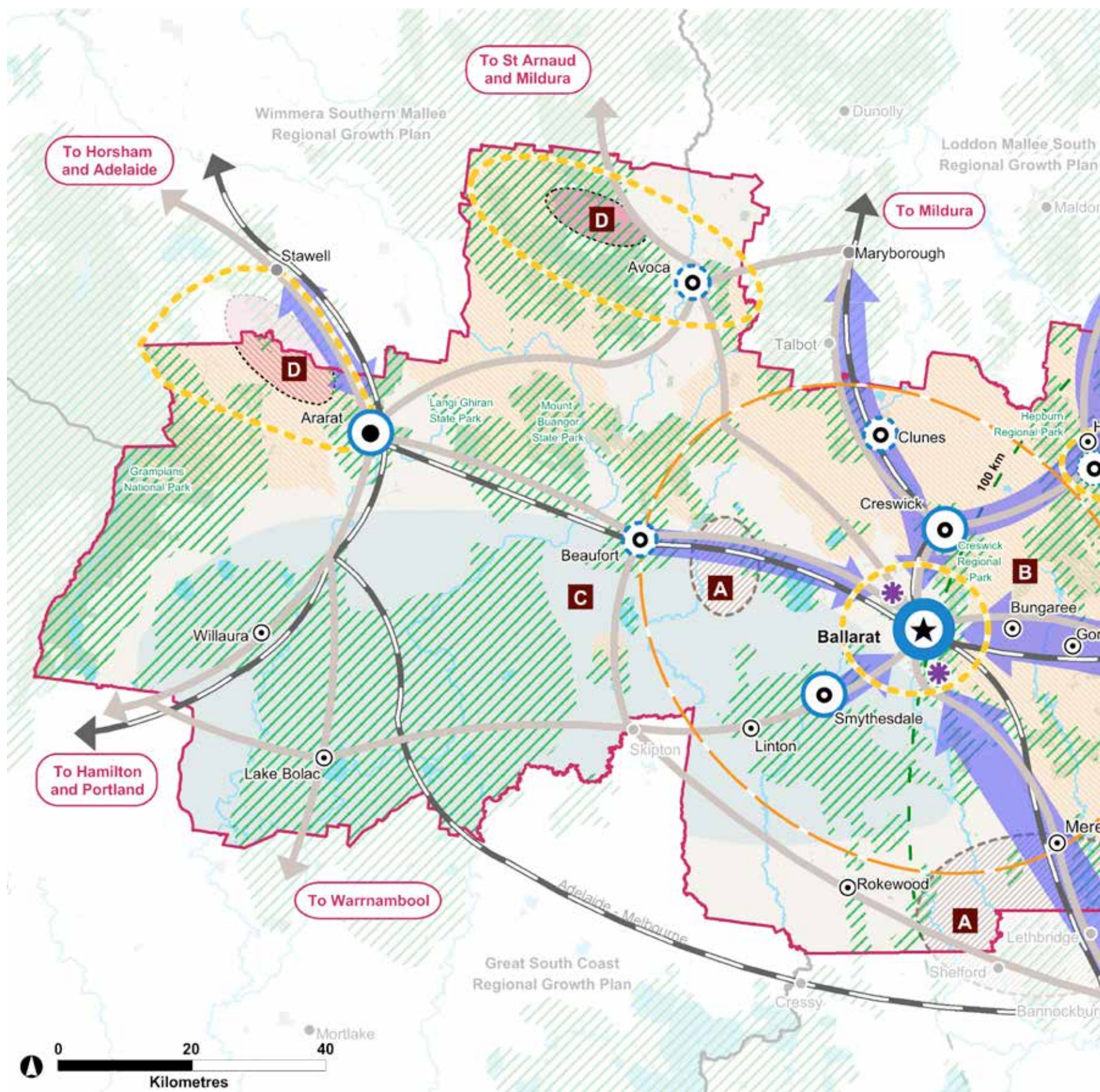
Tourism is a major draw card for the region including the historic gold fields and heritage architecture, the emerging wine regions, mineral springs and spas, and the natural environment.

Rural areas are dominated by agriculture, which is the region's second highest value export sector (manufacturing being the highest) and a significant employer, especially in Ararat and Pyrenees. Rural production and support services underpin the communities of the many small towns throughout the region.

Key features:

- strong links with neighbouring regions, including excellent road and rail access to Melbourne, Adelaide, Geelong and Bendigo
- significant regional employment, services and growth provided by Ballarat, the largest inland city in Victoria
- regionally significant rural and agricultural assets, including the areas of highly productive and versatile soils within Moorabool, Ballarat and Hepburn, the Bacchus Marsh Irrigation District and the Pyrenees wine region
- a strong Aboriginal cultural heritage, rich goldmining history and diverse landscapes that attract many visitors and residents
- major tourism areas, including viticultural areas, mineral springs and spas, and natural environment areas, such as the Grampians National Park, Brisbane Ranges and Mount Cole State Park (Beeripmo Walk)
- environmental assets, including native grasslands, extensive water catchments, national and state parks and state forests, wetlands, rivers and lakes
- excellent wind, energy and earth resources.

THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN MAP





The regional growth plan map illustrates where growth is anticipated to occur in the region and the major transport, economic and social relationships between cities, centres and towns.

LEGEND

SETTLEMENT NETWORK

- ★ Ballarat - Regional city ● Regional centre ● Town ○ Small town ★ Regional city external to the region ● Settlement external to the region
- Major growth ○ Medium growth ○ Support sustainable change ○ Contain growth
- Designated identified growth centre in Plan Melbourne ⁽¹⁾ 🌿 Settlement break

(1) Plan Melbourne (Chapter 6 – State of Cities) identifies Bacchus Marsh and Ballan as peri-urban towns with potential to attract housing and population growth out of Melbourne.

MELBOURNE AND BALLARAT HINTERLANDS

- Areas within 100 km of central Melbourne ○ Ballarat hinterland

CONNECTIVITY

- ➡ Key relationship ➡ Key road corridor ➡ Key rail corridor

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ✳ Regional employment assets in Ballarat ○ Key tourism precinct
- 📍 A Intensive agriculture 📍 B Horticulture 📍 C Broadacre cropping and grazing 📍 D Viticulture

ENVIRONMENT

- 🌿 Areas containing high value terrestrial habitat 🌿 Declared water supply catchment ● Public land
- Lakes and wetlands — Rivers

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

The Central Highlands region is growing in population, which presents challenges for providing infrastructure, services and jobs. The demand for growth varies across the region and therefore the ability to spread the benefits of population growth is a key challenge.

Challenges for growth

- ▶ managing pressure for urban and rural residential development in high amenity areas, which can conflict with the protection of water catchments, environmental assets, agricultural land and landscapes and lead to increased risks from natural hazards, such as bushfire and flood
- ▶ the uneven distribution of population growth and economic development, and the need to spread the benefits of population growth to those parts of the region unlikely to experience significant growth
- ▶ creating more jobs locally and reducing reliance on commuting to jobs and services in other places
- ▶ adapting to the potential impacts of a changing climate, which may include increased bushfire, flood and extreme weather event hazards and changing agricultural commodities
- ▶ providing new services and infrastructure to locations where growth is planned, and maintenance of existing services and infrastructure in locations where population growth is unlikely to be strong.



LIVING IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The settlement and growth patterns of the Central Highlands region are highly diverse. Settlements and rural areas within commuting distance of Ballarat and Melbourne will experience increasing pressure for growth as these cities expand and people seek alternative lifestyle and housing choices.

The plan identifies key settlements where growth is supported while avoiding areas at risk from natural hazards, especially flood and bushfire, and protecting environmental and economic assets. An overview of the region's key towns is overleaf.

Initiative 6.2.1 of *Plan Melbourne* proposes that peri-urban town plans be developed in partnership with local government to increase the supply of land for housing and attract population growth out of Melbourne. Bacchus Marsh and Ballan are identified in *Plan Melbourne* as potential towns for growth.

Future directions

- ▶ respond to the Central Highlands' regional and inter-regional context, including capitalising on links to other centres and responding to growth pressures associated with proximity to Ballarat and Melbourne
- ▶ balance the development of a highly connected settlement network with the need to encourage the provision of services and business investment that enables local jobs
- ▶ plan for development and facilities shared around clusters of linked settlements, particularly for groups of small settlements, or settlements without easy access to a close major settlement
- ▶ support development and investment that is consistent with Ballarat's role as a regional city and the largest settlement in the Central Highlands
- ▶ support Ararat as the regional centre for the western part of the Central Highlands and develop its cohesive relationship with Stawell in the provision of services, housing and employment
- ▶ support Bacchus Marsh as a regional centre and key growth location for the peri-urban part of the Central Highlands, maintaining the character and form of a distinct regional settlement, separated from Melbourne's western growth corridor
- ▶ develop and support the role of Avoca, Ballan, Beaufort, Clunes, Creswick, Daylesford and Smythesdale as key settlements providing local services
- ▶ plan for resilient small towns by building on local opportunities
- ▶ plan for rural residential development on a regional basis to ensure it is directed to locations where it will most benefit the region
- ▶ ensure that new houses in farming areas support agricultural activities and do not impact on farming practices in the future or lead to the permanent loss of land from agricultural production.

KEY TOWNS – FUTURE PLANS OVER THE NEXT 20-30 YEARS

City of Ballarat

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	97,800
2021	113,500
2031	130,000

BALLARAT

Regional City

Major growth – As the largest inland city in Victoria, Ballarat will remain the primary urban centre in the Central Highlands region, providing large scale health, education, retail and government services. The city will grow to a population of around 130,000 people by 2031 (2011 population 97,800). The development of the Ballarat West Employment Zone will be the key driver for a potential 9000 new jobs within the next 20 years.

Golden Plains Shire

(north-west Statistical Local Area)

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	8200
2021	9000
2031	10,000

SMYTHESDALE

Town

Medium growth – Smythesdale will be the preferred location for growth in the northern part of the Golden Plains shire and along the Glenelg Highway corridor. Future growth should be directed to infill locations and other identified sites with an emphasis on housing choice. Future employment opportunities should be encouraged in the retail, rural and nature-based tourism industries.

Rural City of Ararat

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	12,000
2021	13,000
2031	14,000

ARARAT

Regional Centre

Medium growth – Ararat is a regional centre servicing the western part of the Central Highlands region. Over time it will continue to develop a closer relationship with Stawell to increase the diversity of services jobs and housing in the area. Retail and industrial employment growth is forecast for Ararat.

Hepburn Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	15,000
2021	17,000
2031	18,500

CLUNES

Town

Support sustainable change – Clunes will continue to develop as a boutique tourism and cultural destination, linking with other heritage towns in the goldfields region to offer accommodation, heritage sites and major events such as Booktown. Specialist book stores will be encouraged to establish in the town. Careful planning will be needed to recognise flood-prone land.

Major growth – means the cities and towns with the greatest capacity to accommodate growth, in terms of land supply, infrastructure and services, e.g. the regional cities like Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Latrobe City and Wodonga

Medium growth – means the cities and towns that have the infrastructure and services that can support additional growth subject to addressing planning constraints such as bushfire and flood hazard

Support sustainable change – refers to existing towns that have capacity to support limited additional growth at a smaller scale, subject to addressing planning constraints such as bushfire and flood hazard

Contain growth – refers to towns that have significant constraints to growth such as bushfire, flood hazard and the natural environment and where growth needs to be carefully managed

CRESWICK

Town

Medium growth – Creswick will continue to experience residential growth that is carefully planned to take advantage of the town’s heritage and streetscapes while considering flood and bushfire prone land. Improvements to town centre streetscapes and measures to manage the impacts of traffic, particularly freight, will add to the town’s liveability.

DAYLESFORD

Town

Contain growth – Daylesford will continue to build on its strength as a tourist destination. Better public transport options will need to be considered as will freight movements through the town. Urban expansion is not envisaged to occur beyond current boundaries. Various environmental assets and potential natural hazards need to be taken into account. The town will seek to provide better housing affordability and greater choice.

Moorabool Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	29,400
2021	36,000
2031	43,000

BACCHUS MARSH

Regional Centre

Major growth – As the second largest settlement in the region, Bacchus Marsh will need to ensure it provides the facilities and services to manage continued growth. Transport links, particularly new north-south routes and public transport options will also need to improve. Over time Bacchus Marsh will continue to strengthen its local employment focus to limit the need for residents to commute to Melbourne.

BALLAN

Town

Potential for major population growth needs to be assessed. There will be an emphasis on providing local employment opportunities. Population growth will need to be carefully managed to protect the town’s strong historical and village character within a rural setting and environmentally sensitive landscape.

Pyrenees Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	6900
2021	7500
2031	8000

AVOCA

Town

Support sustainable change – Located on the doorstep of the Pyrenees wine region, Avoca has the opportunity to cement its position as a tourism hub, providing boutique retail, accommodation and events. It will also continue to provide retail and community facilities for the local population and surrounding rural settlements and industries.

BEAUFORT

Town

Support sustainable change – Beaufort is expected to attract new residents from larger centres and people engaged to work in local industries. Duplication of the Western Highway may further increase the town’s attractiveness as an alternative location for residential development in Ballarat’s hinterland and the potential for a future by-pass would also improve liveability.

REGIONAL ECONOMY

Ballarat has experienced one of the highest rates of economic growth in regional Victoria over the past decade. Smaller settlements, particularly those in the western parts of the region, have experienced lower rates of growth. Population growth has been the main driver of economic growth and is expected to remain important. The agricultural sector will continue to support many towns and rural communities, while growth in tourism will benefit areas such as the Grampians National Park, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs, Clunes and the Pyrenees wine region.

Future directions

- ▶ support commercial development and activity in each settlement that is consistent with the role and function of that settlement that will encourage economic self-sufficiency and reduce trade leakage to Melbourne, and reinforces the primacy of existing town centres
- ▶ recognise the Central Highland's regionally significant rural and agricultural assets including the areas of highly productive and versatile soils within Moorabool, Ballarat and Hepburn, the Bacchus Marsh Irrigation District and the Pyrenees wine region
- ▶ provide greater certainty in rural areas to encourage new investment in agricultural activities that enables growth of exports, increased productivity and strengthens farming communities
- ▶ manage versatile and productive agricultural areas for primary production by providing for a range of flexible rural uses, while protecting such areas from incompatible uses
- ▶ support and protect opportunities for intensive agriculture in areas with excellent access to markets, and where potential amenity and water catchment impacts can be appropriately managed
- ▶ encourage local employment opportunities and provide industrial land to support the population growth and economic opportunities identified in the plan
- ▶ exploit the regional significance of the Ballarat West Employment Zone in providing land for manufacturing, freight and logistics, and commercial uses
- ▶ support opportunities for local energy generation from renewable sources in locations where amenity, landscape and environmental assets and values can be protected and local infrastructure can support this activity
- ▶ maintain access to productive earth resources
- ▶ recognise the economic benefits of tourism and promote opportunities across the region
- ▶ support tourism opportunities associated with the recognition, protection and development of goldfields assets as part of the 'Goldfields – Australia's Premier Heritage Region' project.

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

The Central Highlands region features diverse environmental, water catchment, landscape and heritage assets that are critical to the region's economy, attractiveness and liveability. There will continue to be significant demand for urban development in the region in areas of high amenity and natural value, including areas close to Melbourne. Balancing these pressures along with the natural hazards associated with these areas, such as bushfire, flood and drought, is a key challenge for the plan.

Future directions

- ▶ promote and protect the Central Highlands significant goldfields and Aboriginal cultural heritage as key regional economic and social assets
- ▶ support tourism opportunities that contribute to positive cultural heritage and natural environment outcomes
- ▶ define the region's valued landscape characteristics and identify landscapes of regional significance
- ▶ protect the rural landscape character of the region as a major contributor to its liveability, tourism and growth
- ▶ support the improvement of knowledge and resources about Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage in the region
- ▶ capitalise on environmental assets by advancing tourism and economic diversification opportunities, while protecting and maintaining environmental assets and values
- ▶ direct settlement growth and development to areas where it will avoid impacting on high value environmental assets, including designated water supply catchment areas, strategically important terrestrial habitat, soil health, waterways and wetlands
- ▶ strategically plan for enhancements to environmental assets to:
 - ▷ enhance land, water and biodiversity assets, including land critical for connecting areas of high value habitat
 - ▷ reduce threats to high value areas and assets
- ▶ encourage strategic land use planning that promotes adaptable land uses that respond to climate change and enable economic diversification
- ▶ take a precautionary approach in planning new developments by avoiding locations that pose an extreme risk from bushfire or flood
- ▶ carefully consider development in locations where there is significant flood or bushfire risk that cannot be avoided
- ▶ consider natural hazards and risks such as soil erosion and contaminated land in planning for growth and development.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Directing growth to locations with good existing physical and social infrastructure that can be further enhanced is a priority. As the region grows, improving transport networks and capacity for people and freight will be important. The transport network is focused around the Western Highway and rail corridors linking Melbourne to Adelaide and Melbourne to Ararat. Other significant roads include the Glenelg, Pyrenees, Sunraysia and Midland highways providing access to other parts of the region and the state.

Future directions

- ▶ improve the capacity and functioning (including safety, reliability and resilience) of the region's transport networks
- ▶ ensure access and connectivity between settlements within and external to the region
- ▶ develop integrated freight precincts and related networks as a means of improving the distribution and collection of goods across the region
- ▶ understand and ensure efficient ways to transport products between producers and markets (supply chains)
- ▶ provide social infrastructure that is well located and accessible in relation to residential development, public transport services, employment and educational opportunities
- ▶ provide multi-purpose, flexible and adaptable health and education infrastructure that can respond to changing and emerging community needs over time
- ▶ protect the operation of existing and planned health and education and training facilities from conflicting land uses
- ▶ direct development to locations that make the best use of existing water, energy and utility infrastructure and minimise the need for infrastructure upgrades or expansion
- ▶ prioritise infrastructure investment that facilitates economic growth and urban development
- ▶ identify potential economic, social and environmental benefits of infrastructure investment and prioritise investment where it will achieve multiple benefits
- ▶ coordinate infrastructure investment with the expected residential, urban and agricultural growth identified in the regional growth plan
- ▶ support economic opportunities around cultural heritage, the built and natural environment.

DELIVERING REGIONAL GROWTH

The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan has identified a broad series of actions that, over the next 30 years, will help realise the vision for the region. Some of these things will happen almost immediately, others will evolve over time.

Outcomes

- ▶ population and economic growth focused around major urban centres in Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh and Ararat, supported by infrastructure planning and investment
- ▶ the continued emergence of a knowledge economy, with higher education, technology and research uses encouraged to grow
- ▶ better transport linkages between towns within and outside the region
- ▶ continued growth of the tourism industry with better coordination between key areas and visitor experiences, working to create a regional tourism approach, rather than individual attractions
- ▶ better services and facilities in centres that are easy to get to
- ▶ greater recognition, protection and support for key agricultural resources and rural industries
- ▶ protection of environmental assets with deliberate strategies to enhance water quality and explore alternative energy sources
- ▶ actions to provide for more jobs closer to home to limit the need to commute long distances
- ▶ managed growth in towns subject to natural hazards such as bushfire and flood
- ▶ support economic opportunities around cultural heritage, the built and natural environment.





FURTHER READING AND INFORMATION

www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans

Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan

Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan Background Report

Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan (2010)

Cover images (clockwise from top left)

1. Ballarat Town Hall, image by Michael McLeod, photographer
2. Train at Bacchus Marsh, image by Michael McLeod, photographer
3. Lake Daylesford, image by Dale Callahan – www.flickr.com/spacountry
4. Ballarat Technology Park, image by Michael McLeod, photographer
5. Waubra Football Club 2013 Premiership Season, image by Michael McLeod, photographer
6. Golden Plains Festival, image by Ty Johnson, photographer
7. Sovereign Hill, image courtesy of Sovereign Hill – sovereignhill.com.au
8. Mount Langi Ghiran Vineyard, Bayindeen, image courtesy of Visions of Victoria

Opposite: Netball at Waubra Community Hub, Waubra, image by Michael McLeod, photographer

