

# WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This regional growth plan provides a regional approach to land use planning in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. It covers the municipalities of Hindmarsh, Horsham, Northern Grampians, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack and identifies opportunities for encouraging and accommodating growth and managing change over the next 30 years.

The plan identifies:

- where future development will be supported, assessed at a regional scale
- environmental, economic, community and cultural assets and resources of regional significance that should be preserved, maintained or developed
- key regional priorities for future infrastructure planning and investment to support growth.

## **Vision for the Wimmera Southern Mallee in 2041**

In 2041 the Wimmera Southern Mallee is a prosperous region that uses its natural advantages of a healthy environment, extensive spaces and a range of urban and rural lifestyle opportunities to attract more residents, businesses and visitors.

Increased primary production remains an important focus of the region, but a more diverse and innovative economy, including new agricultural commodities, industry, tourism, research and education means that the community can adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions.

The environment is protected and enhanced by sustainable communities and industry.

People can choose from a variety of places to live throughout the region to suit different lifestyles, with a network of small and large towns providing hubs to access community activity and services.

Good transport connections are provided within and beyond the region to facilities and markets to improve the competitive advantage of living and working in the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Principles and key directions

The principles and key directions identified to achieve the 2041 vision for the Wimmera Southern Mallee are:

Principle	Key directions
1. Growth should be encouraged throughout the region to create a network of integrated and prosperous settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make opportunities for population and economic growth available throughout the Wimmera Southern Mallee</li><li>• Support a highly connected network of settlements based on communities of interest</li></ul>
2. Key centres should be a focus to manage population change and access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus urban development and community facilities in existing settlements</li><li>• Plan for Horsham and the region's district towns to act as focal points for development and provide facilities to smaller neighbouring communities</li></ul>
3. Ecological health and rural landscapes should be enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect regionally significant environmental assets</li><li>• Encourage greater connectivity between areas of medium to high natural value</li><li>• Identify and protect the region's significant landscapes</li></ul>
4. Key agricultural resources should be protected, productivity maintained, and the development of industry supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect land and environmental resources which make a significant contribution to the region's agricultural productivity</li><li>• Encourage diversification of agricultural production which takes advantage of natural and infrastructure assets</li><li>• Support local industries, activities and infrastructure which complement and enhance the region's agricultural sector</li></ul>
5. The region's assets should be used to facilitate the diversification of the economy and build a resilient community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage diversification of the regional economy through building on the region's assets, particularly agriculture, energy, mining and tourism</li><li>• Provide commercial, retail and industrial opportunities within each community of interest</li></ul>
6. Planning should support adaptation to changes in climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan for the potential economic and social impacts of climate change</li><li>• Manage the risks associated with natural hazards</li></ul>
7. The development of distinct settlements should be supported to create healthy, attractive and liveable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support liveable communities through the development of a range of housing, quality urban design and access to community facilities</li><li>• Protect those valued characteristics of towns which make them unique and liveable</li></ul>
8. Opportunities for growth should be identified to facilitate appropriate local development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote a positive and adaptable approach to planning for the Wimmera Southern Mallee</li></ul>
9. Infrastructure required to support growth should be identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support servicing infrastructure that facilitates urban growth, environmental resilience and economic development</li><li>• Encourage social infrastructure that is well located, flexible and accessible</li><li>• Integrate planning for freight and passenger transport with the land use directions of this plan</li></ul>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# PART A | INTRODUCTION



## 1. What is a regional growth plan?

Eight regional growth plans have been developed to provide broad direction for land use and development across regional Victoria (see Map 1). They also provide more detailed planning frameworks for key regional cities and centres.

Increasing the growth of regional Victoria will help improve the state's competitiveness by strengthening regional labour markets, expanding markets for local goods and services and providing a greater diversity of affordable housing and employment opportunities.

Regional growth plans, together with the new metropolitan planning strategy, *Plan Melbourne*, have been aligned in a way that builds on the interdependence of our urban settlements and facilitates their development as a networked 'state of cities'. Unlocking the growth potential of these cities – so they can accommodate a greater proportion of the state's future growth, with good transport connections between them and Melbourne – will create a state of cities where there are greater choices for people about where to live, work or start a business. It is likely that demand for housing in regional cities and centres would be accelerated in the future with the imposition of a permanent growth boundary around Melbourne.

The regional growth plans respond to directions established in the regional strategic plans that were prepared across regional Victoria between 2007 and 2010.

Regional growth plans are the next stage in planning for growth and change in regional Victoria. They have been developed in partnership between local government and state agencies and authorities, and reflect state and local government objectives.

These plans provide a long-term view of the region to 2041 and beyond, allowing for some short-term actions, and providing long-term strategic land use direction.

This plan provides a regional approach to land use planning in the Wimmera Southern Mallee and identifies opportunities for encouraging and accommodating growth and managing change over the next 30 years. The plan covers the municipalities of Hindmarsh, Horsham, Northern Grampians, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack.

While most parts of the Wimmera Southern Mallee are not expected to experience significant population growth between now and 2041, there is a need to consider how land is used to facilitate economic growth and support the productive use of land. The plan considers a wide range of land uses including agriculture, tourism, protection of environmental assets, commercial and residential uses.

The plan provides land use planning responses to the goals and actions identified in the regional strategic plan, titled the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Plan<sup>1</sup>, which was prepared collaboratively by councils in 2010. The regional strategic plan identified the need to undertake regional scale planning strategies to provide a common approach to land use issues affecting the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

<sup>1</sup> The regional strategic plan can be found here: [www.rdv.vic.gov.au](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au)

## PART A | INTRODUCTION

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Plan 2010 provided the following strategic directions:

### A competitive and innovative economy

**Strategic direction 1:** Strengthen the farming sector's capacity to prosper in a changing climate

**Strategic direction 2:** Build the region's nature-based and outback tourism industry

**Strategic direction 3:** Facilitating industry clusters and building on regional strengths

**Strategic direction 4:** Innovative and sustainable energy solutions

**Strategic direction 5:** Broadband and mobile phone coverage standards enable the whole region to be competitive and liveable

**Strategic direction 6:** Transport infrastructure supports the needs of the region's industries and communities

**Strategic direction 7:** Provide access to a comprehensive and contemporary range of learning programs from K-12, regardless of location

**Strategic direction 8:** Increase locally accessible, post-secondary education and training opportunities

**Strategic direction 9:** Attract and retain workers to meet immediate workforce needs

### A healthy and resilient environment

**Strategic direction 10:** Sustainable management and use of water

**Strategic direction 11:** A healthy catchment

**Strategic direction 12:** A community living more sustainably

### Community wellbeing

**Strategic direction 13:** Strengthening local communities

**Strategic direction 14:** Health and community services delivery responds to population change

### Regional settlements and land use planning

The regional strategic plan set out principles to support strategic settlement and land use planning. These have been developed further to form the principles of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan (see Section 9).

Map 1: The eight regional growth plans



### 2. Why we need this plan

The regional growth plans translate and integrate emerging statewide regional land use planning policy. They provide the basis for regional coordination and future planning of infrastructure to support regional land use objectives.

The Wimmera Southern Mallee 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, agriculture and other rural activities
- shows which areas of land can accommodate growth
- identifies opportunities for supporting regional level infrastructure, providing an essential contribution to the long-term sustainability of the region.

The plan will help councils by streamlining planning policy and potentially reducing their strategic workload. It will also contribute to broader regional goals.

The plan provides a regional strategic land use framework for growth and change. It is a strategic direction-setting document which identifies long-term land uses and growth objectives. It is not at a level where service planning or specific unquantified infrastructure could be committed. The plan will guide infrastructure decisions and provide priority for further investigations of regionally significant infrastructure.

Development proposals for specific sites and related processes are also outside the scope of the plan.

The plan will provide solutions to common issues across Wimmera Southern Mallee but will not reduce attention to local issues or replace local planning. For example, the plan will be used to help identify future industrial and other employment locations or to develop consistent regional approaches to matters such as planning for key resources, waste, tourism and heritage.

The plan will provide direction for managing particular activities and development in rural and urban areas.

Economic, environmental and social issues and trends have influenced the preparation of the plan. Potential future changes have also been considered.

### **3. How this plan will be used**

The key land use planning directions of the plan will be implemented through the state planning system as it is applied by each council in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. This will support decision-making at a local level.

Implementation will occur in a number of ways, such as further specific amendments to planning schemes, preparation of infrastructure plans, land supply monitoring and other projects.

The plan will be used to guide and inform future land use planning work across the Wimmera Southern Mallee, including subsequent reviews of each council's Municipal Strategic Statement.

## PART A | INTRODUCTION

### 4. How this plan was prepared

The plan was prepared in partnership between the State Government and the municipalities of Hindmarsh, Horsham, Northern Grampians, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack (see Map 2).

Key stakeholders involved in the preparation of the plan included the Buloke Shire Council, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Wimmera Development Association and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water. Buloke Shire is covered by the neighbouring Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan. However, due to the close relationship between Buloke Shire and the Wimmera Southern Mallee region, the shire was represented on the project steering committee for this plan.

Initial development of the plan was undertaken through a series of issues papers, regional workshops and analysis of information provided by all partners. From this evidence base, a strategic directions brochure was prepared for public comment. The brochure set out a draft vision and principles for regional growth, and preferred future directions to guide the plan. This was made available for comment in April and May 2012, with feedback used to test the proposed approach.

A draft regional growth plan and background report were then developed, building on the strategic directions. These were made available for public comment in November and December 2012. Feedback from the consultation has informed the final regional growth plan and background report.

Map 2: Wimmera Southern Mallee region



Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

## 5. Components of this plan

**Part A: Introduction** – provides an overview of the context of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan and how it was prepared.

**Part B: Regional overview** – provides a snapshot of the region, a vision for the region and land use principles to achieve the vision.

**Part C: Towards the regional growth plan — Regional land use framework** – outlines land use directions and future actions in relation to the economy, environment, urban and rural settlement and infrastructure.

**Part D: Regional growth plan** – provides an integrated strategic plan for growth and change, bringing together the key directions outlined in Part C.

**Part E: Delivering regional growth** – outlines how the plan will be implemented and progress monitored.

A background report contains additional information that was relied upon in the development of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan. The background report can be viewed at the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure's website

[www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans](http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans)

## PART B | REGIONAL OVERVIEW



This part of the plan provides a broad overview of the Wimmera Southern Mallee including what is driving growth and change, what land use challenges the region faces, and a proposed vision statement outlining a desired future for the region.

## 6. Snapshot of the region

This section describes the Wimmera Southern Mallee's key economic, environmental and community assets. These are illustrated on Map 4.

### Access

The main road transport corridor in the region is the Western Highway, which connects Horsham, Stawell and Nhill with Melbourne (via Ballarat) and Adelaide. The Melbourne–Adelaide railway generally follows the Western Highway alignment, with a deviation to Murtoa between Stawell and Horsham.

There are numerous other important road and rail corridors including the Henty Highway, which runs north–south through the region and provides access to the Port of Portland for the export of bulk commodities such as grain and mineral sands. The Wimmera Highway provides a regional east–west link.

Aviation transport is also important within the region. There are a number of airports within the region that serve a variety of purposes from emergency medical, fire and rescue services to servicing agricultural requirements and driving new business growth.

### Population and settlement

In 2011, the population of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region was 50,700. It is projected to reach 51,300 by 2031.

Horsham is the regional centre of the Wimmera Southern Mallee and provides a wide range of services to the whole region and adjoining areas. Located on the Western Highway, it is relatively central within

**Figure 1:** *Projected population change by municipality*

Local Government Area	Total Population		
	2011	2021	2031
Hindmarsh (S)	6100	5800	5500
Horsham (RC)	20,400	21,600	22,600
Northern Grampians (S)	12,200	12,300	12,100
West Wimmera (S)	4500	4400	4200
Yarriambiack (S)	7500	7300	6900
	<b>50,700</b>	<b>51,400</b>	<b>51,300</b>

Source: *Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria in Future 2012*

the region. A number of significant sub-regional district towns service smaller surrounding settlements and large sparsely settled areas of agricultural hinterland. These include Stawell, St Arnaud, Nhill, Warracknabeal and Edenhope.

### Economy and employment

Agriculture is the dominant land use, economic driver and employment sector in the region, predominantly comprising broad-acre cropping of cereals, pulses and oilseeds in the central and northern parts of the region and livestock grazing in the southern parts. Other key employment sectors are healthcare, manufacturing, retail and construction. Manufacturing, tourism, transport and mining are also important elements of the economy in some parts of the region.

## PART B | REGIONAL OVERVIEW

### Environmental assets

The Wimmera Southern Mallee is highly diverse and includes mountains, plains and desert environments supporting a range of ecosystems. The region has been heavily cleared with most remaining native vegetation located on public land. Key environmental assets identified by the Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy (2012) include rivers and streams, wetlands, native vegetation, threatened plants and animals and soils. The Grampians, Little Desert and Wyperfeld National Parks are important areas for nature conservation and, together with Mount Arapiles, represent significant tourist attractions.

### Facilities and services

Most higher order services are located in Horsham. However, the considerable distance between settlements and the large hinterland areas of some towns results in some small settlements providing a wider range of services than would normally be provided in settlements of a comparable size. For example, there are public hospitals in Stawell, Dimboola, Nhill, St Arnaud, Edenhope, Warracknabeal, Jeparit and Rainbow. Horsham and Stawell also have TAFE and university campuses.

### Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is an important part of the region's identity. Aboriginal<sup>2</sup> peoples have strong relationships with the region's heritage and have custodianship and decision-making roles, related to heritage. Registered Aboriginal Parties will have an important role in planning place-based activity and development, and there are benefits to engaging with the relevant Aboriginal community organisations early in strategic planning processes.

Currently, the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation have legislated responsibilities relating to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage places in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. This arrangement recognises the key role that Aboriginal peoples have in the protection and management of significant Aboriginal cultural heritage places. Key Aboriginal cultural heritage sites in the region include Mount Arapiles, the Grampians and Ebenezer Mission.

Native title is also held over Crown land in a significant portion of the region by the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Japagulk Peoples and the Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples.

There are also a number of important historic heritage buildings and sites located throughout the region. These heritage places make a strong contribution to the character and amenity of towns such as Stawell and St Arnaud.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this document the term 'Aboriginal' is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the terms 'Koori', 'Koorie' and 'Indigenous' are retained in the names of programs and initiatives and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### Surrounding regions

The Wimmera Southern Mallee has strong links with neighbouring regions including the Limestone Coast region within South Australia. Major infrastructure links the region to state, national and international networks via the national rail/freight network and the Western Highway, which connects the region to Melbourne and Adelaide. Map 3 illustrates some of the key cross-border linkages.

The closest large regional city, Ballarat, is located within the Central Highlands region to the south-east. Residents and business within the region access some higher order services from Ballarat and Bendigo in the adjoining Loddon Mallee South region. The large regional centre of Ararat is located a relatively short distance from the south-eastern boundary of the region and there is a strong relationship between Ararat and Stawell.

Another key relationship is to Buloke Shire, located in the Loddon Mallee North region. Some towns in Buloke Shire use services in Horsham while the rural economy and settlement pattern of the shire are similar to its neighbours in the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

The Great South Coast region is located to the south and is particularly important for freight movement, with mining and agricultural produce exported through the Port of Portland. The Grampians National Park is a key regional asset shared between the Wimmera Southern Mallee, Central Highlands and Great South Coast regions.

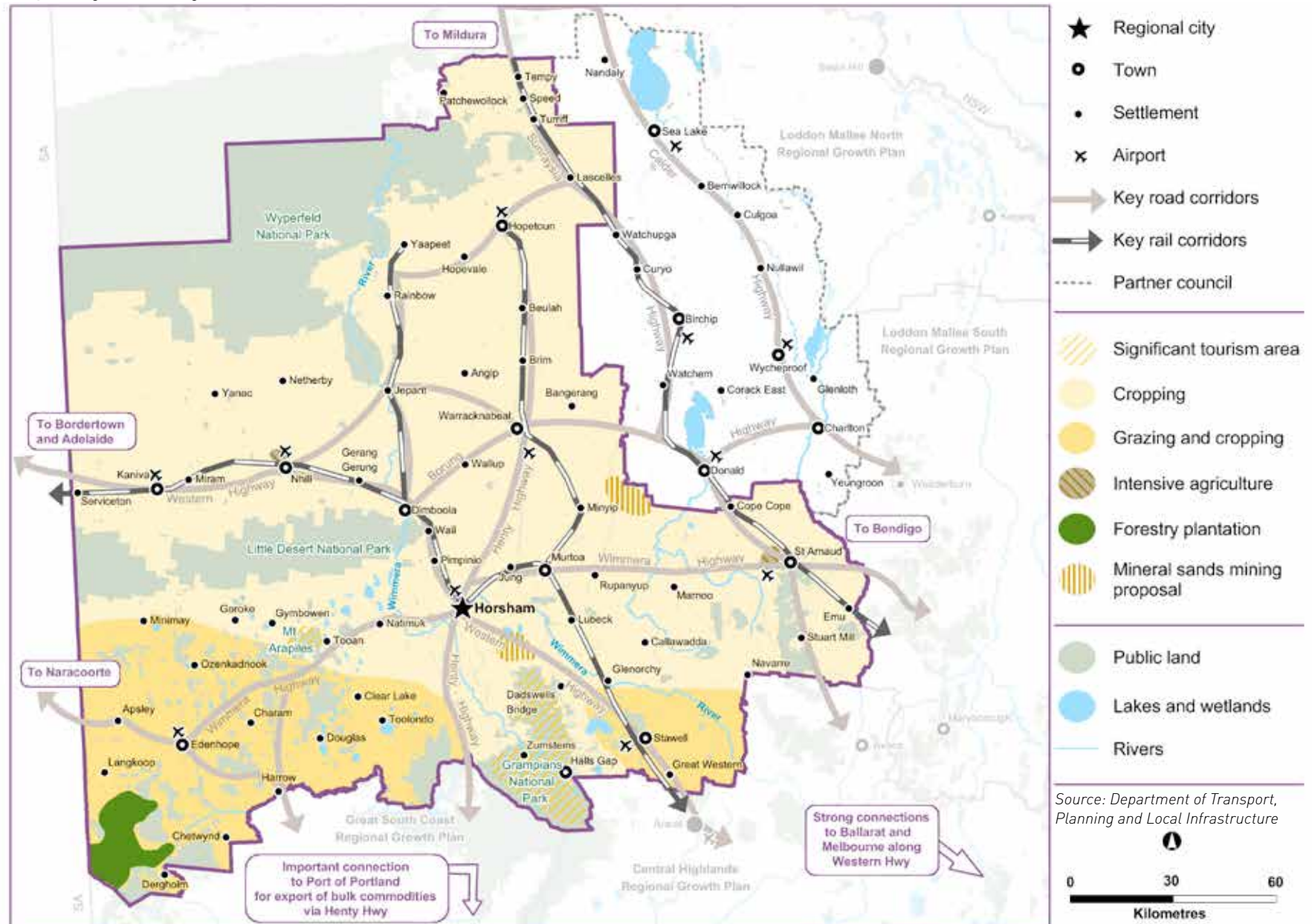
Towns near South Australia have links with neighbouring communities across the border. Edenhope and Apsley have a relationship with many of their residents accessing jobs located in Naracoorte.

## PART B | REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Map 3: Links to surrounding regions



#### Map 4: *Regional strategic assets*



### 7. Drivers of change and challenges for growth

#### Population change

Most towns within the Wimmera Southern Mallee decreased in population over recent decades, although Horsham and Halls Gap grew moderately. Population levels appear to have stabilised in some towns in recent years. The key reasons for loss of population are old age mortality and residents moving from smaller settlements or rural areas to Horsham or other larger towns with better access to services. The region now has the oldest population of any of Victoria's regions. There is a net loss of young people from the region.

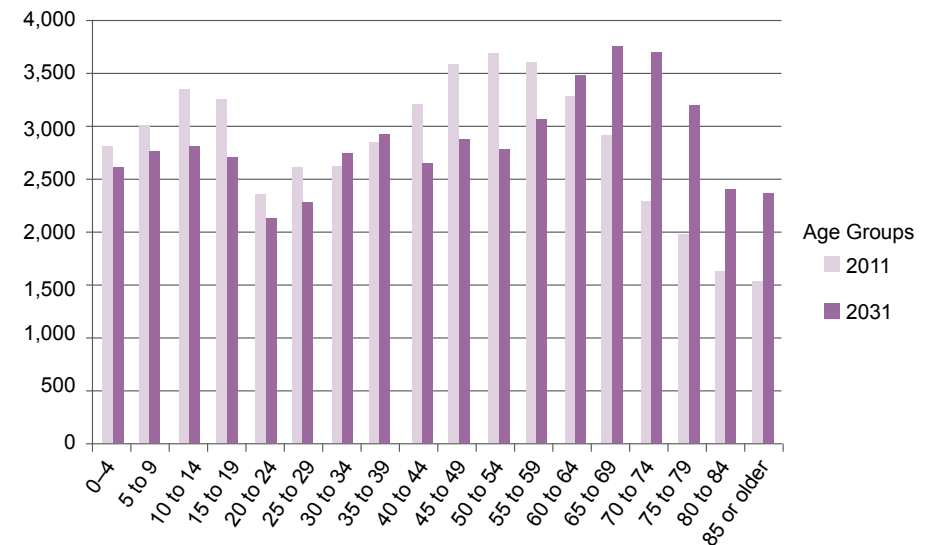
The overall population of the region is expected to increase only moderately. Population forecasts for the next two decades show a continued decrease in population is expected in most parts of the region. This trend will further consolidate the dominance of Horsham, which is already more than double the size of any other settlement in the region. The region's population is expected to continue to age (see Figure 2).

#### Housing and growth

The Wimmera Southern Mallee region provides for a range of lifestyle choices, including conventional residential areas, low density residential development on the periphery of settlements and rural residential uses within rural areas.

House and land values in some of the smaller settlements may be too low to encourage investment in construction of new housing or refurbishment of existing houses. Lack of suitable housing has been identified as a potential constraint to attracting new residents to some settlements and rental accommodation is sometimes scarce or of poor quality.

**Figure 2:** *Projected changes to the population of the region 2011–2031*



Source: Department of Planning and Community Development, *Victoria in Future 2012*

There is also a mismatch between the nature of the housing stock, predominantly detached family homes, and the requirements of older residents, who often live alone or as couples.



### Relationships between settlements

There are strong relationships and interdependencies between settlements within the region and with settlements in other regions. These groups of settlements are known as 'communities of interest' (see inset box below). Smaller settlements often rely on larger settlements for higher order health and education services and major shopping needs. However, the relatively remote nature of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region means that small settlements are more self-sufficient than similar-sized communities closer to Melbourne or other regional cities. The availability of services and facilities has implications for their liveability and potential to attract new people.

#### What are communities of interest?

A community of interest is a group of settlements with strong social and economic interrelationships. Residents will regularly access services and jobs in nearby towns and some services and facilities may be shared between the towns in the community of interest.

A number of the land use strategies in this plan refer to the Wimmera Southern Mallee's communities of interest. The plan identifies there are a number of sub-regional groups of settlements in the region with strong interrelationships, usually based around one major town which acts as a hub for services and facilities. More details about these can be found in Section 12.

### Transport and infrastructure

The Wimmera Southern Mallee faces a number of transport and infrastructure challenges. There is increased demand for the movement of freight within the region particularly for bulk commodities such as grain. Both road and rail are important for the movement of freight in and out of the region.

There are a number of challenges for transport services throughout the region, including declining populations in many areas and significant distances between relatively small settlements. Dispersed settlements and reliance on private transport make the region vulnerable to a range of issues such as rising energy prices, social isolation and reduced access to employment.

Utilities in the region present potential constraints to growth, in particular to those settlements with some services. Reticulated gas, for example, is only available in Horsham and Stawell. The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline constitutes a significant investment in upgrading water supply to towns and rural areas and presents opportunities for intensive agriculture through improved water security.

Access to telecommunications is important to better connect services and attract business within the region. The National Broadband Network project provides an opportunity to improve the connectivity of the region for business and service provision.

## PART B | REGIONAL OVERVIEW

### Protecting and enhancing the environment

The environmental assets of the Wimmera Southern Mallee are considerable and highly valued by the community. Nevertheless many ecosystems have been significantly degraded. Opportunities to connect fragmented habitats will be important to help restore environmental health and enhance landscapes. The health of the natural environment is critical for underpinning the region's economic prosperity including agriculture and tourism.

### Education and skills

Labour shortages and lack of appropriate skills are major challenges for some sectors of the local economy. These problems are compounded by the age structure of the workforce. Young people often leave the region to undertake tertiary studies, with many leaving the region permanently. Skills deficits are most pronounced in those areas of the economy that have continued to grow, including health and community services.

### Climate change and extreme events

The Wimmera Southern Mallee economy is dominated by agriculture, which is highly dependent on favourable climatic conditions. Many parts of the region, including those most attractive to residents and visitors, are susceptible to natural hazards such as flood and bushfire. Future climate change predictions suggest the region may experience an increased frequency of drought and that bushfire and high rainfall events (that result in flooding) may be more severe. Such changes have significant environmental, economic and social implications. Careful management of new land use and development is required to minimise risk to life and property and to ensure that environmental assets are not compromised by inappropriate development.

### Diversity of the regional economy

The Wimmera Southern Mallee economy is the least diversified in regional Victoria, due to the dominance of the agricultural sector and activities dependent on it, such as transport. Agriculture will remain the most important part of the regional economy but there is a need to support diversification, which may include new economic sectors as well as an expanded commodity mix, to reduce reliance on traditional agriculture and exposure to external factors. The region's agricultural capabilities will position the region to increase and diversify its value-add processing of agricultural commodities based on access to research and development capabilities and infrastructure. Innovation and improved connections to markets will also increase productivity.

Other potential future growth industries include food processing, mining, engineering and manufacturing, renewable energy and tourism.



## 8. Vision for the region

The following vision for the Wimmera Southern Mallee describes the region in 2041. The strategies and actions set out in the plan will help achieve this vision.

The Wimmera Southern Mallee is a prosperous region which uses its natural advantages of a healthy environment, extensive spaces and a range of urban and rural lifestyle opportunities to attract more residents, businesses and visitors.

Increased primary production remains an important focus of the region, but a more diverse and innovative economy, including new agricultural commodities, industry, tourism, research and education means the community can adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions.

The environment is protected and enhanced by sustainable communities and industry.

People can choose from a variety of places to live throughout the region to suit different lifestyles, with a network of small and large towns providing hubs to access community activity and services.

Good transport connections are provided within and beyond the region to facilities and markets to improve the competitive advantage of living and working in the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

## 9. Principles to achieve the vision

The following principles for growth have been developed to guide implementation of the plan:

1. Growth should be encouraged throughout the region to create a network of integrated and prosperous settlements
2. Key centres should be a focus to manage population change and access to services
3. Ecological health and rural landscapes should be enhanced
4. Key agricultural resources should be protected, productivity maintained, and the development of industry supported
5. The region's assets should be used to facilitate the diversification of the economy and ensure a resilient community
6. Planning should support adaptation to changes in climate
7. The development of distinct settlements should be supported to create healthy, attractive and liveable communities
8. Opportunities for growth should be identified to facilitate appropriate local development
9. Infrastructure required to support growth should be identified

# PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN — REGIONAL LAND USE FRAMEWORK

## 10. Economic development

### 10.1 Overview

The Wimmera Southern Mallee economy will continue to be dominated by the agricultural sector, with broadacre cropping and grazing the most widespread land uses. The region is of national significance in terms of cereal, pulse and oilseed production. Niche agricultural uses in the region include horticulture, viticulture, piggeries and intensive poultry farms.

The productivity of the agricultural sector is high, and is a key strength of the local economy. The region is characterised by large consolidated farms which are highly efficient and globally competitive. However, the dominance of the agricultural sector results in the Wimmera Southern Mallee having the least diversified economy in regional Victoria. External factors such as climate, global commodity prices and the exchange rate can pose threats to stable economic growth. External factors also present opportunities for the region such as increased global food demand. Growth of this sector is consistent with the government's objective to double the state's food and fibre production by 2030.

Most of the Wimmera Southern Mallee's settlements are highly dependent on agriculture and have a major role in providing services to farming communities and forming part of the agribusiness supply chain. Settlements also provide commercial services and are important for economic self-sufficiency and contributing to the liveability of the region.

Manufacturing is generally under-represented in the region's economy (except in the Northern Grampians Shire) and is dominated by food product manufacturing, including poultry and other meat processing. The region attracts industry through its competitive strengths which include its location at the heart of Victoria's grain production, its integrated agribusiness supply chains and good accessibility to south-east Australian population centres.

Infrastructure is important to support, facilitate and encourage diversification of agriculture and to provide opportunities to add value to agricultural products. The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline is an excellent example of enabling infrastructure, providing more reliable and higher quality water to many rural areas and allowing increased water allocations to support economic development.

The tourism sector is an important part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee's economy and is focused on the region's environmental assets, including national parks, waterways and lakes. These places attract large numbers of tourists for predominantly nature-based activities. Wine tourism is also significant in the region's south-east.

There are significant deposits of minerals within the region, including gold mining in Northern Grampians Shire and mineral sands in the western and northern parts of the region.

The largest sectors of the economy by 2031 in terms of output are projected to be agriculture, healthcare, mining, construction and manufacturing. Growth is expected across a wide range of sectors.

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### 10.2 Rural land use

#### Future directions

- Support and protect agriculture as the key rural land use and driver of the regional economy
- Encourage diversification and value adding to agricultural production
- Develop clusters of economic activity based on locational advantages and infrastructure
- Provide opportunities for uses and infrastructure in rural areas which can take advantage of the region's sparse population and large buffer distances to minimise land use conflicts

The Wimmera Southern Mallee's prosperity and identity are closely linked to its rural areas and agriculture.

This plan encourages diversification of rural land uses and the rural economy as a central strategic direction. However, this should not be at the expense of agriculture, which is a land use of statewide and national importance. Opportunities exist for further value adding to agricultural commodities. Key spatial opportunities in relation to rural land use are shown on Map 5.

Diversification of the rural economy is closely linked to other settlement and community issues considered by this plan. If the region cannot attract the right workers, this may constrain its ability to capitalise on opportunities. Urban settlements need to provide attractive and liveable communities with good access to services to help attract a more diverse skills base to the region.

Areas close to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline have the most potential for agricultural diversification in the region. The pipeline generally runs in a north-south direction, which corresponds with many of the major transport routes. This combination of secure water and good transport infrastructure is an important characteristic that should be leveraged for broader economic growth.

Encouraging industry clusters that build on regional strengths will aid investment and create expansion in certain sectors. These opportunities include a piggery and poultry cluster to the east of the region and a grain production cluster to the north and west. In addition, the new Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal north-east of Horsham provides an excellent opportunity to focus grain-related industry and associated value adding by providing a transport and logistics gateway to access external markets.

Tourism, mining and renewable energy generation are industries that offer potential diversification opportunities and may be located in rural areas, complementing agricultural growth and diversification.

The low population density of rural areas, particularly in the north and west of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region, is a key asset in terms of attracting uses with potential off-site impacts that need management through buffers from more sensitive uses.

In contrast, the south-eastern triangle between Halls Gap, Stawell and Ararat comprises a more complex mix of agricultural, environmental and tourism assets, as well as notable areas of rural living. The plan seeks to protect the agricultural base of this area, while ensuring housing and new tourism activities can be developed in harmony with agriculture and the environment.

Land use planning needs to protect agricultural production, growth and diversification from conflicting uses. Uses which facilitate diversification of rural land use should be encouraged where they:

- build on existing infrastructure
- have close synergies with nearby uses or assets
- do not compromise the region's agricultural significance
- are supported by local planning policy and other controls to manage potential land use conflicts.

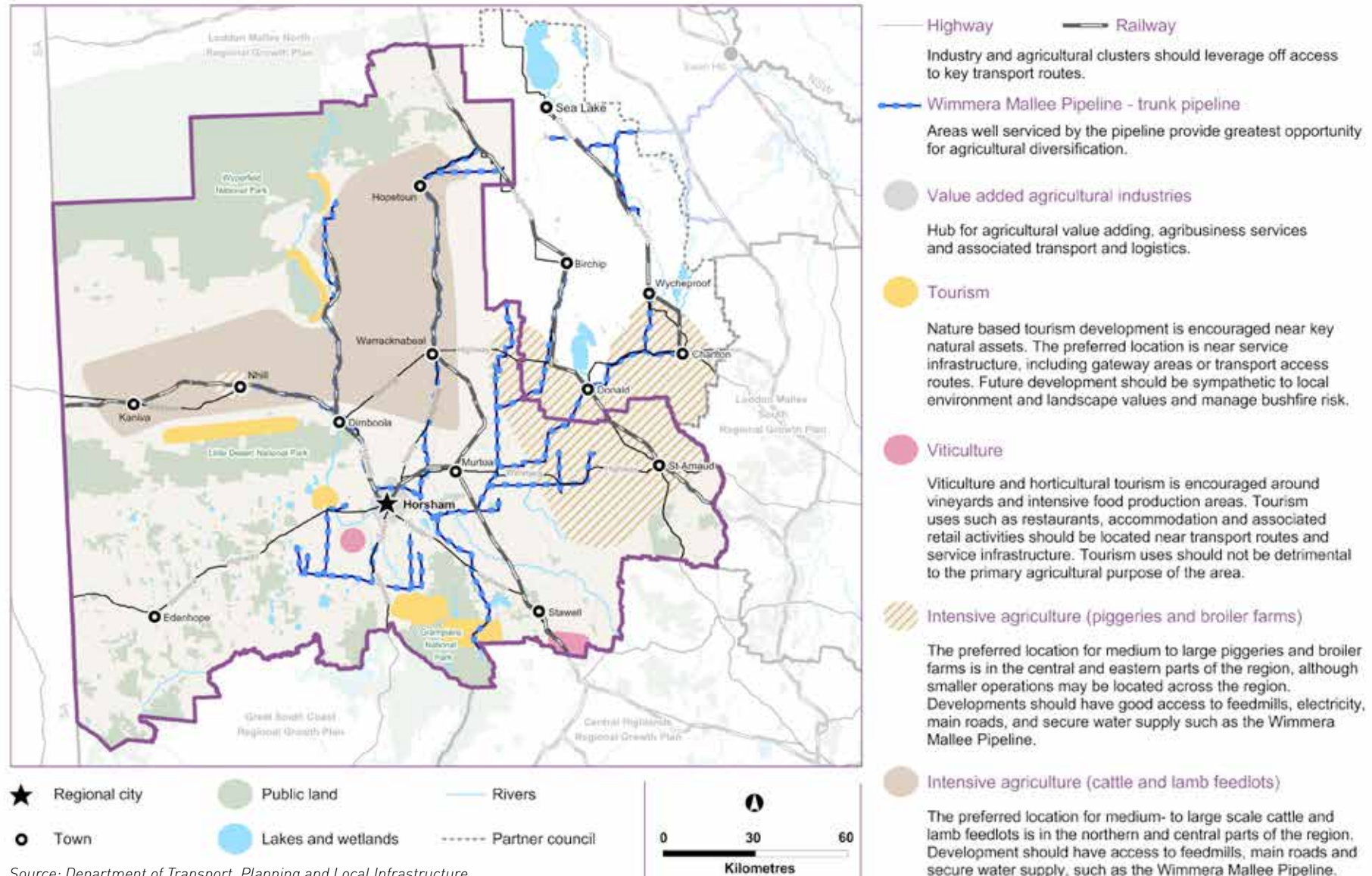
Local governments should adopt a consistent approach to rural land use planning to maximise opportunities related to regional-scale assets.

### **Land use policies, strategies and actions**

- Encourage planning schemes to reflect contemporary approaches to rural land use planning such as adapting to climate change, avoiding potential conflicts with non-agricultural uses, matching land use to land capability and protecting environmental assets
- Update planning schemes to support and manage diversification through policy and planning scheme provisions, reflecting rural land use opportunities, including but not limited to, those indicative areas shown on Map 5
- Provide sufficient land to support the development of the rural industry and clusters of economic activity
- Provide a consistent approach to rural land use policy and planning scheme provisions across the Northern Grampians and Ararat planning schemes in keeping with the recommendations of the rural zones review for the Halls Gap-Ararat-Stawell triangle, to support agriculture, encourage complementary tourism and protect environmental assets

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

**Map 5:** Rural land use - some potential strategic opportunities



Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

Note: this map is indicative only and is not intended to prescribe the location of diversification opportunities

## 10.3 Agriculture

### Future directions

- Support agriculture and protect its long-term growth from inappropriate urban development and land use change
- Encourage synergies between agricultural outputs and complementary local industries
- Encourage the provision of infrastructure to support diversification and transition of agricultural activities over time

Agricultural productivity is critical for the Wimmera Southern Mallee's economic prosperity. Land use planning plays an important role in ensuring that agricultural activities and farmers' 'right to farm' are safeguarded. This should include limiting dwellings in the Farming Zone unless they are associated with farming activities.

The growth of Horsham and the other major towns will require the conversion of some rural land but planning will seek to minimise adverse effects on rural production. Planning schemes may also provide that a range of other economic activities may occur in conjunction with agriculture, such as the diversification opportunities shown on Map 5. Identifying the most significant agricultural land in the region, in terms of contribution to state and national economies, may lead to designation of regional priority production areas that require specific support in planning schemes.

There are opportunities to value add to the agricultural products currently exported from the Wimmera Southern Mallee such as raising livestock fed on local grain, including poultry farming and lamb and beef feedlots. Other opportunities to build on local strengths include agricultural research and development, processing agricultural produce and using agricultural waste for bioenergy.

Good opportunities for growth in intensive agriculture exist across the region but Horsham and Northern Grampians are particularly well suited for further expansion due to their existing infrastructure.

Key favourable characteristics of these areas include:

- low population density and close proximity to grain production areas
- Horsham and St Arnaud have established feed mills that can easily deliver feed to the region
- Stawell and Wycheproof contain meat processing centres
- piped natural gas is available to some parts of these municipalities
- the Western and Sunraysia highways provide key transport routes to export markets
- upgrade of the rail line between Dimboola and Rainbow
- quality and security of water supply is provided by the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

These areas are well suited to medium and large piggeries and broiler farms. Sufficient land and infrastructure will be required in towns like St Arnaud to cater for related transport, logistics and industry functions associated with growth of intensive agricultural production. Nhill could be a good location to cluster intensive poultry raising, given the existing duck industry near the town.

The West Wimmera and parts of Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack within the reach of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline are suitable for uses such as medium- to large-scale lamb and cattle feedlot development. These uses would benefit from the area's access to grain, its sparse population and reliable water supply.



## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

Over the past decades cropping has expanded in the southern parts of the Wimmera Southern Mallee and projected changes in climate are likely to consolidate this trend. Changes to the region's climate and agricultural output present challenges and opportunities that will need to be managed to support adaptation and build resilience in the regional economy. Examples of adaptation responses include providing infrastructure which recognises the different needs of cropping and grazing and reducing the effects of agricultural practices on the region's environmental assets, particularly the pressures of cropping on remnant vegetation and wetlands. Diversification in agriculture may also result from the national action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through the Carbon Farming Initiative.

Land use planning should provide sufficient flexibility to allow for changes to agricultural production and support for diversification of the local economy.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Provide support and direction on appropriate locations for the establishment of intensive agricultural activities, including the areas identified in this plan
- Undertake further investigations to determine whether there is strategically important agricultural land that requires protection from encroachment by urban or other incompatible uses
- Facilitate different types of agricultural activities over time, encourage and facilitate agricultural diversification and value adding, and provide appropriate and timely infrastructure to realise these opportunities
- Encourage housing into towns, to support sustainable rural communities and protect areas of high agricultural productivity and land near regionally significant agricultural operations
- Undertake further work to develop criteria for determining whether land use change to a mix of agricultural and other uses is appropriate in agricultural areas
- Protect and manage environmental assets as cropping expands in the southern parts of the Wimmera Southern Mallee

## 10.4 Industry

### Future directions

- Support industry growth in the Wimmera Southern Mallee
- Identify opportunities for siting value-add industries associated with agriculture and new opportunities based on the competitive strengths of the region
- Address infrastructure deficiencies where they constrain the expansion or establishment of industry
- Support the provision of an adequate supply of serviced industrial land in each community of interest

Food products, including meat processing, are the dominant manufacturing outputs of the region. Other manufacturing includes agricultural machinery and equipment, metal fabrication, wine production and transport equipment.

This plan proposes three strategic approaches in relation to industry:

### 1. Encourage strategic opportunities for new industry

New industry for the region is likely to build on existing assets and advantages, although opportunities for diversification will be encouraged.

Opportunities include:

- more processing of the region's agricultural produce
- developing renewable energy projects that use local energy sources such as agricultural or waste products
- clustering agricultural functions such as intensive poultry farms around St Arnaud or viticulture near the Grampians, ensuring that appropriate skills, infrastructure and transport are available
- taking advantage of existing assets around Horsham, including its supply of industrial land and transport access through the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal, to focus grain processing operations and transport and logistics industries.



Other opportunities for industry may also exist. Infrastructure such as transport, telecommunications and information technology will be needed to support growth opportunities.

### 2. Provide industrial land around the region

Planning schemes should support the establishment of industry. Appropriate planning provisions should be in place to protect industry, future industrial growth areas and key infrastructure from encroachment by incompatible land uses. Adequate land will need to be provided to support the growth of the economy in a variety of locations to maximise productivity through access to customers, suppliers, labour markets and freight routes.

Some towns in the Wimmera Southern Mallee have a limited supply of industrial land (see discussion in Section 12). Appropriate new areas should be identified and rezoned as required. It is critical that industrial land is available in all parts of the region to support local employment opportunities, particularly in district towns. New industrial land should be located where it will minimise land use conflicts and have good access to the region's transport routes, in particular the arterial road network.

### 3. Make towns highly liveable to attract and retain a workforce

There needs to be an integrated approach to the development of industry and broader planning for towns and communities. In order to retain and attract a skilled workforce, towns must be attractive places to live. This includes ensuring adequate housing supply, providing good services and facilities, and maintaining local character and amenity.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Encourage industry to be separated from sensitive uses
- Support industry growth in designated locations through planning schemes
- Undertake regular reviews of the demand for, and supply of, industrial land across different economic sectors and respond to the findings by providing additional industrial land in appropriate locations
- Support the provision of appropriate and timely infrastructure to help expand existing industries and establish new industries

### 10.5 Energy

#### Future directions

- Help diversify the local economy by generating energy locally from a range of renewable sources

Renewable energy sources in the Wimmera Southern Mallee include wind, solar, geothermal and bioenergy. The region has a number of competitive advantages including its low population density, solar access and ready fuel sources for some forms of energy generation. The financial viability of local energy production will improve in a carbon-constrained economy.

Most opportunities relate to small- to medium-sized power generation. The Wimmera Southern Mallee Infrastructure Study (2012) found most towns in the region are capable of supporting small-scale renewable energy generators such as solar arrays or wind farms. The northern parts of the region have excellent potential for solar energy generation.

Bioenergy has potential within the region due to the availability of agricultural waste. It has the added advantage of converting waste into an income-generating asset.

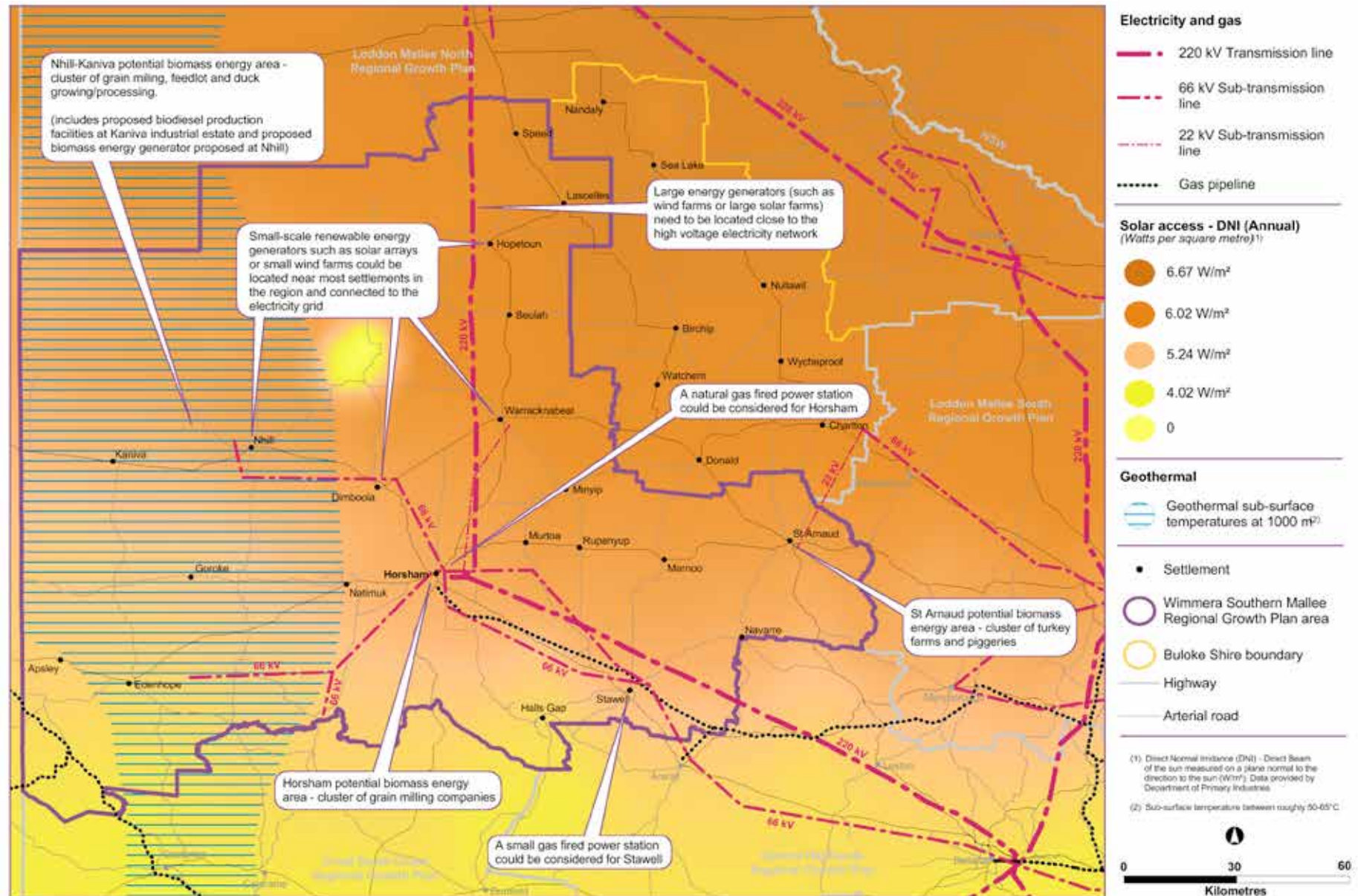
The Wimmera Bioenergy Resource Audit (2011) identified numerous opportunities for medium-sized energy generation in proximity to clusters of bioenergy sources such as intensive livestock operations, grain milling and landfill (see Map 6 for cluster locations). Locational requirements for power generation in the region include: proximity to the energy source and to parts of the electricity grid with spare capacity; the ability to create buffers to sensitive land uses; and good access to transport infrastructure where the fuel needs to be transported to the generator.

Opportunities for wind generation may exist given the sparse population distribution in rural areas. However, turbines should be located to minimise the impact on important identified landscapes and residential uses.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Provide for the expansion of energy supply infrastructure where it is feasible and would support the establishment of new industry or the expansion of existing industry
- Encourage local energy generation to help diversify the local economy and improve sustainability outcomes
- Support the development of energy facilities but ensure they are located to minimise conflicts with identified environmental assets, residential areas and the transport network

Map 6: Strategic energy opportunities



Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### 10.6 Earth resources

#### Future directions

- Protect significant earth resources from incompatible land use and development
- Identify the potential social, economic and environmental effects of earth resources projects and plan and manage projects to maximise benefits and reduce adverse impacts

Major earth resources projects can contribute significantly to economic development and help to diversify the economy.

While this sector provides direct employment for only two per cent of the regional workforce, the flow-on effect is much higher due to jobs created in associated industries such as earth moving and transport. Employment forecasts for the region estimate that mining employment will double over the next 25 years.

Extractive industry interest areas occur within the region, which contain areas of known future interest to the extractive minerals industry, for example, sand and stone. Areas are based on suitable geological occurrence and also take into account existing local government planning schemes. They are intended to provide a guide to local government in developing future planning policy. In response to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee's *Inquiry into greenfields mineral exploration and project development in Victoria*, the Victorian Government has committed to various activities that will undertake further data gathering and planning to better protect the state's extractive resources for future development. The outcomes of these activities may have implications for future planning provisions. Extractive industry interest areas located in the region are shown on Map 5 of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan Background Report.

Provision of transport and energy infrastructure is critical to enable earth resources projects to proceed, particularly to transport raw materials to processing facilities and export ports. Earth resources projects can place significant demands on infrastructure, such as the impact on arterial roads from transporting of heavy earth resource materials and equipment. Improved use of rail transport is encouraged, such as the recent initiative to transport minerals sands concentrates by rail from Hopetoun to Hamilton, and the construction of the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal at Doon.

Earth resources projects can have significant environmental, economic and social benefits or impacts. They need to be carefully managed to maximise the benefits and minimise adverse impacts.

The introduction of sensitive land uses, including urban residential growth and rural living, in proximity to earth resources (especially quarries) can constrain future extraction of resources depending on methods used.

Planning schemes in the Wimmera Southern Mallee need to protect significant earth resources from incompatible development or land uses, particularly extractive industries and two significant minerals sands deposits near Horsham and Donald. These deposits may each provide an opportunity for more than 20 years of ore extraction and processing. Therefore land uses in proximity to these areas should be carefully managed. Methods for managing the environmental and transport impacts of these future mines need to be developed.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Identify, manage and facilitate access to locally sourced natural resources where appropriate, including sand and stone, and minerals
- Avoid urban growth and rural living in areas of valuable earth resources
- Identify housing, transport and infrastructure needs associated with mining at mineral sand deposits near Horsham and Donald and plan to manage any impacts in advance of the commencement of mining

## 10.7 Tourism

### Future directions

- Encourage the development of the tourism sector by building on strengths around environment and heritage assets and agriculture
- Direct larger scale tourism activities into existing settlements where infrastructure is capable of supporting development
- Encourage smaller boutique tourism activities in rural areas where they are compatible with farming activities
- Support infrastructure investment where it will maximise benefits to tourism
- Protect and enhance the features of the region that attract tourists
- Enhance Halls Gap and the Grampians National Park as a tourism focal point for the region

This plan supports an approach to regional tourism planning which capitalises on strengths, including nature-based tourism, the Grampians National Park, agriculture, wine and cultural heritage. Specific opportunities to expand the range of tourist experiences offered in the region involve enhancing less-visited assets such as the desert parks and large lakes. Improved environmental flows to waterways and wetlands, as a result of the region's enhanced water security, will have benefits for the tourism industry. Regional tourism bodies have identified the need for infrastructure investment to support tourism facilities in the region. This is particularly the case for relatively untapped natural resources around Lake Hindmarsh, Lake Albacutya and the Wyperfeld and Little Desert national parks.

Land use planning can help address constraints to tourism expansion, including:

- lack of accommodation
- lack of available land for tourism development in certain locations
- preventing development in locations with unacceptable exposure to natural hazards such as bushfires and flooding.

Planning policy should recognise the role of tourism in supporting the region's economy and the need for land use planning to facilitate tourism development where it is compatible with environmental and cultural assets and values and does not impact on farming practices. Accessibility from nearby towns and the arterial road network should also be a key consideration in planning new tourism infrastructure.

### Grampians National Park and Halls Gap

The Grampians National Park is the most significant tourist draw card in the region, with the northern parts of the park located in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.

Halls Gap provides a focal point for visitors to the Grampians National Park and is located in an environmentally sensitive setting adjoining the park. While Halls Gap provides the greatest concentration of accommodation and commercial services for visitors, it is subject to natural hazards such as flooding and bushfire.

Land use planning should recognise Halls Gap's primary role to support the tourism industry. Therefore it is preferred that general residential development is directed to other established settlements in the Stawell-Ararat-Halls Gap triangle.

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

New development in Halls Gap needs to be undertaken in an environmentally sensitive manner in keeping with the environmental and cultural values of its setting. Development must ensure bushfire hazards are managed to an acceptable level to protect life and property.

A review of planning provisions applying to Halls Gap and to land in proximity to the park, with reference to the findings of the Stawell-Ararat-Halls Gap rural zones review, is necessary so that appropriate controls and guidance are in place to protect environmental and cultural values.

Opportunities to enhance tourist facilities and activities surrounding the park, through public and private investment, will be supported. Opportunities include activities complementary to nature-based tourism, conference facilities and higher end tourist accommodation. Projects such as a proposed tourist route around the Grampians National Park (the Grampians Way Ring Road) and walking trail through the National Park (Grampians Peaks Trail) would help promote increased dispersal of visitation within the region.

Nearby areas can also refine and develop their tourism product to complement the Grampians. For example, the Wartook Valley may provide opportunities on the northern side of the Grampians while the future highway bypass of Great Western provides the chance to enhance the town's character and its identity as a centre for wine tourism.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Guide infrastructure investment to support tourism where opportunities have been identified
- Provide support in planning schemes for a diverse range of tourism development on private land, particularly in designated locations where they will:
  - have access to settlements, transport infrastructure and other services
  - be compatible with environmental and cultural assets and values
  - link with nearby environmental assets
  - not be exposed to unacceptable bushfire risk
  - operate in conjunction with agricultural activities and be located away from intensive agriculture and mining
- Encourage planning schemes to recognise and protect regionally significant natural attractions such as the Grampians, Little Desert and Wyperfeld national parks
- Encourage residential growth not to be directed to areas where tourism developments should be given priority, to support the local economy
- Encourage further development of tourism related to the wine industry at Great Western and nature-based tourism around key attractions such as the Grampians National Park, Little Desert National Park, major lakes and cultural heritage sites
- Implement the findings of the Stawell-Ararat-Halls Gap rural zones review (jointly prepared by Ararat Rural City Council and Northern Grampians Shire Council) to provide opportunities for uses which will complement the tourism offer of this area



## 10.8 Commercial activity

### Future directions

- Support commercial activity within the Wimmera Southern Mallee's towns and key settlements to encourage economic self-sufficiency and ensure access to services
- Support the regional role of Horsham central activities district to provide higher order commercial services to the region
- Support new commercial development which reinforces the commercial primacy of town centres

Commercial services, including retail, office and entertainment, make an important contribution to the liveability of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. They also support economic self-sufficiency and are a critical source of employment.

The commercial services offered in each settlement provide for local needs while larger towns also provide services to a network of nearby communities.

The notable exception to this pattern is Horsham, which provides a range of higher order commercial services to the whole region. Horsham's vibrant central activities district is the main business and employment location within the region. In 2011 it provided 8811 jobs or around half of the jobs in the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

Land use planning plays an important role in ensuring that sufficient land is zoned for commercial uses and is appropriately located in each town. This plan supports the provision of key shopping and commercial services in each community of interest, particularly in district towns, to enable access to goods and services.

All significant retail development in the Wimmera Southern Mallee has been successfully guided to the core of each centre with no notable out-of-centre retail activity. Major commercial development should continue to be directed to existing town centres to consolidate their economic role and ensure investment in the public realm or other infrastructure can be efficiently targeted towards these locations.

Some bulky goods retailing is provided along major roads in both Horsham and Stawell. This is expected to retain its limited role and should not replace town centres as the key retail focus of these settlements.

Further development of retail and office floor space is encouraged in the Horsham central activities district, particularly projects of regional significance. The Horsham Rural City Council has commissioned a central activities district strategy, which is examining the future of the commercial centre in more detail.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Encourage commercial services to be provided to towns commensurate with their role in the regional settlement network
- Support commercial land uses in designated locations through policy direction and by providing sufficient, appropriately zoned land, in planning schemes
- Support the consolidation of prime commercial activities within town centres
- Undertake regular reviews of the demand for, and supply of, business land and respond to the findings by providing additional commercial land in appropriate locations
- Implement the recommendations of the Horsham central activities district strategy

### 11. Environment and heritage

#### 11.1 Overview

The highly diverse landscapes of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region include mountains, plains, wetlands and deserts. The climate varies from temperate in the south to semi-arid in the north, with much of the region lacking reliable rainfall. Fourteen wetlands of national importance are located in the region. The region is also home to the Wimmera River, the largest river in Victoria that does not flow to the sea. Instead, it flows into Lake Hindmarsh, Victoria's largest freshwater lake. This lake is also linked to another significant Ramsar site, Lake Albacutya, and chains of wetlands leading into the Mallee.

The Wimmera Southern Mallee includes extensive public landholdings with high biodiversity values including the Grampians, Wyperfeld and Little Desert National Parks and the Big Desert Wilderness Park. These present a major opportunity for encouraging increased tourism.

The plan recognises the need to maintain a healthy and resilient environment, which will be achieved by:

- sustainable management and use of water resources
- effective natural resource management and sustainable agricultural practices
- improved knowledge of, and adaptation to, the potential impacts of a changing climate
- well-informed communities.

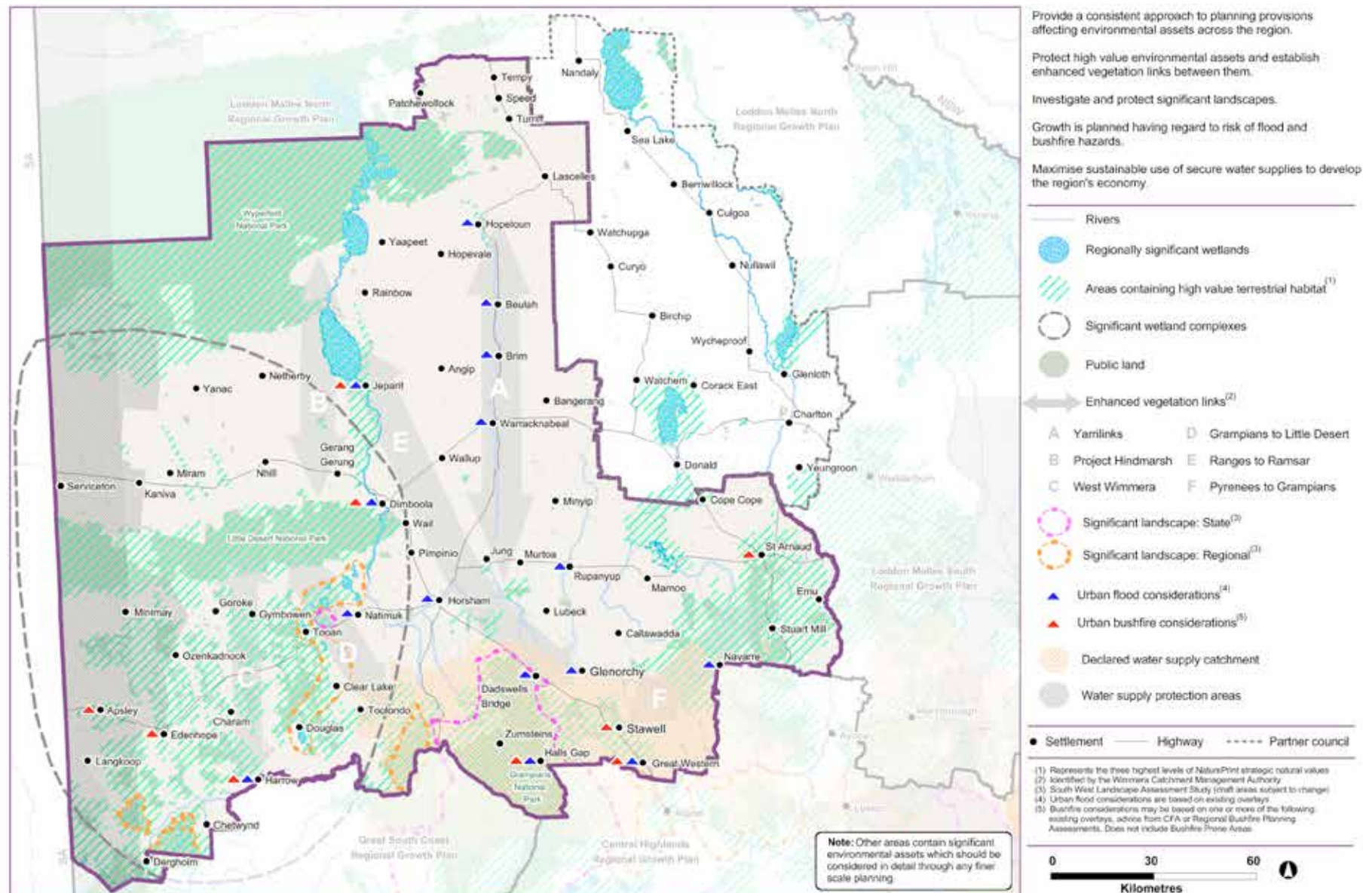
The Wimmera, Mallee, North Central and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authorities coordinate investment in the protection and enhancement of environmental assets throughout the region, along with public land managers. Regional catchment strategies have been developed to provide integrated strategies for achieving improved environmental outcomes across the region. Regionally significant environmental assets have also been identified in this plan and these align with those identified in the regional catchment strategies. This plan proposes a land use response that complements the regional catchment strategies.

Key areas where potential growth or land use change may intersect with environmental and heritage assets have been identified. Natural hazards have been mapped and form part of the considerations for urban growth. This plan provides direction on these issues.

Areas for action included in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Strategic Plan, the Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy and the Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy include increasing vegetation corridors throughout the region, maintaining and enhancing significant environmental features across the whole landscape and embedding consideration of a changing climate into planning.



**Map 7: Environment and heritage future directions**



Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

### 11.2 Environment and heritage assets

#### Landscapes and heritage

##### Future directions

- Use landscape assessment studies across the region to define valued landscape characteristics and identify areas of regional significance
- Protect landscapes and cultural heritage places from development that detracts from its significance
- Encourage initiatives that are compatible with heritage conservation to allow residents and visitors to engage with the history of the region

The Significant Landscape Overlay has been applied on a limited basis within the Wimmera Southern Mallee region to private land surrounding the Grampians National Park, the Black Range State Park and Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park. The South West Landscape Assessment Study, which includes the southern part of the region, has been prepared. The study evaluates the visual character and significance of landscapes and will inform land use planning to ensure the most highly valued landscapes are protected from inappropriate development. The study identified significant landscapes as follows:

- The Grampians (state significance)
- Mount Arapiles (state significance)
- Black Ranges (regional significance)
- Natimuk-Douglas Saline Wetland Depression (regional significance).

A landscape assessment study will be necessary for the balance of the region to identify other valued landscapes and provide the basis for the consistent application of the Significant Landscape Overlay in the region.

In planning for growth and future land use, cultural heritage is an asset – in community, economic and social terms. The region contains a range of Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage assets. Many tourists seek heritage tourism experiences. Heritage places and Aboriginal community organisations and enterprises contribute to the regional economy and employment. Building a comprehensive sense of place around heritage places is important to develop resilient and sustainable communities. This involves protection of heritage places and supporting initiatives that allow residents and visitors to engage with the history and culture of the Wimmera Southern Mallee. The Goldfields – Australia's Premier Heritage Region initiative is an example of such a project with cross-regional significance.

The availability and implementation of heritage studies across the region is variable. Ongoing assessment of heritage assets and implementation of heritage overlays in planning schemes will enable comprehensive recognition and protection of the region's heritage assets.

##### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Support the preparation of a landscape assessment study for those parts of the Wimmera Southern Mallee not covered by the South West Landscape Assessment study
- Planning schemes to recognise and protect significant landscapes to maintain the amenity of the region for residents and visitors, and promote the economic contribution they make to the region
- Undertake heritage assessments across all local government areas in the region and ensure heritage assets are identified in and protected by planning schemes

## Native vegetation and habitats, rivers and wetlands

### Future directions

- Work with Catchment Management Authorities to protect terrestrial habitat and the biodiversity it supports through identification of appropriate locations for links and corridors for plants, animals and ecosystems
- Minimise the impacts of land use change and development on high value environmental assets

The expansion of cropping in the southern part of the region is a potential threat to native vegetation and wetlands as it increases the pressure to remove trees and groundcover to provide access for machinery. Areas of remnant vegetation are often isolated from each other by large cleared areas.

Improved connectivity between patches of remnant vegetation is important for allowing native plants and animals to better respond to threats and opportunities and to make ecosystems more resilient to change. Re-establishing connectivity through establishing vegetation corridors will also help sustain the productivity of landscapes on which agriculture is dependent. Actions aimed at increasing landscape connectivity require careful planning to take into account ecological issues, bushfire management, weed and pest management and impacts on productive agricultural land.

Current and proposed vegetation establishment activities in the region, such as plantations for carbon capture and storage or offsets for vegetation cleared elsewhere, could be linked with development of habitat corridors. The Wimmera Catchment Management Authority has identified strategic corridors for native vegetation (see Map 7). Some of these broadly follow watercourses such as the Yarriambiack Creek while others aim to link areas of high natural values.

Pressure for urban and rural residential development in areas of high amenity such as near the Grampians National Park, or rural living areas near Horsham and Stawell, may also threaten environmental assets and water quality. Potential conflicts between protecting environmental assets and

providing for residential uses need to be carefully managed, such as where bushfire hazard management requires the clearing of vegetation. Housing growth needs to be directed away from areas where it would result in unacceptable impacts on environmental values.

There is a need to achieve consistency in the application of planning scheme provisions which protect environmental assets across the region. Updating these provisions to reflect current knowledge of environmental assets should be undertaken by all councils in the region.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Apply planning tools consistently to recognise the importance of native vegetation, waterways and wetlands for both biodiversity protection and maintenance of agricultural productivity. Also provide support for the outcomes sought in regional catchment strategies regarding protection of environmental assets
- Exchange mapped and modelled data of environmental assets and natural hazards to provide for accurate interpretation of the best available data in planning decisions
- Support the environmental values of ephemeral wetlands, watercourses and floodplains in planning schemes to ensure they are considered in changes of land use and development
- Direct growth and development to areas where it will not impact on significant environmental assets. If impacts are unavoidable, every effort should be made to minimise and, where appropriate, offset them
- Ensure that development and growth is directed to areas where bushfire protection measures will not impact on areas of high biodiversity and environmental values
- Assess areas for potential growth in detail for their environmental and heritage assets, including habitat, waterways, wetlands, soil health and Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage
- Encourage planning authorities to identify opportunities for increasing landscape connectivity to improve ecosystem resilience. In particular, planning schemes should recognise the location of designated vegetation corridors at a strategic level within their respective municipalities

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### Water supply assets

#### Future directions

- Promote the security and availability of high quality water within the region to attract residents and industry
- Use appropriate planning scheme provisions and policies to protect water supply assets of regional importance from development that may have a detrimental impact on water quality or water yield
- Support opportunities for land use change made possible by the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline, where they will result in overall benefits to the community

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, regional catchment strategies and the Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy all promote actions to protect water resources. The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline has delivered much more reliable and higher quality water to towns, domestic and stock users, lakes and weirs for consumption, recreation, industrial uses and the environment.

Land use change and drought over the last 15 years has resulted in periods of reduced run-off into some watercourses. The land use changes include increased farm forestry in the southern parts of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region and changes from grazing and mixed farming to dry land cropping in the west. As climate change impacts emerge, reduced average rainfall and extreme rainfall events are expected, meaning that a general trend for lower catchment inflows is likely to continue. Therefore it is important to respond appropriately to enable economic diversification from changes in water availability over time.

Land use planning around Horsham and for the Northern Grampians Shire will be particularly important to protect water quality and habitats in the upper catchment of the Wimmera River system. Declared water supply catchments occur in these two municipalities, which officially recognise those catchments for water supply purposes and require water quality and yield to be taken into account in land use planning decisions. This includes consideration of erosion, salinity and land use impacts on water yields.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Encourage growth and investigation areas in local planning strategies to provide ongoing protection of regional water assets and apply water sensitive urban design
- Consistently apply planning tools to recognise the importance of water assets in achieving beneficial social, economic and environmental outcomes, and facilitate the economic opportunities presented by the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline
- Consistently apply planning tools to recognise the threats to the condition of waterways in the upper catchment of the Wimmera River system. Consideration should be given to applying overlays to certain areas to address specific threats, where warranted, and where information is available

### Soils

#### Future directions

- New land use and development provides for the long-term sustainable management of the region's soils
- Land use change is environmentally sustainable

The Wimmera Southern Mallee's soils support a large agricultural industry of state and national importance. The long-term sustainable use of agricultural land is dependent on the continued health of the environment as a whole, of which soils are an important part.

The Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy (2012) acknowledges that sustainable management of the region's soils is critical for maintaining Victoria's economy and providing national food security. However, soil health in the region is continuing to decline, at the same time that demand for food production is increasing. This has critical implications for agricultural industries and related uses. Regional catchment strategies recognise the threat of soil erosion to other regional assets, such as water quality.

Land use planning can assist in the protection of the region's soil resource by promoting land use change that does not disturb soils to a level that could result in soil deterioration or that further contributes to the pollution of waterways in any significant volume. Planning provisions such as environmental significance or erosion management overlays can be used to enhance the protection of soils across the region.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Encourage natural resource management strategic planning to consider the implications of land use planning, such as regional soil health plans, when identifying strategic locations for vegetation planting
- Recognise the importance of soil health in local planning policies for the long-term prosperity of agriculture in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. Policies will enable the careful management of land use and development to encourage improvements in soil health
- Assess the implications for soil health when considering development proposals or designating areas for land use change so that sustainable soil management outcomes are achieved. This applies particularly to uses such as livestock feedlots, which can lead to significant soil health decline if not appropriately managed
- Apply planning tools consistently to address particular soil management issues, such as applying the Erosion Management Overlay to areas prone to erosion or landslip in the vicinity of the Grampians National Park. The Salinity Management Overlay should be applied to areas affected by salinity in the upper and lower sections of the Wimmera River catchment
- Undertake studies, where necessary, to identify areas subject to particular soil management issues such as landslip and erosion, where such issues may warrant the application of overlay controls. In addition to current knowledge, work towards reducing the number of areas where soil quality is unknown



### 11.3 Natural hazards and risks

#### Flood

##### Future directions

- Consider flood hazards in planning for land use, particularly where the threat to life and property may be increased as a result of land use or development
- Adopt a precautionary approach for consideration of new development in flood prone areas and prevent development that would increase flood hazard

Flooding has had significant impacts on the Wimmera Southern Mallee in recent years, affecting many communities and damaging property. Climate change predictions indicate more extreme flood events may occur.

Many flood hazards areas are attractive places to residents and visitors due to their proximity to waterways, including land along the Wimmera River at Horsham. Careful management of new land use and development in these areas is required to minimise risks to life and property. Settlements with flood considerations are identified on Map 7.

Planning tools such as the Urban Floodway Zone and other flood overlays are currently used in the region's planning schemes although their application is limited to areas where floodplain modelling has been undertaken. There is variation in the currency of the studies on which these planning controls are based. Some studies have since been reviewed and updated, and an updated overlay is required. Flood provisions in planning schemes should be used consistently across the region to avoid inappropriate development (or redevelopment).

The Wimmera Catchment Management Authority is the floodplain manager for most of the Wimmera Southern Mallee. It has recently commissioned flood studies in the Natimuk Creek catchment, Landsborough, Navarre and Mt William Creek including Dadswells Bridge, to better understand floodplain behaviour in these locations. A number of other studies have been completed but require revision in light of the major 2011 flood events.

Flood studies would also be beneficial for Warracknabeal and Rupanyup. Major development proposals in flood hazard areas, such as a new road alignment, could trigger the need for additional floodplain modelling. Land use planning decisions should be based on the best quality information on flooding hazard to minimise risk to life and property. Accurate flood mapping is critical in this regard.

##### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Support further floodplain studies, where necessary, to better inform decisions regarding growth including for the complex floodplain of the Wimmera River at Horsham and towns in the upper catchment where risks of flash flooding are greatest
- Apply appropriate zone and overlay controls as soon as possible after flood studies have been completed. Detailed mapping and advice on interpretation of data should be provided to councils to assist in their planning decisions
- Use planning schemes to protect life, infrastructure assets and property from flood events within flood hazard areas, particularly for those towns shown on Map 7
- Direct new growth and development to land outside flood hazard areas

### Bushfire

#### Future directions

- Prioritise the protection of human life over other policy considerations when planning to create or expand a settlement at risk from bushfire
- Apply a precautionary approach to planning and decision-making when assessing the risk to life, property and community infrastructure from bushfire
- Take advantage of existing settlement patterns where new development will not expose the community to increased risk from bushfire

The Wimmera Southern Mallee contains highly diverse landscapes with varying levels of bushfire risk. Many of the most attractive areas for residents and visitors are also at greatest risk from bushfire such as Halls Gap and rural living areas surrounding Horsham and Stawell. Pressure for development within these areas presents a significant challenge to land use planning agencies and careful management is required to minimise risk to life and property.

Climate change predictions indicate that bushfire frequency is likely to increase with a greater number of extreme fire index days each year.

Regional and local planning must consider bushfire hazard in detail, with the assistance of planning tools, such as the Bushfire Management Overlay, Regional Bushfire Planning Assessments and Bushfire Prone Areas, as well as input from key stakeholders, such as the Country Fire Authority.

The Regional Bushfire Planning Assessment identifies specific locations where future land use planning decisions should consider bushfire hazards. Evaluation of bushfire hazards may also be required for developments in other areas, depending on local circumstances.

The Bushfire Management Overlay is being applied through local government planning schemes to recognise areas where fire hazard is an important land use planning consideration. New mapping is being prepared and will more accurately reflect areas where bushfire hazard requires specific bushfire protection measures to reduce risk to an acceptable level.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Direct development to locations of lower bushfire risk
- Carefully consider development in locations where there is significant bushfire risk that cannot be avoided
- Avoid development in locations of extreme bushfire risk
- Avoid areas where planned bushfire protection measures may be incompatible with other environmental objectives

## 12. Urban settlement

### 12.1 Overview

The settlement pattern of the Wimmera Southern Mallee is dominated by Horsham, which is twice the size of any other centre in the region. Stawell is the second largest centre in the region and has a close relationship with Ararat. The remaining regional population is largely concentrated in small to medium towns. These towns operate as groups of settlements with strong social and economic interrelationships known as 'communities of interest'.

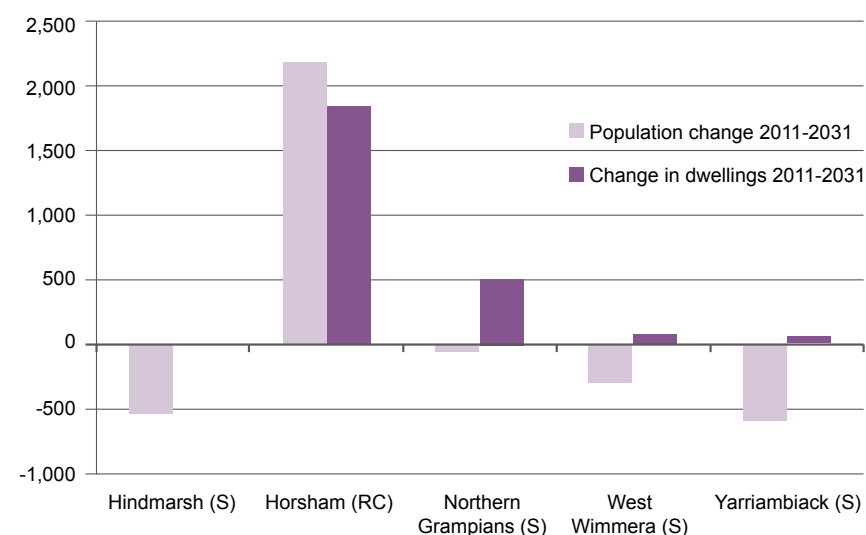
Wimmera Southern Mallee towns typically have a more important servicing role for surrounding rural areas compared to similar sized settlements in more densely populated parts of the state.

The population of many of the region's towns has decreased over the last few decades. This trend has stabilised in recent years, particularly for larger settlements. Most urban growth in the region has occurred in Horsham and this trend is expected to continue.

However, it is important not to follow a wholly trend-based approach to regional planning. The plan seeks to enable growth in all towns in the region and attract residents by facilitating economic growth and enhancing liveability.

A number of important demographic issues need to be considered in settlement planning for the region. Victoria in Future (2012) projections indicate an uneven pattern of growth (see Figure 3). The region's population will increase moderately between 2011 and 2031, with growth in Horsham's population to be off-set slightly by decreases in other municipalities. There will also be a disproportionate increase in the number and proportion of people in older age groups and a decrease in the size of households.

**Figure 3:** *Projected change in population and number of dwellings 2011-2031*



Source: Department of Planning and Community Development, *Victoria in Future 2012*

This forecast population change has implications for housing in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. In particular, the number of dwellings required will increase at a greater rate than the population. The decline in household size and the ageing of the population will mean more housing variety is needed to support changing lifestyles.



## 12.2 Regional settlement strategy

### Future directions

- Support Horsham's role as the regional city
- Build on the strengths of the region's communities of interest in planning for growth, development and services
- Each 'community of interest' provides adequate housing, employment and service opportunities
- Promote new residential development which comprises a mix of detached and medium density dwellings located in existing settlements
- Protect and enhance township attributes which create attractive, healthy and liveable settlements

### Regional settlement

Existing towns in the Wimmera Southern Mallee are the preferred locations for new residential development. Limited population growth is projected for the region and it should be concentrated in locations with existing services. Horsham will remain the key regional city and be where significant shopping, health, commercial and education services with a regional catchment are located.

Settlement planning in the region will be based on its 'communities of interest'. This continues a tradition of people shopping and working in their own town or another nearby centre. The sharing of resources, services and economic development initiatives within communities of interest is one way to assist in maintaining the viability of small settlements and minimising the social and economic disadvantage associated with a lack of access to services or employment. This requires future land use and infrastructure planning to consider each community of interest as a single entity.

Planning for each community of interest will seek to provide sufficient residential and employment land for growth and change and for sites for key services. Each community of interest will have at least one town which functions as the hub for service delivery, employment and residential growth in the group. Other smaller settlements may change over time to take on complementary functions within the community of interest, such as providing niche residential, tourism or employment uses, rather than being comprehensive service centres.

Some communities of interest incorporate settlements from outside the region. In particular there are relationships between:

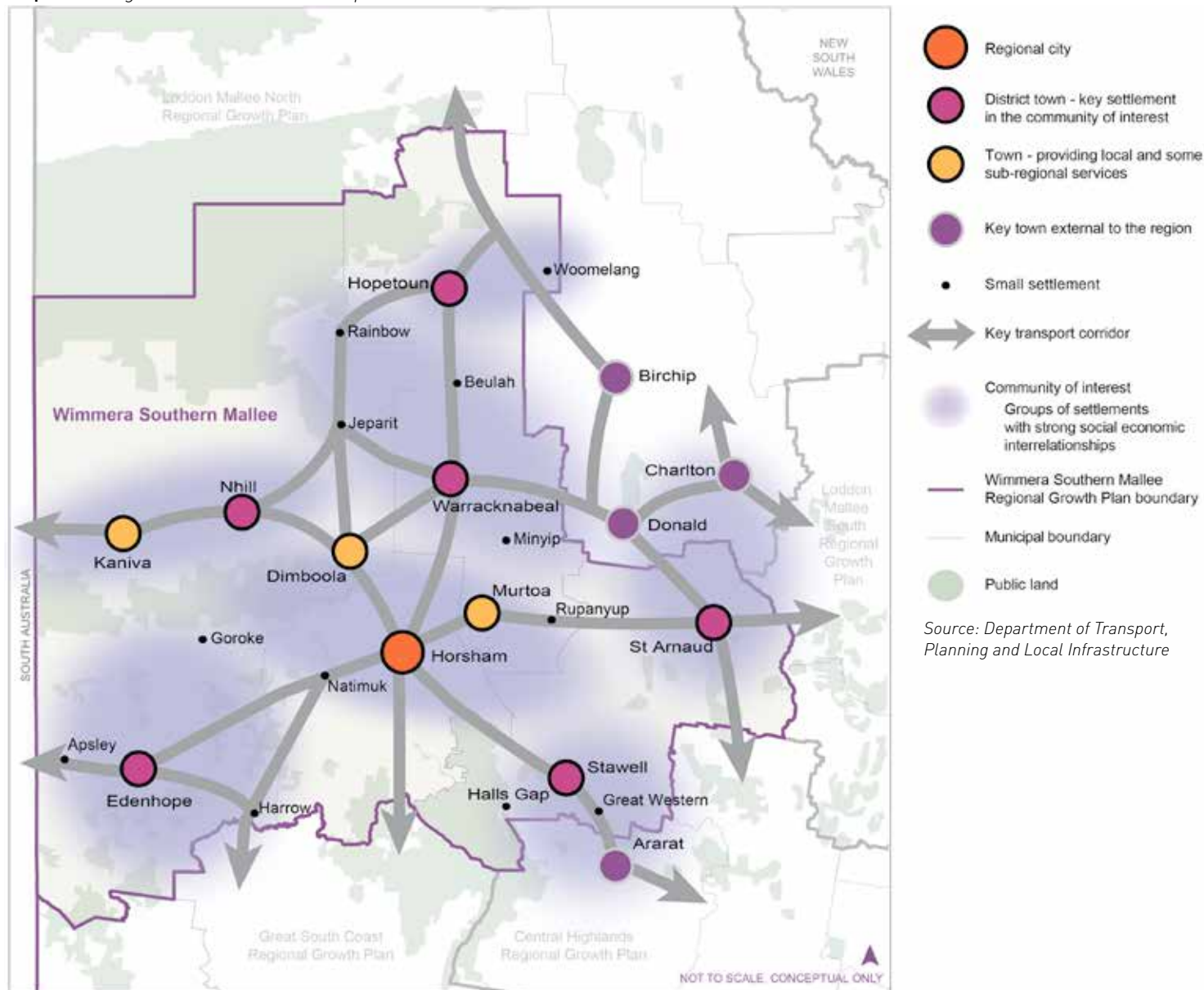
- towns in Buloke Shire, such as Donald and Charlton, with Horsham and St Arnaud
- Ararat with Stawell, Halls Gap and other smaller settlements in this sub-region
- towns in West Wimmera Shire and nearby South Australian communities including Naracoorte and Bordertown.

There will be a need to consider the services, housing and employment available in adjoining areas outside the region as part of settlement and service planning.

The Wimmera Southern Mallee strategic settlement framework and communities of interest are shown on Map 8.

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Map 8: Strategic settlement framework plan – communities of interest



Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

### Liveable communities

In order to encourage people to the Wimmera Southern Mallee it is essential that urban settlements are highly liveable places. Liveability will be supported by easy access to services and jobs, a clean and healthy environment, and attractive and engaging urban environments.

Land use planning can contribute to creating attractive towns in the region by recognising and protecting those attributes valued by the community and which make places distinctive. Additional heritage and urban character investigations and planning scheme controls will be necessary to manage change in some communities.

It is critical that proposals adopt principles of high quality urban design so that development integrates with urban areas and creates healthy, safe and connected places.

Figure 4 outlines the Wimmera Southern Mallee settlement network and characteristics.

**Figure 4:** Wimmera Southern Mallee settlement network and characteristics

Regional city	
Horsham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highest levels of population, services and employment in the region</li> <li>Variety of residential opportunities</li> <li>Clear commercial centre</li> <li>May include the head offices of major regionally-based firms, institutions, or agencies</li> <li>Services a regional network of settlements and can influence the role of smaller settlements surrounding them</li> <li>Major destination for freight and passenger transport</li> </ul>
District towns (sub-regional hubs)	
Edenhope Hopetoun Nhill St Arnaud Stawell Warracknabeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an important sub-regional goods and service role, meeting smaller town and rural district needs including local government, policing and ambulance services to a surrounding rural hinterland</li> <li>Moderately diverse population and housing base</li> <li>Good access to services and retail</li> <li>May include some higher order services such as medical/hospital services and a variety of education facilities – larger towns may have post-secondary education facilities</li> <li>All utility services are provided, with some larger towns having access to reticulated gas</li> </ul>
Towns	
Dimboola Kaniva Murtoa Halls Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to district towns but generally service a more localised catchment</li> <li>Greater reliance on other centres for services and employment</li> <li>Specialist tourism role for Halls Gap</li> </ul>
Small settlements	
Examples include: Natimuk Harrow Jeparit Minyip Great Western	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low population levels</li> <li>Access to services such as a small primary school and general store with postal facilities may be found in a small retail area</li> <li>Connection to reticulated water is generally available but access to sewer connection varies</li> <li>In popular tourism localities, role may include a low level supply of visitor accommodation and holiday homes with seasonal variation in population</li> </ul>

Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

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### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- For the regional city, district towns and towns:
  - encourage the provision and maintenance of a wide range of services and facilities
  - provide sufficient land to enable residential and employment growth (note that Halls Gap is not intended to be a focus for conventional residential growth)
  - prioritise infrastructure investment towards supporting growth
- Support transport systems that provide access to the regional city, district towns and towns
- Continue to support smaller settlements by allowing for their ongoing transition, maintaining services where feasible and encouraging limited incremental growth if required
- Identify the need for additional heritage or design controls to protect the valued character of urban areas
- Encourage urban development that promotes and supports high quality streetscapes and urban design, and contributes to attractive and healthy urban environments

## 12.3 Housing diversity and affordability

### Future directions

- Provide social infrastructure that is well located and accessible to residential areas, transport services, employment and educational opportunities
- Support opportunities to increase and renew housing stock
- Promote new housing which responds to the characteristics and requirements of the region's population

In the Wimmera Southern Mallee, there is a mismatch between the changing structure of households and the available housing stock. The region features a relatively high proportion of small households but has a fairly homogenous housing stock, dominated by detached single dwellings. As the population ages there is likely to be an increased demand for a greater mix of houses including units and aged care housing. Housing for elderly people should be encouraged in the region's larger, well-serviced towns to help reduce social isolation, particularly Horsham, to take advantage of its local public transport services.

Despite low rates of housing stress and high levels of housing affordability, the region has significant challenges in relation to housing. The housing market is not working effectively, for different reasons in different towns.

Barriers to investment in housing, in some locations, include low returns compared to other investments, institutional investors such as hospitals competing in the rental housing market and widespread low incomes in some pockets of the region.

Dealing with these complex housing market issues will require sustained intervention from all levels of government. Land use planning alone cannot address all housing issues. However, key opportunities for support through integrated land use planning include the location of housing and transport services, and the appropriate design mix of housing types.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Encourage planning schemes to recognise the importance of diverse and affordable housing which takes into account emerging demographic, social and economic trends
- Allow for increased housing densities in locations that are accessible to shops, transport networks and other community services and facilities
- Develop a regional housing strategy with a focus on choice, availability and affordability
- Encourage principles of universal and adaptable design to be incorporated into new housing
- Identify and address gaps in the housing market that are hindering growth and prosperity or exacerbating disadvantage
- Support the provision of suitable housing for elderly people to cater for the projected demographic change

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### 12.4 Regional city – Horsham

#### Future directions

- Support development and investment that is consistent with Horsham's status as a regional city and the largest town in Wimmera Southern Mallee
- Provide for residential growth through infill development and targeted greenfield development
- Consolidate the regional significance of the Horsham central activities district by providing additional retail and office space over the life of this plan
- Provide a comprehensive growth plan for Horsham which integrates transport and land use planning

Horsham is the key regional centre for the Wimmera Southern Mallee region and is of statewide significance. It is strategically located on the junction of three highways and the Melbourne-Adelaide railway. Horsham is home to regional health services, tertiary education and government agencies. Horsham's role as the primary urban settlement in the region is reinforced by this plan. The success of Horsham will be important to the regional economy and for attracting new residents. Horsham will continue to provide higher order employment and services to the whole Wimmera Southern Mallee.

#### Residential growth

Population projections (from Victoria in Future 2012) indicate growth of around 0.5 per cent per year can be expected over the next 20 years (around 2200 people in total). Projected dwelling demand for Horsham Rural City is 100 to 125 per annum. There is a need for high quality housing to attract skilled professionals to the region.

There is vacant residential zoned land available on all sides of the city with the largest area to the west between Remlaw Road and Natimuk Road.

Data for the period 2011–2026 indicates the supply of greenfield residential land is adequate for the next 10 to 15 years, based on recent construction trends and population projections. Further opportunities for residential development over the medium- to long-term will need to be identified.

The Wimmera River provides a major recreational and environmental asset for the city, but it also creates a number of planning considerations. In particular, major residential growth is unlikely to be appropriate on the eastern side of Horsham due to flooding, while areas to the west of the city are likely to have the least environmental planning considerations for further growth. Areas immediately to the south of the Wimmera River could be investigated for further development although it will be necessary to manage various constraints including bushfire, flooding and cultural heritage.

Infill and medium density development should be supported as a key source of supply including mixed use developments in and around the central activities district.

It is not expected that additional low density residential land will be required in the short- to medium-term.

#### Urban form and design

The Western Highway runs through the middle of Horsham. VicRoads is investigating options for bypassing the city to the north-east. It is important that any future bypass integrates with the urban form of Horsham and does not segregate preferred growth areas from other parts of the city or prejudice opportunities for growth. Decisions about future growth should be cognisant of the bypass route once it is finalised.

Future expansion of Horsham will preferably be contiguous and integrated with urban areas to achieve high levels of connectivity and accessibility. The urban form should support walking, cycling and easy delivery of local public transport.

New development should incorporate quality urban design so that new communities have high levels of amenity and liveability.

There is a need to improve connectivity between the central activities district and Horsham North, currently divided by the railway line. The relocation of freight activities to the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal at Dooen will assist in this process, as will other initiatives such as the future potential realignment of the railway line away from the city. Further opportunities to enhance connectivity and to regenerate Horsham North should be pursued.

### Employment and business

Half of all jobs in the Wimmera Southern Mallee are located in Horsham and this proportion is even higher for retail and service sector employment. This emphasises Horsham's importance to the region as a whole.

Horsham's central activities district is the prime focus for commercial activity in the city and has a relatively compact, integrated form. It is anticipated there will be demand for increased office and retail floor space over the life of the plan and this should be located in the central activities district. Enhancements to public spaces in the central activities district would help strengthen Horsham's role as the capital of the region. There is some potential to encourage secondary retail development, such as bulky goods sales and car yards, within existing business zoned land along Stawell Road and Dimboola Road.

There is a range of industrial land located in and around the city and data suggests there is in excess of 15 years' supply available. This situation should be monitored to ensure a sufficient land supply is maintained. Any new industrial land should be located near key transport routes, particularly the proposed bypass. The airport also creates opportunities. It is recommended that a study be undertaken to consider expanding the adjoining industrial area to support further aviation uses.

The new Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal and its adjoining precinct at Dooen, eight kilometres to the north-east of Horsham, is of regional importance and should be a focus for freight and logistics.

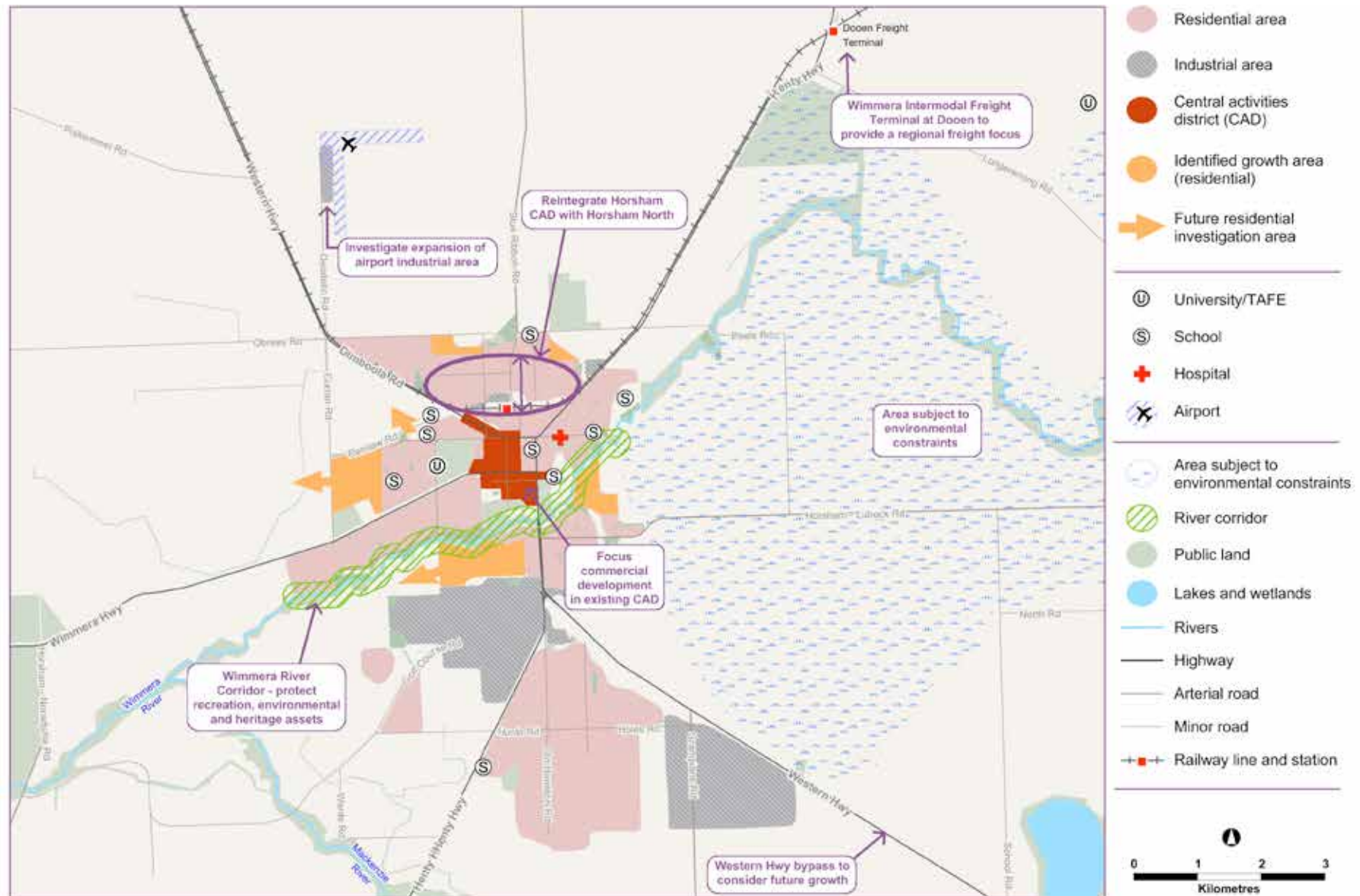
### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Prepare a strategic growth plan to direct Horsham's future development
- Support investment in higher order services and facilities that cater for a regional catchment
- Undertake detailed investigation of potential residential growth areas to ensure a long-term supply of residential land including infill and conversion capacity and greenfield expansion
- Encourage new growth areas, particularly those adjacent to the Wimmera River, which do not conflict with its environmental and cultural heritage assets and are not at risk of flooding
- Provide for the majority of residential growth through infill development and limited greenfield residential expansion
- Encourage infill within areas of low density rather than providing additional low density land rezoning
- Consolidate industrial development in existing locations and monitor the need for additional industrial land for the city
- Investigate expansion of the industrial area at Horsham Airport
- Consider Horsham's proposed long-term growth pattern in selecting the final route for the Western Highway bypass
- Locate additional retail and office space in the existing business areas of the central activities district
- Support regeneration of Horsham North through better access, community infrastructure and housing
- Prepare new development plans which link growth areas with the existing street network and provide for a contiguous urban area
- Develop planning policies and investment strategies to enhance the central activities district's regional significance
- Implement the Horsham Heritage Study



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Map 9: Horsham strategic framework plan





## 12.5 District towns

### Edenhope

#### Future directions

- Recognise Edenhope as the district town for the south-western Wimmera community of interest
- Encourage the provision of a range of middle order health, education, retail, municipal and emergency services
- Provide for residential growth through infill development
- Provide additional industrial land to facilitate employment

Edenhope is the major centre in the south-western part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region, providing various services to its community of interest, which includes Goroke, Harrow and Apsley. The town's proximity to South Australia enables a close relationship with Naracoorte and residents rely on this centre and Horsham for higher order services. The town is located on Lake Wallace, which should be protected as an important focus for recreation, tourism and amenity.

Infill development will provide for residential growth in the short-to medium-term. Over time additional residential land supply will be required. This could be located to the south of the town or around Lake Wallace. Development around Lake Wallace would require an extension of the reticulated sewerage system to limit the impact on the lake.

There is a need for additional industrial land to support employment growth. The preference is for this is to be located to the south-east of the town.

Other key strategic issues for the town include the reliance on treated bore water for drinking supplies and the need to upgrade the airport to accommodate emergency flights to meet future community needs.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Focus investment in services and facilities for the south-western part of the region in Edenhope
- Identify a preferred location for additional industrial land and facilitate development
- Monitor the need for additional residential land

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### Hopetoun

#### Future directions

- Recognise Hopetoun as the district town for the northern Wimmera Southern Mallee community of interest, relying on Horsham and Warracknabeal for higher order services
- Promote residential development within the existing urban area
- Allow for future industrial growth through expansion of the industrial area, as demand requires

Hopetoun is located in the northern Wimmera on the banks of Lake Lascelles and Lake Coorong. Hopetoun has a relatively small population but its remote location has led to it having a relatively high level of services, including a secondary school and a rural health centre. These facilities mean it plays an important role for surrounding communities and this is expected to continue.

Demand for residential land is relatively low and the town will not require expansion in the immediate future, although ongoing monitoring of supply will be required. Some opportunities for infill development exist and could be increased if education facilities are consolidated onto one site.

Hopetoun's location at the terminus of a freight rail line and on the Henty Highway has encouraged some recent employment growth, including using the station to ship mineral sands by rail to Hamilton. This has been assisted by the rezoning and expansion of the industrial area to the north-west. Further industrial land should be provided in this location if the demand eventuates. Additional sewerage infrastructure would be needed to facilitate such development. Other mineral resources in the area, as well as links to nearby recreation and tourism assets, may help drive further growth.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Retain and enhance services and facilities appropriate to servicing the local population and adjoining communities
- Monitor the need for additional industrial land and undertake investigation of land to the north of Hopetoun, if required for development
- Determine the sewerage infrastructure requirement for industrial expansion
- Maximise use of the town's key assets such as the railway line and natural attractions to encourage employment and population growth

### Nhill

#### Future directions

- Recognise Nhill as the district town for the western Wimmera community of interest
- Encourage the provision of a wide range of middle order health, education, retail, municipal and emergency services
- Support expansion of the urban area to accommodate future residential and employment growth

Nhill is strategically located half way between Melbourne and Adelaide on the railway and road corridor linking these cities. It is a key focus for service provision and employment in the western part of the region and provides some services to smaller settlements such as Kaniva, Dimboola, Jeparit and Rainbow. This role is expected to continue.

Nhill and the surrounding area have a range of employment opportunities, particularly in services and rural industry. Additional industrial land will be required to provide for future employment growth. Appropriate locations include areas east or west of the town along the Western Highway. New employment opportunities may arise in tourism related to nearby environmental assets as well as in rural industry and renewable energy facilities.

Population migration to Nhill to service local industry is likely to create ongoing demand for housing. Additional housing will be provided through infill development and some urban expansion. Land to the south of Bone Lane and George Street are preferred locations for investigation of future residential development. These options are favoured over providing additional land for rural living development.

Residential liveability will be enhanced by impending upgrades to the town's potable water supply. Opportunities also exist to regenerate the centre of the town and provide additional housing or public open space through the relocation of Davis Park and existing industrial land.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Focus investment in services and facilities for the western part of the region in Nhill
- Identify a preferred location for additional industrial land and facilitate its development
- Monitor the need for additional residential land and undertake investigation of land to the town's south-east to determine its suitability for development
- Further investigate opportunities for regeneration of the centre of the town through the relocation or renewal of the Davis Park precinct and consolidation of industrial land

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### St Arnaud

#### Future directions

- Recognise St Arnaud as the district town for the communities of interest in the region's east
- Encourage the provision of a wide range of middle order health, education, retail, municipal and emergency services
- Allow for expansion of the urban area to accommodate future employment growth
- Protect and enhance St Arnaud's attractive architecture and streetscapes

St Arnaud is strategically located at the junction of several major roads with good access to Horsham, Ballarat, Bendigo and northern Victoria. St Arnaud has a good range of facilities and services and shares a community of interest with the southern parts of Buloke Shire. It also has links to Ballarat, Bendigo and Maryborough for a variety of services and activities.

St Arnaud is characterised by its attractive goldfields era architectural character and the surrounding natural environment. Proposed Heritage Overlays will provide some protection for the town's valued built form but the need for further planning protection should be considered. Ongoing investment to enhance buildings and streetscapes will be encouraged to create an attractive draw card for residents and visitors. There is potential to create a more pedestrian-friendly shopping strip.

Additional greenfield residential development is not required in the short- to medium-term and infill opportunities will be pursued as a priority. Longer term residential land requirements could be considered along Charlton Road to the north. Any future expansion of St Arnaud will need to consider bushfire hazards.

St Arnaud has an employment sector based on servicing rural industry. Its proximity to a concentration of intensive agriculture is a strategic opportunity. Provision of reticulated natural gas and improvements to power supplies would help support growth and diversify the economy.

Some industrial land in the centre of the town is poorly sited for modern industry and the relocation of businesses to more suitable sites may provide some additional residential supply. New industrial land may be required and the preferred locations for this are to the east and south.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Retain and enhance services and facilities appropriate to the local community and its surrounds
- Encourage residential infill development ahead of expansion of the town
- Investigate the provision of additional industrial land to the east or south of the town and consider the opportunity to relocate businesses from constrained sites in the centre of town
- Consider the need for additional planning controls to protect the character and streetscapes of St Arnaud, which are an attractive tourism draw card and help support the local economy

## Stawell

### Future directions

- Support the role of Stawell as the district town for the southern part of the region and the second largest urban centre in Wimmera Southern Mallee
- Encourage the provision of a wide range of middle order health, education, retail, municipal and emergency services as well as some higher order services
- Recognise the cohesive relationship between Stawell and Ararat in the provision of services, housing and employment
- Allow for expansion of the urban area to accommodate future residential and employment growth
- Protect and enhance Stawell's attractive architecture and streetscapes

Stawell is the second largest town in the Wimmera Southern Mallee, the home of the internationally known Stawell Gift foot race, and acts as a gateway to the Wimmera and the Grampians National Park. It is part of a strong community of interest based on the 'triangle' of Stawell, Ararat and Halls Gap. The interdependent relationship between Stawell and Ararat is unique in western Victoria. There is only 30 kilometres between the two towns, they are a similar size, and both provide a wide range of services, jobs and housing. This close association will continue and should be considered as a significant focus for population, employment and investment in this sub-region. Proposed improvements to the Western Highway will enhance this connection.

New greenfield residential development, in addition to infill development, will provide for the medium to long-term housing needs of Stawell. Urban expansion of Stawell is constrained by the airport, goldmine and bushland. A sewerage strategy will be required to help service urban growth.

Stawell has a diverse employment base including services, mining, construction, tourism and manufacturing. The town will continue to support this range of uses and consolidate its manufacturing base. Additional industrial land is likely to be required and this should be located to the west of the existing industrial area on the western side of the town, north of the highway.

Future employment opportunities that could be supported in Stawell include the equine industry, aviation industry and recreation and tourism sectors. There will be a need to carefully manage the transition of the goldmine at Stawell when it ceases operation. An opportunity to use it as a training centre for the mining industry is being considered.

The Western Highway will influence the growth and urban form of Stawell over the long term. Duplication of the highway is proposed to terminate at Stawell and the existing highway through Stawell will need to be managed to address traffic impacts and use of adjoining land.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Plan for future investment and services based on the close connection between Stawell and Ararat to maximise shared and niche opportunities for both
- Identify additional industrial land and facilitate its development
- Provide for additional residential land in south-east Stawell and prepare a sewerage strategy to facilitate orderly and efficient infrastructure provision
- Ensure bushfire hazard is avoided in the design and location of new residential development
- Investigate measures to manage traffic and land use along the Western Highway

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### Warracknabeal

#### Future directions

- Support Warracknabeal as the key district town for the communities of interest in the northern part of the Wimmera
- Encourage the provision of a wide range of middle order health, education, retail, municipal and emergency services
- Allow for some expansion of the urban area to accommodate future residential and employment growth

Warracknabeal is a hub for services and employment in the northern part of the Wimmera, with its community of interest including Rainbow, Jeparit, Beulah and Minyip. It also has good links to Birchip, Hopetoun and Donald. Warracknabeal's service and employment role will be consolidated and enhanced by ensuring services and facilities are retained and further investment is directed towards the town.

Road and rail links to other parts of the region will be a key driver for further employment growth. Over the life of this plan additional industrial land will be required. This should be located adjacent to the existing industrial area to the north of Warracknabeal.

The town features a very high proportion of traditional detached housing and a relatively low proportion of rental dwellings. Diversification and renewal of housing stock is encouraged to support a changing population and to improve housing quality.

Infill development will continue to provide for residential growth but some additional land will be required for either conventional or rural living development. This growth should be contiguous with the urban area and could be directed to the western side of the Yarriambiack Creek or to the south-east of the town.

The Yarriambiack Creek runs through Warracknabeal and is a key environmental asset that enhances the liveability and attractiveness of the town. Development near the creek will need to be restricted to those areas not affected by bushfire and flood hazards. Environmental values associated with the waterway and its riparian vegetation will also need to be considered.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Focus investment in services and facilities for the northern part of the region in Warracknabeal
- Monitor the need for additional residential land and undertake investigation of land to the south-east or west of the town to determine its suitability for development
- Monitor the need for additional industrial land and undertake investigation of land to the north of the town to facilitate additional supply
- Review the extent of the inundation mapping covering parts of Warracknabeal so that it remains current

## 12.6 Other key towns

### Dimboola

#### Future directions

- Recognise Dimboola as a key local service centre
- Encourage the provision of a range of services appropriate for the local community
- Residential development will primarily occur within the existing urban area
- Allow for urban expansion to support future industrial growth

Dimboola is located on the Western Highway and interstate rail corridor between the larger towns of Horsham and Nhill. There will continue to be a reliance on these larger centres for higher order services. Dimboola's proximity to Horsham and Warracknabeal allows residents to commute to access employment and services.

Infill is preferred over the provision of additional rural living land. It is likely additional industrial land will be required with good access to the Western Highway. Opportunities could be considered to the north or east of the town in proximity to the bypass.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Retain and enhance services and facilities appropriate to local residents and surrounding communities
- Provide for residential growth primarily within the current town boundaries
- Monitor the need for additional industrial land and undertake investigation of land to the north or east of the town near the Western Highway to determine its suitability for development

### Kaniva

#### Future directions

- Recognise Kaniva as a key local service centre
- Encourage the provision of a range of services appropriate for the local community
- Provide for infill residential development within the town boundaries and provide for some additional rural living land adjacent to the town

Kaniva will continue to provide services for its local community of interest which includes small rural settlements such as Lillimur, Miram, Serviceton and Telopea Downs. Kaniva's location on the Western Highway corridor means it has good access to Nhill and Horsham for higher order services.

Kaniva has a compact and contiguous built form and is contained within the Township Zone. Infill development will be encouraged to consolidate the existing urban form. A number of small lots on the immediate western side of the town, currently located in the Farming Zone, could be zoned for low density residential purposes.

Industrial land is provided on the eastern side of Kaniva and is expected to meet demand for the immediate future.

Kaniva relies on bore water for town supplies. An infrastructure upgrade will be required in order to supply potable water to the town.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Promote residential development within current town boundaries
- Investigate rezoning small lots to the west of Kaniva to allow for low density residential development
- Provide a single zone for the town's aerodrome
- Monitor the need for additional industrial land
- Support improvements to the town's drinking water quality



### Murtoa

#### Future directions

- Support Murtoa as a service centre, predominantly serving its local area
- Allow for the development of Murtoa as an alternative residential option within commuting distance of Horsham

Murtoa is located 30 kilometres east of Horsham and relies on this centre for employment and higher order services. Murtoa will continue to provide some services and jobs for local residents and its rural hinterland but will also act as a commuter town to Horsham. It is expected demand for new houses will be focused on lower density residential property and some infill.

Demand for expansion of the town is not expected in the short- to medium-term but should be monitored.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Retain and enhance services and facilities appropriate to servicing the local community
- Monitor the need for additional residential and industrial land

### 12.7 Small settlements

#### Future directions

- Plan for small settlements to manage local challenges and help these communities to be adaptable and resilient
- Encourage small settlements to contribute to their local communities of interest to enable good access to key services

The regional settlement strategy confirms the urban structure of the Wimmera Southern Mallee will be based around communities of interest or groups of towns which have a strong interrelationship. This model is particularly pertinent to the future role and viability of small settlements (urban centres of less than 500 people), while recognising the region's large towns will generally provide the size and critical mass to support higher order services. Small settlements within each community of interest will continue to play a role in providing for complementary functions to larger towns. They will continue to share services and facilities with other settlements in the community of interest and maintain services for their local communities and rural hinterland.

The plan will encourage and support small settlements to be resilient (have the ability to recover from a negative event) and adaptable (adjust effectively to changing circumstances).

There are a number of ways land use planning can support these objectives although a multi-sector response will be needed to address many of the opportunities and challenges.

### Facilitating localised responses

Strategies need to be tailored towards the individual opportunities and threats for each settlement and recognise the diversity of small settlements. The Wimmera Southern Mallee's small settlements will have a variety of different roles such as providing and promoting a range of lifestyle and housing choices, supporting niche tourism uses, facilitating rural industry and freight functions, or acting as commuter centres with links to larger towns. For example, Great Western and Natimuk are attractive settlements located near tourism attractions and can leverage off these assets. In contrast, Apsley is playing an increasing role in providing additional housing to service Naracoorte.

### Access to services

There is a strong relationship between population growth and proximity of settlements to higher order services. This plan's communities of interest model seeks to ensure reasonable access to services throughout the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. The ability to access these services in each group of settlements will be enhanced by planning for services and facilities on a network basis and improving transport links between smaller settlements and nearby district towns. The National Broadband Network should also provide a significant benefit to the viability and liveability of small settlements even though access will be via satellite rather than fibre optic cable for most parts of the region.

### Economic diversification

Economic diversity tends to be lower in remote rural settlements, making communities vulnerable to change. Flexibility in planning controls will be central to planning for small settlements to allow them to adapt to a myriad of potential economic and social changes. Forward planning should identify and protect strategic economic assets such as future industrial land near freight rail lines, tourism nodes or agricultural land.

### Providing infrastructure

While many small settlements in the Wimmera Southern Mallee have a range of lower order services, it will be important for social infrastructure to continue to evolve to match demographic changes and to encourage population replenishment. This could require new models of service provision such as integrated community hubs. Ongoing improvements to service infrastructure, such as the new sewerage scheme proposed for Rupanyup or improved water quality in Jeparit, will also enhance liveability and support economic diversification.

### Managing change from significant investment

A number of large infrastructure investments have been made in the Wimmera Southern Mallee, or are planned, such as upgrades to roads and railway lines or the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. Planning for small settlements should help them take advantage of major changes. This could include structure planning to set aside land for industry and housing to support a new mine or enhancing streetscapes and tourism uses to create a new identity for a town that may be bypassed by the Western Highway upgrade.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Encourage planning and service delivery that takes account of communities of interest across municipal and regional boundaries and supports improved transport access between closely linked settlements
- Encourage the development of integrated planning and economic development policy to identify tailored strategies for individual small settlements, including protecting strategic land for growth
- Undertake planning for settlements affected by major infrastructure to assist them in taking advantage of opportunities
- Support ongoing upgrades to infrastructure and new integrated, networked models to deliver community services
- Identify actions to enhance streetscape character and sense of place

### 12.8 Rural settlement

#### Future directions

- Plan for the supply of rural living opportunities on a regional and sub-regional scale
- Provide for some rural living in appropriate locations where it will not compromise agricultural use, urban settlement, economic or environmental policy objectives

Rural living or lifestyle opportunities may attract new residents to the hinterland around settlements that have under-utilised infrastructure. However, rural living developments can lead to conflicts between residential and agricultural uses in farming areas or expose more people to natural hazards. This form of housing can be an inefficient use of land, particularly when many towns in the Wimmera Southern Mallee contain vacant, serviced residential allotments.

The current supply of rural living land is unevenly distributed throughout the region. The largest areas of Rural Living Zone are found around major centres in the Northern Grampians Shire as well as areas around towns such as Horsham, Warracknabeal and Dimboola.

The preferred approach to rural living is that it is only located where it will:

- benefit existing settlements by attracting new residents
- recognise existing land use and subdivision patterns
- minimise natural hazards and protect environmental assets
- not compromise long-term growth of settlements
- limit the impact on agricultural uses and industry
- not compromise residential infill policy in existing settlements
- meet a need for new supply within the sub-region, not only the local area.

#### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Encourage proposals for rural settlement to comply with the criteria set out in this plan
- Monitor the supply of rural living land to better understand the needs in various parts of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region

## 13. Regional infrastructure

### 13.1 Overview

Timely provision of infrastructure and services is required to support future growth and change of the Wimmera Southern Mallee. The delivery of an appropriate settlement pattern, where population fluctuations are both predicted and sequenced, is necessary to achieve sustainable growth. In some instances, existing services and assets may have to be reviewed to accommodate new levels of demand.

Infrastructure supports the liveability of the Wimmera Southern Mallee, connects it to the rest of the world and makes it an attractive place for investment and economic development. The distance to large cities means parts of the region need to be self-sufficient. Conversely, there are some key infrastructure gaps related to remoteness and the dispersed population. This section examines some of the overarching regional land use and infrastructure issues for the region in relation to transport, social infrastructure and utilities.

### 13.2 Water, energy and utilities

#### Future directions

- Support the provision of appropriate utility servicing infrastructure to urban settlements throughout the region
- Support infrastructure upgrades that facilitate urban growth, environmental resilience and key economic development initiatives
- Favour development proposals that maximise use of existing infrastructure capacity and minimise the need for infrastructure upgrades or expansion, unless the development provides significant economic or community benefits

Growth in towns and cities will result in demand for additional water, energy and utility infrastructure. Efficient use of existing systems and preservation and identification of utility infrastructure corridors and urban location have been considered as part of this plan. The projected population and settlement pattern for the region takes into account currently planned and anticipated utilities.

#### Power

Opportunities for diversification and modernisation of the electricity supply exist in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. This would create numerous benefits such as: minimising the load on the existing network; minimising transmission losses; providing for local needs; and providing a commercial return to businesses in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. Energy opportunities have been discussed in detail in Section 10.

A key siting issue for medium to large power generators is the location and capacity of the transmission network. Larger towns in the region tend to have greater network capacity due to the presence of a zone sub-station and higher voltage feeder lines. Upgrades may need to be considered to support specific proposals.

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### Gas

The availability of reliable and cost effective energy is critical for business. Economic development in some locations may be constrained by a lack of access to energy sources such as reticulated natural gas. Gas can be important for certain types of industry. Reticulated gas is currently only available in Horsham and Stawell. There are no plans to increase capacity of the gas supply as current infrastructure has the capacity to meet foreseeable needs including gas-fired power generation. However, there are expansion options available, if needed, for a particular large user.

There may be an opportunity to extend reticulated gas within the region to support industrial development or growth. Potential locations identified in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Infrastructure Study (2012) include the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal, Warracknabeal, Dimboola and Nhill.

### Water

A secure water supply is of critical importance given the potential for drought to affect availability for urban and rural purposes. Significant reforms to supply infrastructure have been achieved through construction of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. The pipeline provides opportunities to increase supply to particular urban centres to aid development through interconnection between pipes or by piping treated water to towns that do not have treatment plants. Increasing local storage volume is a further opportunity if intermittent local capacity becomes an issue.

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water's Water Supply Demand Strategy (2012) indicates that most of the region may experience shortfalls in water supply in around 2035, depending on how dry the conditions are. Measures have been identified to address these potential shortfalls. Urban areas supplied by groundwater supplies generally all have adequate supply beyond the life of this plan.

An important supply issue is the quality of water available to some towns in the western part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee. A number of towns are reliant on bore water for their supplies. Nhill and Jeparit will receive higher-quality reticulated water through the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline, leaving Kaniva as the only key local town with untreated water. Ongoing incremental upgrades to the water supply for towns across the region should be encouraged.

Recycled water is used for agriculture and maintaining gardens and sporting facilities in some towns. Further investment in recycled water infrastructure is supported to help manage overall water demand and ensure that recreation and landscape assets are maintained to protect the liveability and amenity of towns.

When integrated water cycle strategies<sup>3</sup> are developed, the growth proposed in this plan will need to be taken in to account to identify any potential capacity and infrastructure planning needs. Further consideration will need to be given to the link between the urban and rural water cycle and the implications of reduced water availability when planning for new growth and development.

### Sewerage

All centres in the Wimmera Southern Mallee with populations of 500 people or more have reticulated sewer connections but some smaller settlements are reliant on septic systems. As the major centre for growth in the region, Horsham has adequate servicing planned to meet its 2026 population forecast.

In order to facilitate additional growth on infill sites and potential growth areas, expansion of the region's sewer systems will be needed. Some settlements with on-site disposal systems, including Rupanyup and Great Western, have been nominated for provision of sewerage. In addition to current programs for servicing small settlements, it will be essential to

<sup>3</sup> Integrated water cycle strategies will be developed by water corporations by 2017 and will replace water supply demand strategies. Refer to the background report for further information.

maintain sewerage capacity for the largest towns in the region to allow for future expansion.

Improved treatment of sewerage should be considered to enable recycling for environmental or public uses.

### Telecommunications

The National Broadband Network is scheduled to be rolled out to the Wimmera Southern Mallee region from December 2013. Horsham and surrounding areas will be part of the first area connected. Improved capacity will be valuable for business and personal communications. Dimboola, Horsham, Nhill, Stawell, St Arnaud and Warracknabeal are the main centres that will be provided with hard-wired broadband connection to all premises.

Edenhope, Halls Gap, Jeparit, Minyip, Murtoa and Rupanyup will have a fixed wireless broadband system implemented. This features a central satellite receiving unit in town, which transmits a broadband signal to radio units on premises within the town. Other centres will have a satellite connection with telephone services relying on the copper wire network. Land use and infrastructure planning for the region should seek to take advantage of enhanced telecommunications, particularly in larger centres which have the best connections.

### Waste disposal

Regional landfills are located at Dooen and to the south of Stawell, with other smaller landfill facilities in the region for non-putrescible waste. Most other towns operate a transfer station, which in turn results in waste being transported to regional landfill facilities. Regional landfills have capacity for around 20 years. It is unlikely capacity will need to grow dramatically due to limited projected population growth.

The region will need to consider how it will manage its waste management and resource recovery activities before the current landfill capacity is reached. Any opportunities to generate new industries in this field and to generate energy from waste (including inactive landfills) should be explored and supported. The opportunities for bioenergy production within the region are discussed in Section 10.

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Identify key regional priorities for improved utilities, energy and telecommunications infrastructure and seek funding to implement these projects
- Promote infrastructure planning that is coordinated with urban development needs and the key locations for growth identified in this plan
- Prepare a development contributions scheme to fund infrastructure identified by this plan or other local strategic planning as necessary to support growth

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### 13.3 Transport networks

The transport system is a critical facilitator of regional growth. Local transport and internal town and city activities are addressed in municipal and local plans. Urban design and place-based integration with land use is the role of local government. Region-wide and inter-regional transport systems and infrastructure are considered as part of this plan.

Business and the regional economy rely on an effective freight system including Victoria's connectivity to the Australia-wide system. Regional connections to port facilities in Melbourne and other hubs such as Portland, Geelong and Hastings are essential. Airport facilities include those at Melbourne Airport, Avalon Airport and regional airports such as Stawell and Horsham that are discussed in this plan.

The integration of major logistics and freight precincts in the Wimmera Southern Mallee in conjunction with the transport network has been considered with a view to the long-term freight demand of the region. This plan seeks to optimise freight-related activities and support efficient and effective operations. It seeks to achieve efficiencies and apply sustainable practices while achieving economic and social benefits. The use of airports now and for the next 30 years has also been considered, along with appropriate land use and buffers around these critical facilities.

People living in the Wimmera Southern Mallee undertake a variety of activities locally and within other parts of Victoria. This plan seeks to ensure residents of towns and cities have improved access and connectivity in their region for work, education or leisure across the region. Long-term access patterns are matched to population, current planned infrastructure, anticipated service demands and identified employment locations. This plan provides directions for meeting these long-term needs in response to growth and change.

Strategic decisions regarding growth will need to be aware of transport constraints and opportunities. In developing this plan it will be important to maximise sustainable transport options.

#### Future directions

- Develop freight and logistics precincts as places to collect and distribute goods
- Understand and ensure efficient ways to transport products between producers and markets
- Improve the capacity, safety and functioning of the transport network
- Ensure access and connectivity
- Provide for a safe, reliable and resilient network
- Consider technological advancements in the transport provision mix
- Ensure amenity and useability

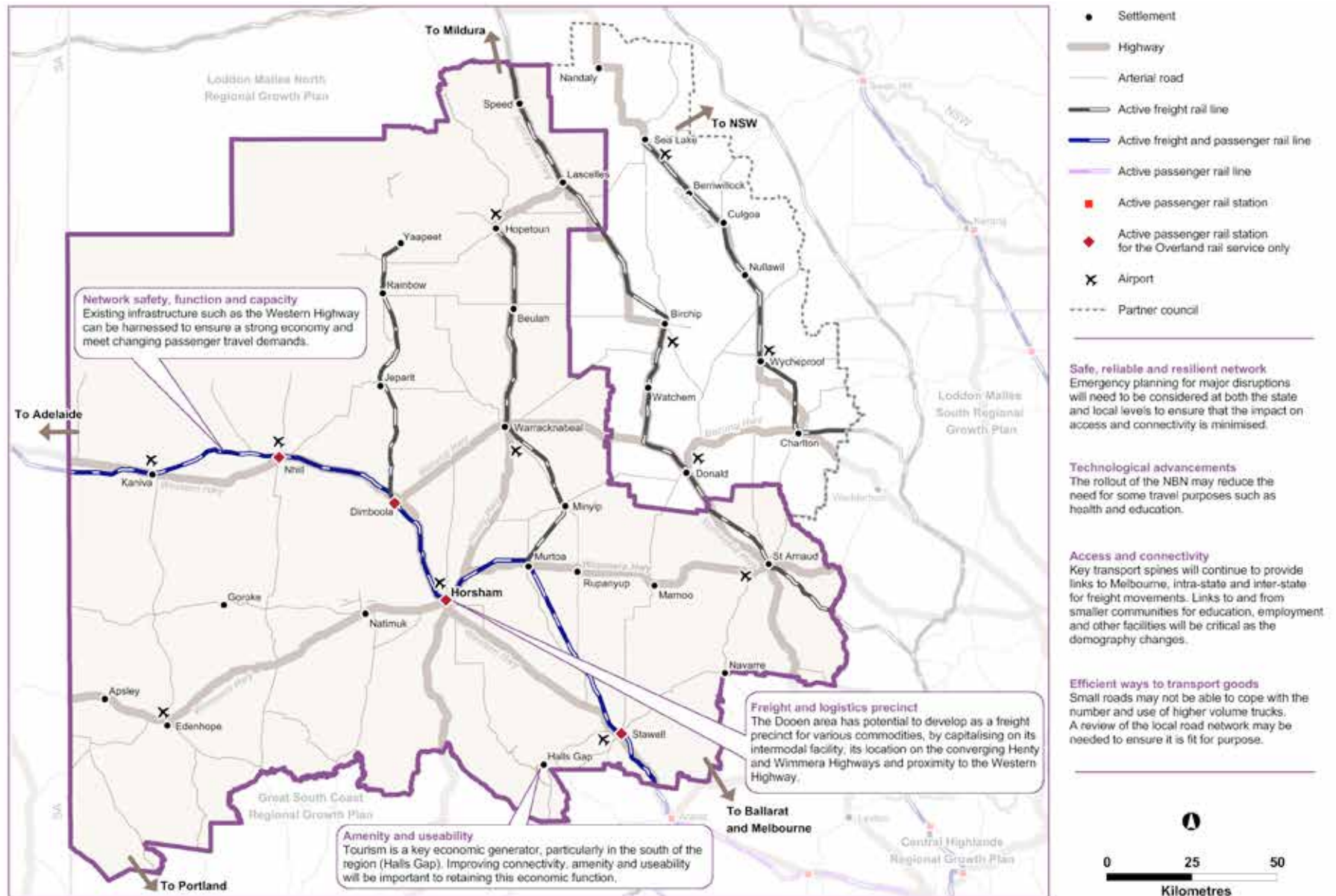
Transport in the Wimmera Southern Mallee will face many challenges in the future. The freight task is increasing which has resulted in the need for a new freight hub at Dooen to replace the existing intermodal facility at Horsham. In the future, this new freight hub could be used for other commodities, as well as the region's main commodity of grain. Despite population changes, smaller settlements continue to require transport infrastructure to provide access to education, employment and facilities to larger centres and other towns within their community of interest.

The region's liveability and prosperity is dependent on a variety of transport. Current policy direction, local and regional strategies, directions and projects (investigated, planned and implemented) will all contribute to and support future growth.

Considering the implications of the region's future growth on the transport network will be critical to economic and settlement planning. Detailed below, and on Map 10, are future directions that may be considered to support growth across the Wimmera Southern Mallee region into the future.



Map 10: Future directions for transport



Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### **Improve the capacity, safety and functioning of the transport network**

Existing infrastructure such as Western Highway and Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal can be harnessed to ensure a strong economy. Realignment of road and rail routes through Horsham may be advantageous into the future to ensure a functional network for freight and passenger movement in and around the centre. Opportunities to improve transport network capacity include:

- enabling or managing diverse travel choices such as walking and cycling links
- expanding road space through widening, sealed shoulders, duplication, clearways and cycle paths
- enhancing rail capacity, such as track duplication, signalling and larger rolling stock
- improving or modifying the network of public transport services to better meet market needs.

### **Ensure access and connectivity**

It will be important to ensure access for people and freight is flexible and adaptable. For example, a Horsham bypass could provide adaptable and alternative freight access and improved amenity in Horsham's town centre. Flexible public transport, such as the expansion of community transport and taking resources to the people, may be needed in the future. Some transport implementation opportunities for ensuring access and connectivity include:

- linking the region to international gateways, ports, airports, state capitals and other regional cities
- intra-regional connections such as regional city urban bus networks and links to their hinterland and surrounding small communities

- aligning the public transport network to better service demand accessibility for people of all ages and abilities to public and community transport
- improved bicycle access.

### **Provide for a safe, reliable and resilient network**

Horsham provides higher order services and facilities to the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. Therefore the transport network will need to be able to stand up to major disruption to ensure connectivity to key towns. Some transport implementation opportunities for providing a safe, reliable and resilient transport network include:

- contingency plans for major disruptions due to flood or bushfire
- maintenance of existing and future rail and road infrastructure
- increased track capacity to improve reliability and reduce delays
- identify and promote safety improvements.

### **Consider technological advancements in the transport provision mix**

Technological advancements, such as the rollout of the National Broadband Network, could mean that in the future people in the Wimmera Southern Mallee travel less and make more use of technology. This is currently the case in the health and education sectors with some services being provided online. This kind of behaviour change could create capacity on the existing transport network. Opportunities for considering technological advancements could also include:

- access to the National Broadband Network
- increased use of mobile electronic devices
- alternative fuelled vehicles and new vehicle designs.

### **Ensure amenity and useability**

The Wimmera Southern Mallee transport network is used by a variety of people for both business and pleasure. It will be important to ensure the network continues to be useable to assist with diversification of the economy. For example, new tourism opportunities may be encouraged with the use and expansion of walking and cycling facilities, particularly around Stawell and the Grampians National Park. The following are some examples of transport implementation opportunities for ensuring amenity and useability:

- tourist routes for all users, including cyclists
- facilities such as wayside rest areas, signage and information hubs
- marketing such as package tours for daytrips.

### **Develop freight and logistics precincts as places to collect and distribute goods**

The potential to develop a freight and logistics precinct at Dooen, the site of a new Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal, may attract new industries into the future. This could in turn create a need to review transport requirements to ensure access and connectivity for freight movements. It is critical that any future potential developments of freight and logistics precincts consider industry needs.

Some transport implementation opportunities for developing freight gateways could include hubs around:

- airports
- the Dooen Intermodal Freight Terminal acting as an inland port
- activity specific centres such as a distribution warehouse or processing plants.

### **Understand and ensure efficient ways to transport goods between producers and markets**

Changes to vehicle and fleet characteristics may mean that small local roads are not be able to cope with increasing numbers of higher volume trucks taking products to processing or export locations. A review of the local road network and changes to maintenance funding and weight restrictions, for example, may need to be considered into the future. Some transport implementation opportunities to ensure efficient ways to transport goods between producers and markets (supply chains) include:

- understanding relationships, movements and modes between the farm-gate, market, distribution centres and gateways for various commodities such as extractive industry and agricultural products
- enhancing road and rail links to protect amenity and better support access to markets and technological advancements.

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### Land use policies, strategies and actions

- Renew, maintain and develop transport infrastructure to meet anticipated population growth identified in the urban settlement framework
- Provide flexible and adaptable freight connectivity to the transport network to cater for changes in commodities to be carried and changes to truck weights and volumes or other logistical advances into the future
- Incorporate future directions into planning schemes and structure plans to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with changes in demography, land use, and with economic and social development
- Set aside land to future proof road and rail projects using zones and overlays
- Maximise the strategic position of the transport network to encourage settlement and economic growth, along existing transport infrastructure
- Consider the impact of new development on the road network and encourage developers to contribute to the cost of improving the condition and life expectancy of the network
- Use this plan to support infrastructure projects into the future to assist with managing growth

### 13.4 Social infrastructure

Social services that support regional and rural communities should be provided in an equitable way so that communities have access to the services they need at a regional level. The delivery of services needs to be matched with both the location and time sequence of development and population growth. The broad settlement pattern should also provide for community recreation and leisure activities that support protection of valued landscapes and recreation assets at a regional scale.

#### Future directions

- Identify and plan for social infrastructure provision in sequence with residential development
- Encourage social infrastructure that is well located and accessible to residential development, public transport services, employment and educational opportunities
- Support 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/training facilities from conflicting land uses

### Social planning and community resilience

Social infrastructure includes community facilities, services and networks that help communities meet their social needs and maximise their potential wellbeing. A desirable regional outcome is to provide high quality social facilities and living environments that meet education, healthcare and living needs. This will support resilient and liveable communities where people enjoy healthy, happy and productive lives.

This plan recommends that social infrastructure planning is based on a strategic identification of needs and complements settlement planning around communities of interest. Social infrastructure planning for the region will encourage shared uses to improve efficiencies.

Cooperation between service providers can provide cost benefits by maximising the use of sites to obtain the full benefit of community infrastructure.

The availability of accessible and affordable transport is an important factor in accessing services, social and recreational options, employment and overcoming isolation. Transport planning will also need to be integrated with social and settlement planning.

## PART C | TOWARDS THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

### Education and skills

Education and skills are vital to the prosperity of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. Better school retention rates and increased participation in higher education will have multiple benefits at an individual, family and community level.

A key challenge for the region is to appropriately match the skills of the workforce to the changing economic profile. While agriculture is declining as a source of employment, other sectors such as health and community services are forecasting growth. Already, the health sector experiences difficulty in recruiting skilled labour to the region such as specialist general practitioners, nursing and allied health staff. Other parts of this plan emphasise the need for good housing, transport and facilities to increase the attractiveness of the region to professionals and other qualified workers.

It will be important for the region to address educational deficiencies and provide services and infrastructure that enhance community liveability and respond to population drift from the region.

### Health and wellbeing

The built form, economic, social and natural environments are important dimensions of health. Particular issues and challenges impacting on the health of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region include travel distance and transport options, variations in the workforce, socio-economic status and infrastructure.

Health planning for the region has recognised the importance of developing a healthcare system that emphasises health promotion strategies and ensures timely and early intervention where possible.

This effort will be enhanced by: using technology such as telehealth (services provided remotely using video links or other technologies); providing greater support for clinicians; enabling consumers to participate in their own care; and encouraging the delivery of appropriate and cost effective care closer to people's homes. This may reduce the need to travel and mitigate some of the disadvantages associated with the remoteness of the region.

Social infrastructure is an important enabler. Key examples include:

- the recent expansion/redevelopment of the Wimmera Base Hospital at Horsham in relation to core specialist and clinical support services
- capital redevelopment/reconfiguration of core infrastructure at other health provider locations
- enhanced information technology to support service access and integration.

### **Land use policies, strategies and actions**

- Retain and enhance social and community facilities in key population service centres, particularly district towns, to ensure they are sustainable and can continue to attract new residents
- Plan for population needs based on local communities of interest
- Plan and provide for the development of social infrastructure, including hospitals, aged care and education facilities
- Investigate social infrastructure needs for the region and target facilities to particular settlements where the need is greatest or planning identifies a strategic direction to grow or maintain the town
- Integrate social infrastructure with transport services and infrastructure to maximise accessibility



## PART D | REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

This part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan brings together all the elements of the regional land use framework (economy, environment and landscape, settlement and regional infrastructure) to identify the plan for growth and change over the next 30 years. It provides direction on where future growth should occur and has been informed by advice, analysis, investigation and community feedback.

## 14. Future directions for regional growth

Principle	Key directions	Rationale	How (see Map 11 for further direction)
<b>1. Growth should be encouraged throughout the region to create a network of integrated and prosperous settlements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make opportunities for population and economic growth available throughout the Wimmera Southern Mallee</li> <li>Support a highly connected network of settlements based on communities of interest</li> </ul>	Providing for growth and development throughout the Wimmera Southern Mallee will help support economic development and wellbeing of the region's dispersed communities. Planning around well connected communities of interest encourages reasonable access to services and jobs within each part of the region and particularly for small settlements. This will help mitigate any future impacts associated with population decreases and rising energy costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce the settlement network identified on Map 11</li> <li>Recognise links with key settlements in neighbouring regions in planning for growth and infrastructure</li> <li>Encourage the development of a transport network which supports connectivity and access between settlements</li> </ul>
<b>2. Key centres should be a focus to manage population change and access to services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus urban development and community facilities in existing settlements</li> <li>Plan for Horsham and the region's district towns to act as focal points for development and provide facilities to smaller neighbouring communities</li> </ul>	The region's largest towns, which have good connections to surrounding areas, will act as focal points for development and provide facilities to smaller neighbouring communities. The nomination of key hub towns for each community of interest will be important to provide centres with a critical population mass for the delivery of services, facilities and attraction of new residents or industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce the settlement network identified on Map 11</li> <li>Ensure an ongoing supply of infill and greenfield residential land is available, particularly in Horsham and district towns</li> </ul>
<b>3. Ecological health and rural landscapes should be enhanced</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect regionally significant environmental assets</li> <li>Encourage greater connectivity between areas of medium to high natural value</li> <li>Identify and protect the region's significant landscapes</li> </ul>	The prosperity of the region, with its agricultural base and high levels of liveability, relies on a healthy and sustainable natural environment. The protection of the environment and significant landscapes are also important given their value for natural beauty, liveability and visitor experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a consistent approach to planning provisions affecting environmental assets across the region</li> <li>Direct urban settlement to existing towns and rural activities to appropriate locations</li> <li>Establish areas of increased landscape connectivity between high value environmental assets identified on Map 11</li> <li>Investigate and protect significant landscapes</li> </ul>

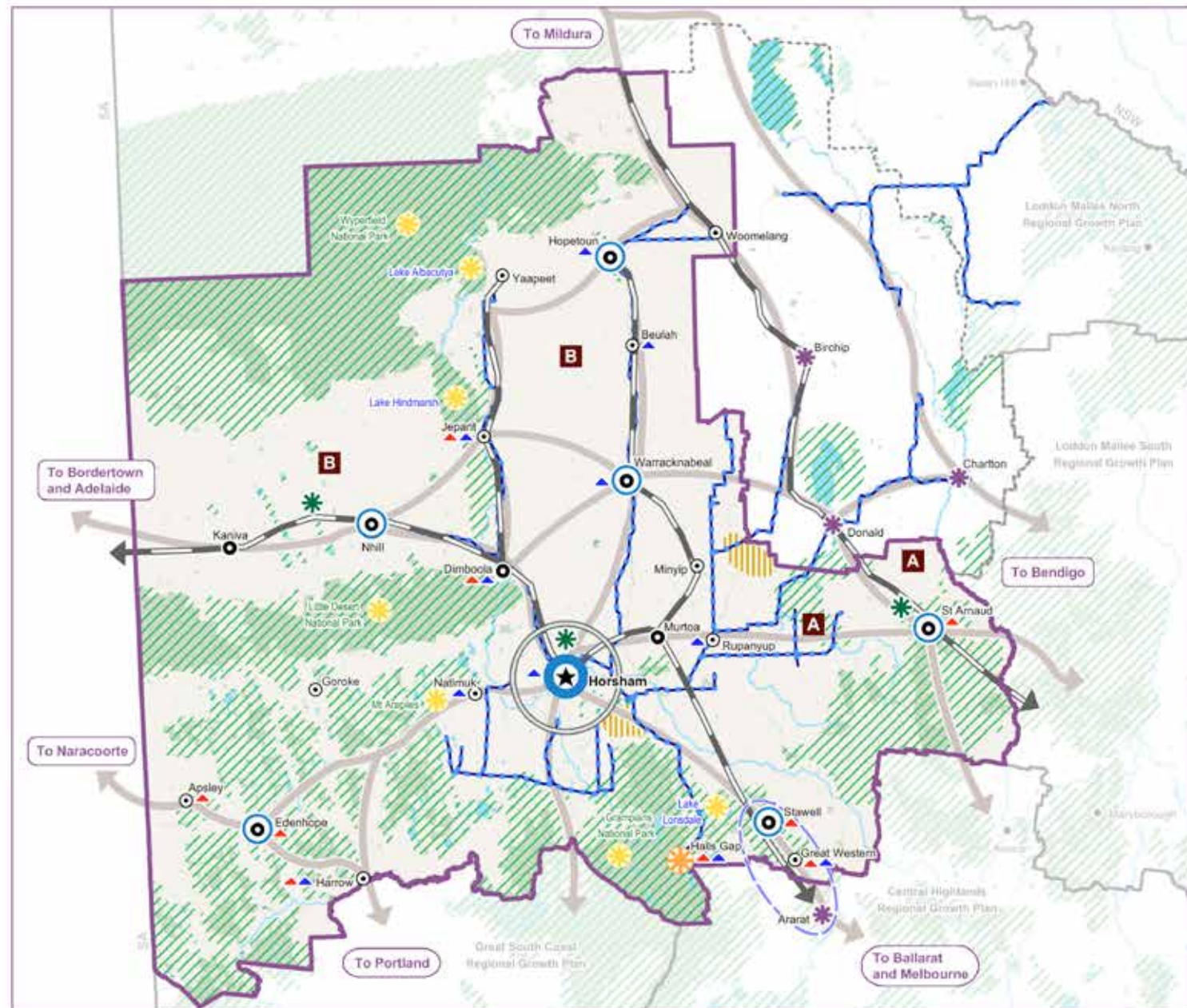
## PART D | REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

Principle	Key directions	Rationale	How (see Map 11 for further direction)
<b>4. Key agricultural resources should be protected, productivity maintained, and the development of industry supported</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect land and environmental resources which make a significant contribution to the region's agricultural productivity</li> <li>Encourage diversification of agricultural production which takes advantage of natural and infrastructure assets</li> <li>Support local industries, activities and infrastructure which complement and enhance the region's agricultural sector</li> </ul>	Agriculture is projected to remain the key economic driver of the region. Protection of land and water resources and support for agricultural productivity improvements will enhance the region's economic base and meet growing export demands. Opportunities to build on the agricultural industry will be supported by encouraging a range of related activities such as value adding industry, new commodities, specialist services, research and education and improved transport connections to export markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct urban settlement to existing towns identified on Map 11</li> <li>Plan for rural residential development on a regional scale and direct it to appropriate locations</li> <li>Encourage intensive agriculture, particularly in areas outlined on Map 11</li> <li>Investigate improvements to transport and servicing infrastructure</li> </ul>
<b>5. The region's assets should be used to facilitate the diversification of the economy and build a resilient community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage diversification of the regional economy through building on the region's assets, particularly agriculture, tourism, and natural resources such as energy, sand and stone and minerals</li> <li>Provide commercial, retail and industrial opportunities within each community of interest</li> </ul>	The region's economy is heavily reliant on broadacre farming. Diversification will create a more robust economy, protect jobs and encourage population growth. The features of the region provide a basis to drive future growth, including its extensive land area, agricultural clusters, environmental assets, new freight terminal and pipeline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalise on the economic development opportunities identified on Map 11</li> <li>Promote Halls Gap as the region's tourism focal point</li> <li>Support the development of Doon as a freight and industry gateway</li> <li>Ensure an ongoing supply of industrial land is available, particularly in Horsham and district towns</li> <li>Support the regional role of Horsham central activities district in providing higher order commercial and retail services</li> <li>Encourage measures which make small settlements more adaptable and resilient</li> <li>Investigate improvements to transport and servicing infrastructure</li> </ul>
<b>6. Planning should support adaptation to changes in climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for the potential economic and social impacts of climate change</li> <li>Manage the risks associated with natural hazards</li> </ul>	The region's economy is heavily dependent on climatic conditions. Settlement and growth planning can ensure development and infrastructure are planned to minimise the exposure to bushfire and flood hazards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide for flexible approaches to rural land use and infrastructure which support a transition of agricultural activities over time</li> <li>Maximise use of secure water supplies to develop the region's economy</li> <li>Protect high value environmental assets shown on Map 11 and establish areas of increased landscape connectivity between them</li> <li>Support the development of locally generated renewable energy, including the bioenergy clusters outlined on Map 11</li> <li>Growth is planned having regard to flood and bushfire hazards</li> </ul>

Principle	Key directions	Rationale	How (see Map 11 for further direction)
<b>7. The development of distinct settlements should be supported to create healthy, attractive and liveable communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support liveable communities through the development of a range of housing, quality urban design and access to community facilities</li> <li>Protect those valued characteristics of towns which make them unique and liveable</li> </ul>	Planning can help create conditions which support and encourage distinctive lifestyle opportunities and niche businesses across the region to attract a range of new residents, businesses and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide for easy access to housing, education, employment and community facilities, particularly in Horsham and district towns</li> <li>Encourage the provision of service infrastructure to support growth</li> <li>Support opportunities to increase housing choice</li> <li>Investigate and protect the region's valued urban character and cultural heritage assets</li> </ul>
<b>8. Opportunities for growth should be identified to facilitate appropriate local development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote a positive and adaptable approach to planning for the Wimmera Southern Mallee</li> </ul>	The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan provides the means to take a more proactive approach to planning by identifying significant opportunities for change and growth. A flexible approach will be required to take advantage of investment opportunities as they arise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue opportunities for land use change to support growth, including those identified on Map 11</li> <li>Monitor the supply of residential and industrial land and provide for additional land as required</li> <li>Monitor and adapt this plan and local planning schemes to respond to changing circumstances</li> </ul>
<b>9. Infrastructure required to support growth should be identified</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support servicing infrastructure that facilitates urban growth, environmental resilience and economic development</li> <li>Encourage social infrastructure that is well located, flexible and accessible</li> <li>Integrate planning for freight and passenger transport with the land use directions of this plan</li> </ul>	Infrastructure can help support the economic and residential growth of the region and facilitate land use initiatives of the plan. This will include transport, utility and social infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage infrastructure which enhances the liveability and attractiveness of the region to residents and businesses</li> <li>Locate growth and development in existing centres to maximise efficient use of existing infrastructure</li> <li>Investigate infrastructure needs to facilitate economic and population growth in identified locations</li> </ul>

## PART D | REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

**Map 11:** Regional land use strategy



Source: Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure





## SETTLEMENT NETWORK

-  Horsham – Regional city
-  District town
-  Town
-  Small settlement
-  Stawell-Ararat relationship
-  Halls Gap – tourism hub
-  Key hubs external to the region
- Partner council

### Horsham – Regional city

Reinforce the role of Horsham as the key population and employment centre for the region. Locate major regional facilities in this city, particularly commercial activities in the central activities district. Provide for residential growth through infill development and investigate further greenfield sites to the west for medium to long term expansion of the city.

### District town

Support the ongoing growth and development of District Towns as the key service hubs within their sub-regional communities of interest. Ensure that these towns provide a supply of residential and employment land to facilitate growth as required.

### Town

Continue to provide local and some sub-regional services. Residential growth will generally be provided by infill development.

### Small settlement

Plan for change in small settlements to make them more resilient and adaptable. Ensure that these communities retain access to services within the town or local community of interest.




### Halls Gap – tourism hub

Support the development of Halls Gap as a resort town and tourism focal point for the region.

### Stawell-Ararat relationship

Recognise the close relationship between Ararat and Stawell and plan for these towns as a cohesive sub-regional cluster of housing, employment and services.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

-  Key road corridor
-  Key rail corridor
-  Wimmera Mallee Pipeline trunk routes

Improve passenger access to services in towns throughout the region and to other large centres. Ensure that the capacity of the network meets freight demands around the region and to external markets.

### Wimmera Mallee Pipeline trunk routes

Take advantage of water security to encourage more intensive agriculture and industry in areas serviced by the pipeline and encourage tourism based on the region's wetlands and lakes.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

-  Preferred location for medium-large piggery and broiler farm intensive agriculture
-  Preferred location for medium-large cattle and lamb feedlot intensive agriculture
-  Freight and industry gateway
-  Mineral sands mining proposal
-  Bioenergy cluster
-  Key tourism asset

*Note that application of these principles should not be limited to the resource and economic development opportunities shown on this plan.*

### Rural land use

Support and protect agriculture as the key driver of the regional economy. Encourage diversification and value adding which builds on existing infrastructure.

### Freight and industry gateway

Capitalise on the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal and value adding from the agricultural industry to create a regional freight and industry gateway in and around Horsham.

### Mineral sands mining proposal

Protect significant earth resources from incompatible land uses. Ensure that the impacts of these projects are carefully managed.




### Bioenergy cluster

Exploit the potential for bioenergy where clusters of agricultural and other waste products exist.



### Key tourism asset

Support the development of the tourism sector by building on key natural and agricultural assets throughout the region.

## ENVIRONMENT

-  Areas containing high value terrestrial habitat
-  Public land
-  Lakes and wetlands
-  Rivers

### Manage risks to settlement growth from natural hazards

-  Urban flood considerations<sup>(1)</sup>
-  Urban bushfire considerations<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Urban flood and salinity considerations are based on existing overlays.  
(2) Bushfire considerations may be based on one or more of the following: existing overlays, advice from CFA or Regional Bushfire Planning Assessments. Does not include Bushfire Prone Areas.

### Areas containing high value terrestrial habitat

Protect the region's environmental assets and encourage greater connectivity between areas with high natural values. Ensure significant landscapes are recognised and protected.

## PART E | DELIVERING REGIONAL GROWTH



## 15. Implementation

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan will provide councils in the region with a clearer regional land use context to inform and influence future local strategic planning, scheme amendments and local decisions. As this plan indicates preferred locations for future urban development and valued areas for protection it can be used as a high level context for regional and local infrastructure planning and investment.

This plan establishes a context for growth and settlement planning which can inform and assist in frameworks for town and city growth plans and infrastructure requirements. This more detailed level of planning will continue in partnership between local and state planning authorities. Careful monitoring of urban projects, land development and population change will be established during the life of the plan to assist its delivery.

Implementation of this plan is critical to achieve its strategic directions for growth and change. Short-term implementation priorities include:

- amending planning schemes to include key elements of the plan
- identifying infrastructure needed to facilitate land use directions of the plan
- where required, facilitating further detailed work and investigations as identified in the plan.

### 15.1 Planning schemes

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan will have status as part of the Victoria Planning Provisions and planning schemes. Its key planning directions will be implemented through council planning schemes. It will be used to guide and inform future strategic planning work across the region, including future reviews of each council's planning scheme and help provide justification for planning scheme amendments.

The region's councils will work in partnership with state government to facilitate the required planning scheme amendment process and content as an immediate priority.

An Advisory Committee has been appointed to conduct a review of the State Planning Policy Framework in order to deliver regional growth plans and other major planning policies, such as the metropolitan planning strategy, *Plan Melbourne*.

### 15.2 Links to Regional Strategic Plan Implementation

This plan has close links to the strategic framework established by the regional strategic plan. Implementation will be coordinated with ongoing work being undertaken by councils, state and federal governments and the Regional Development Australia Grampians Committee to progress the strategic directions of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Plan. This will ensure that common objectives can be realised and that funding is directed towards the highest priorities for the region.

The regional growth plan will inform any subsequent review of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Plan.

## PART E | DELIVERING REGIONAL GROWTH

### 15.3 Infrastructure planning

Ongoing improvements to the region's infrastructure will be critical to implementation of the future directions in this plan. Councils, government and other agencies should use this plan as a basis to inform future planning for infrastructure projects, particularly those which deliver regional outcomes. The Victorian Government is also working with Infrastructure Australia and the Australian Government to develop key regional infrastructure.

The key opportunities to implement the plan through infrastructure development are set out below, including some examples of current planned projects:

- Improved connectivity and access to the region and around the region. This includes the ongoing duplication of and improvements to the Western Highway and planning for a Horsham bypass.
- Providing for enhanced freight distribution to markets, such as the development of the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal and Green Triangle Freight Transport Program.
- Ongoing upgrades to and provision of utilities infrastructure to support proposed urban growth and economic development initiatives, particularly in the regional city, district towns and towns identified in the regional settlement framework.
- The development of more diverse productive rural land uses, such as intensive agriculture.
- The development of infrastructure which supports diversification of energy generation and supply.

- Provision of social and community infrastructure which support the region's communities of interest and provide for social resilience. Residents should have access to a range of high quality facilities like the Wimmera Community Services Centre, particularly in the regional city, district towns and towns identified in the regional settlement framework.
- Infrastructure which enhances the liveability of settlements and the region and helps retain and attract skilled workers, such as the upgrade to the Horsham Town Hall as a regional events venue.
- Infrastructure to support tourism opportunities, particularly around the region's key environmental assets, for example the Grampians Peaks Trail.

Infrastructure developments which coordinate with land use planning initiatives outlined in this plan should be given priority.

### 15.4 Key implementation actions

Part C of the plan details a wide range of land use policies, strategies and actions which will help implement the future directions for each topic. Some of these actions are quite specific measures; some require further investigation; others are matters to be addressed on an as needs basis when planning permit applications or planning scheme amendments are being prepared and considered.

The following table groups these actions into nine categories for the purposes of detailing how and when implementation of the plan will occur.

Category	Partners	Timing <sup>4</sup>	Actions
<b>Planning schemes</b>			
<b>1. Include the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan in the Victoria Planning Provisions</b>	Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure	Short term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure to implement the regional growth plan into the Victoria Planning Provisions</li> </ul>
<b>2. Updates to local planning policy frameworks to recognise the directions of this plan</b>	Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, other authorities and councils	Short-medium term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councils to update local planning policies to include references to the directions within the plan</li> <li>Councils to undertake further strategic work and policy development to implement specific directions and policy within the plan</li> <li>Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and other authorities to support councils to implement cross boundary strategic plans/policies</li> </ul>
<b>Development proposals</b>			
<b>3. Implementation occurs through ongoing land use and development proposals</b>	Councils and development proponents	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councils and development proponents to use this plan to facilitate development proposals that advance the directions in the plan</li> </ul>
<b>4. Direct investment and key facilities and services to centres in accordance with settlement network</b>	State government agencies, councils and development proponents	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councils, development proponents and businesses to advance investment into facilities and services in accordance with the directions of the plan</li> </ul>
<b>Land supply</b>			
<b>5. Monitor land</b>	Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure – monitoring	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure through the Urban Development Program is to continue to support councils by providing information on residential and industrial land supply</li> </ul>
<b>6. Provide land</b>	Councils – land supply	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councils to ensure there is a sufficient supply of land for residential commercial, retail, industrial, recreational, institutional and other community uses</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>			
<b>7. Provide infrastructure to support land use and development</b>	Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, councils, water authorities, energy authorities	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State government and authorities to plan and seek funding to support enhancements to or the development of infrastructure that helps implement the directions of this plan</li> </ul>
<b>Data</b>			
<b>8. Make information available to support decision making</b>	State government agencies, catchment management authorities, councils	Short-medium term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authorities to map key assets of the region for access by stakeholders</li> <li>Authorities to exchange data and mapping to enable planning decisions to be made based on the best available information</li> </ul>
<b>Other processes</b>			
<b>9. Ensure the directions of this plan are reflected in other agencies' planning processes</b>	State government agencies, catchment management authorities, councils	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering the directions of the plan in future reviews of and updates to the regional strategic plan and regional catchment strategies</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Short term: 1-4 years, Medium term: 5-10 years

## PART E | DELIVERING REGIONAL GROWTH

### 15.5 Performance, monitoring and review

The plan is a living and adaptable plan, able to respond to new data and information as it arises, including information from state or regional strategies and programs. It will be reviewed on a four- to five-year cycle.

The region undertakes regular reporting on progress in implementing the regional strategic plan. It is recommended that this process also be used to monitor implementation of this plan. This would take the form of description and analysis of what work has been undertaken to progress each of the key directions set out in Part D. This analysis would also suggest future work priorities to further the implementation of the plan. An example of how this might be undertaken is set out below.

Activity	Possible performance measures	Partners	Reporting
1. Undertake strategic work (including research and development)	Evidence of the development, adoption and implementation of strategic projects that advance the directions and themes within the plan	Councils Authorities Businesses State government	State government and councils to compile a progress report every 12 months
2. Undertake planning scheme amendments	Evidence of the development, adoption and implementation of planning scheme amendments that advance the directions and themes of the plan	Councils	State government to compile a progress report every 12 months
3. Collaboration on strategic work/projects	Evidence of collaboration that advances the directions and themes of the plan	Councils Authorities Businesses State government	State government to compile a progress report every 12 months
4. Request funds	Evidence of projects that have been funded to advance the directions and themes of the plan	Councils Authorities Businesses State government	State government to compile a progress report every 12 months
5. Develop innovative and flexible service delivery models	Evidence of service delivery (including infrastructure) that improves outcomes for communities and takes into account the communities of interest model	Councils Authorities Businesses State government	State government with support of councils and businesses to compile a progress report every 12 months

# GLOSSARY

**Aboriginal cultural heritage:** means Aboriginal places, Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal human remains. They tell the story of Aboriginal use and occupation of the land. An Aboriginal place can be an area of land or water, a natural feature, formation or landscape, an archaeological site, as well as a building or structure. Aboriginal cultural heritage also includes intangible places where there may be no physical evidence of past cultural activities. These include places of spiritual or ceremonial significance, places where traditional plant or mineral resources occur, or trade and travel routes.

**Bioenergy:** energy generated from organic matter, such as agricultural waste.

**Carbon farming:** a method of allowing farmers and land managers to earn carbon credits by storing carbon or reducing greenhouse gas emissions on the land.

**Community of interest:** a group of settlements that have strong functional social and economic interrelationships and share facilities and services.

**Cultural heritage:** captures both Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage.

**Earth resources:** these comprise minerals, petroleum, gas, extractive and geothermal industries.

**Environmental asset:** a tangible bio-physical element of the environment, such as terrestrial habitat, waterways, significant landscapes and soils.

**Environmental value:** the attributes of an environmental asset that make it valuable or important based on environmental, social or economic values.

**Extractive Industry Interest Area (EIIA):** identified areas around major centres in Victoria where it is possible that a quarry could be placed within defined constraints.

**Freight and logistic precincts:** places where large volumes of freight are received, stored and dispatched. These precincts may support port, airport or rail and road intermodal terminals and may include manufacturing activity, warehouses and distribution centres within the broader precinct of complementary freight and freight-related activities.

**Greenfield land:** non-urban land designated for future urban development.

**Higher order services:** services that are only provided in a limited number of locations and have a large catchment area, such as a university or department store.

**Historic heritage:** refers to the fabric of our past that we value today and includes archaeological sites, buildings and precincts, structures, gardens, trees, cemeteries, cultural landscapes, shipwrecks and significant objects and artefacts.

**Horsham central activities district:** the business centre of Horsham comprising the key retail, commercial, community and civic functions of the city.

**Housing diversity:** the provision of a range of different housing types to suit different ages, lifestyles and incomes.

**Housing stress:** where the cost of housing is high relative to household income.

**Increased landscape connectivity:** broad corridors of vegetation which have been established to connect areas of high natural value such as national parks.

**Industry or agricultural clusters:** geographic concentration of businesses and activities that relate to each other or work together.

**Infill development:** the development of additional dwellings in established urban areas.

## GLOSSARY

**Intensive agriculture:** land used to intensively produce agricultural products, through ventures such as poultry farms, piggeries, feedlots, aquaculture, hydroponics, greenhouses and glasshouses. This includes 'intensive animal husbandry' and intensive 'crop raising' as defined in planning schemes.

**Mixed use development:** a development which integrates two or more uses, such as housing and retail.

**National Broadband Network (NBN):** high speed internet network being provided across Australia.

**Natural hazard:** a naturally occurring source of potential harm or a situation with the potential to cause loss, for example bushfire or flood.

**Natural resources:** naturally occurring commodities such as oil, gas, sand and stone, minerals, fisheries, timber or places of solar or geothermal energy potential.

**Nature-based tourism:** any activity that relies on experiences directly related to natural attractions including ecotourism, adventure tourism, wildlife tourism and extractive tourism, for example, fishing or gold panning.

**Overlays:** planning scheme provisions generally related to a particular issue, such as heritage or flooding.

**Planning scheme:** policies and provisions for the use, development and protection of land prepared by councils or the Minister for Planning.

**Regional catchment strategy:** a document setting out the management of natural resources, such as rivers, wetlands, terrestrial habitat and agricultural land.

**Regional cities:** the 10 largest cities outside metropolitan Melbourne (Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Warrnambool, Wangaratta and Wodonga). The relevant municipalities are represented by the Regional Cities Victoria group and together they advocate a whole-of-government approach to delivering services and infrastructure.

**Registered Aboriginal Party:** represents Aboriginal people in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

**Rural areas:** include areas outside urban areas. They can include farming and non-farming land uses, such as rural residential, extractive industry, and open space. In some cases rural areas may include very small rural settlements.

**Rural land use:** a broad term representing the use of land outside urban areas and includes activities such as agriculture, rural living, forestry and extractive industry.

**Rural living:** land in a rural setting which is used and developed for dwellings that are not primarily associated with agriculture.

**Sensitive uses:** land uses which have high amenity expectations such as housing, schools or hospitals.

**Social infrastructure:** includes community facilities, services, and networks that help communities meet their social needs and maximise their potential wellbeing such as, sports and recreation facilities, schools and hospitals.

**Terrestrial habitats:** combinations of biological and physical features of the landscape (including native vegetation, fallen timber and litter, soil, rocks, etc) that enable populations of each native plant or animal species (or group of species) to live and reproduce. Features can be considered at the site scale, for example, the food sources used by individuals, and the landscape scale, for example, the linkages used for movement between areas, or the refuges used to cope with disturbance events.

**Town centre:** the area comprising the core commercial, civic and community functions of a town.

**Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal:** a key rail and road freight distribution facility located at Dooen.





