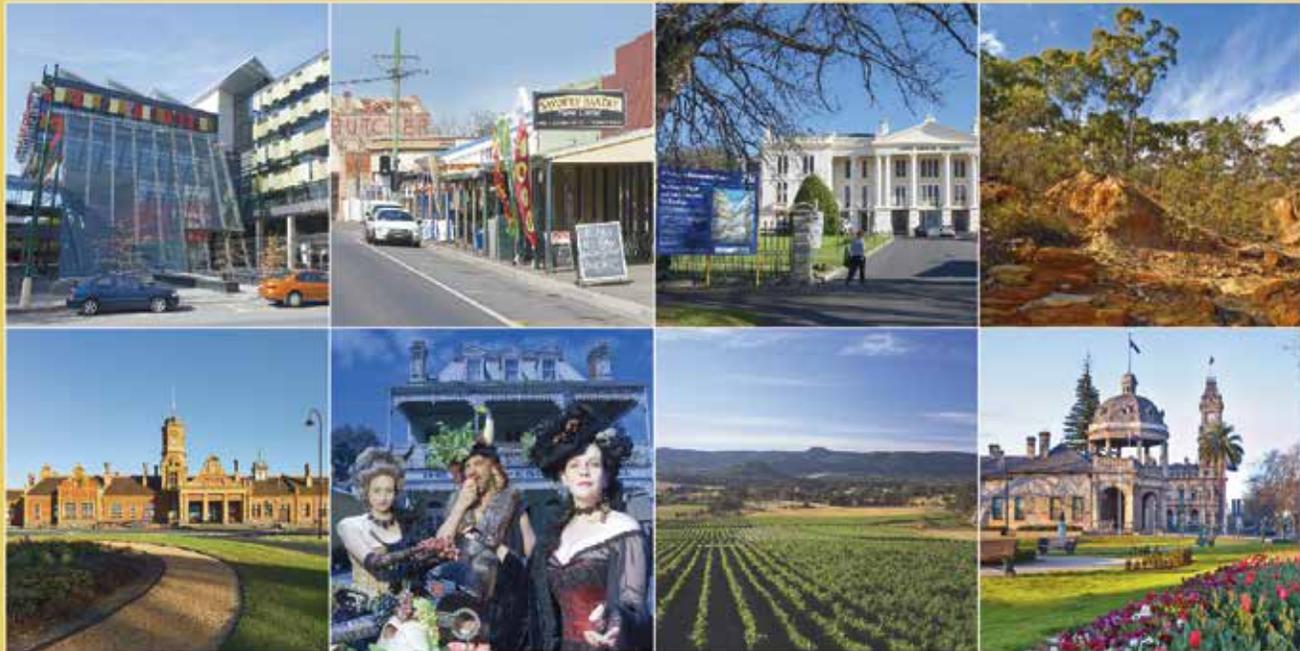


LODDON MALLEE SOUTH



REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

SUMMARY



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

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May 2014

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Guy' with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Hon Matthew Guy MLC
Minister for Planning

WHY WE NEED A PLAN

The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan has been developed over two years in partnership between local government and state agencies and authorities. The plan covers the municipal areas of the Central Goldfields, Greater Bendigo, Loddon, Macedon Ranges and Mt Alexander.

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

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

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

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

“The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan provides a vision for long-term prosperity and sustainable growth.”

The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan:

- establishes a framework for strategic land use and settlement planning that can accommodate growth within ecologically sustainable development principles
- 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 and which are to be maintained for other uses
- identifies opportunities for supporting regional level infrastructure, providing an essential contribution to the long-term sustainability of the region.

STATE OF CITIES

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



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

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

Plan Melbourne directions:

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



SNAPSHOT OF LODDON MALLEE SOUTH

The region

14,600 sq km

- ▶ extends from the floodplains of the Loddon River in the north-west to the Macedon Ranges in the south-east
- ▶ contains three main river catchments – the Loddon, Campaspe and Avoca rivers
- ▶ contains rich heritage from Victoria's 1850s gold rush.

Employment (top 5)

14%

Retail trade



13%

Health care and social assistance

10%

Manufacturing

9%

Education and training

8%

Construction



Employment

Just over **58,300 jobs in the region**

Just over **48,200 jobs in Bendigo** and over 4000 businesses

Over 40% of people from Macedon, Woodend and Gisborne **commute to Melbourne for work**



Living in the region

Around 180,000 people live in the region.

Over 100,000 people live in the City of Greater Bendigo.

266,900 people are expected to live in the region by 2014.

Quiz questions

1. The largest Buddhist monument in the western world is currently being built near Bendigo. Once completed, it aims to be a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists from around the world. What will it be known as?

2. The Whirrakee Wattle is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region. Where can its largest population be found?

Answers page 4

Amazing fact

152,706 visitors

attended the Bendigo Art Gallery when it held the Grace Kelly Exhibition from March to June 2012

Amazing fact



The Maryborough Station Redevelopment was recognised with a UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage.

Originally built in 1890, the restoration was completed under plans approved by Heritage Victoria and was one of the largest and most significant in the state.

Images: Bendigo Hospital, photo by Peter Charlesworth / Maryborough Station, photo provided by Peter Bennetts / Bendigo Art Gallery, photo provided by City of Greater Bendigo.

Health

Bendigo Hospital

\$630 million provided for a major redevelopment of the Bendigo Hospital, making it Victoria's largest regional hospital, with:

- 372 beds and 10 operating theatres
- an integrated cancer centre and mental health unit
- a helipad connected to the main hospital by bridge link.



Transport



2 rail corridors run through the region connecting to Melbourne, Ballarat, southern NSW and South Australia



There are 7 major highway corridors within the Loddon Mallee South Region:

- ▶ Calder
- ▶ Midland
- ▶ Pyrenees
- ▶ Loddon Valley
- ▶ Mclvor
- ▶ Wimmera
- ▶ Northern

Industry and Business

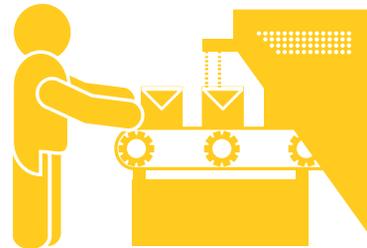
\$4.4 billion

Value of manufacturing output in 2012



Wine

The Heathcote Wine Region is renowned as one of the best Shiraz growing regions in Australia.



Major manufacturing hub for: **metals, engineering, defence, building and construction, textiles and transport.**

Equine

Worth \$140 million to the region in 2009-10. It's the seventh largest industry in the Macedon Ranges Shire in terms of local jobs.

Apples

Harcourt is the apple centre of Victoria, and is fast gaining a name for its cider production.



Quiz answers
 1. The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion
 2. In the Whipsick, Wellford and Kamarooka Forests surrounding Huntly.

THE VISION FOR LODDON MALLEE SOUTH

Our communities will continue to enjoy regional liveability with urban accessibility. We will be a region with vibrant, innovative, sustainable and connected communities offering a diversity of lifestyles, building on our heritage, natural environment and agricultural landscapes.

The region aspires to be home to some 300,000 people by 2041, with access to employment, infrastructure, educational opportunities, healthcare and other services. The region will continue to attract new investment, a diverse range of jobs, anchored within a diversifying economy, capitalising on competitive advantages.

PRINCIPLES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION



ABOUT LODDON MALLEE SOUTH

The Loddon Mallee South region is centrally located in Victoria and has a rich natural and built heritage, attractive towns, a pleasant climate and social and economic diversity.

Extending from the floodplains of the mid-Loddon River in the north-west, to the Macedon Ranges in the south-east, parts of the region are within 50 kilometres of central Melbourne.

The majority of Loddon Mallee South is made up of rural land, a significant proportion of which is used for diverse agricultural production, with irrigated dairying, cropping and grazing in the north-east and large-scale productive cropping, dryland and mixed farming in the north-west. Wineries, orchards and olive groves feature throughout the region, with one of the world's largest single estate olive groves located near Boort.

Over the past decade, the region has outpaced the rest of regional Victoria for economic growth. Gross Regional Product increased from \$4.62 billion in 2001 to \$6.63 billion in 2011 due largely to growth in financial, health and insurance services, manufacturing and mining sectors.

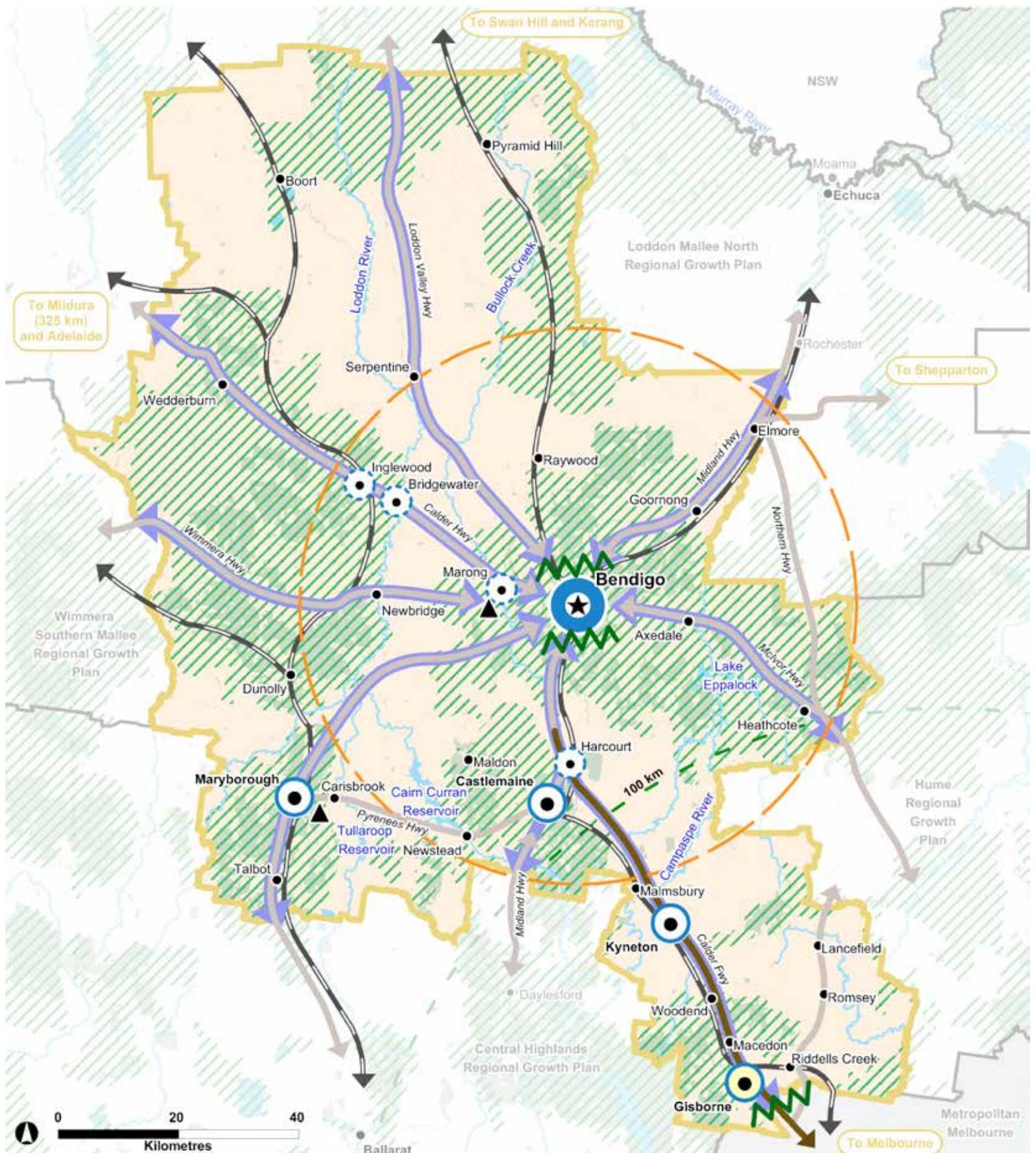
As a whole, the region has experienced, and continues to experience, strong population and economic growth. However there are parts of the region where growth has been slower. Without intervention, future growth is unlikely to be evenly dispersed across the region.

The regional growth plan seeks to address the challenges for the future by helping to direct growth while protecting and building on the region's strengths.

Key features:

- significant tourism areas, such as the Goldfields region, the Macedon Ranges and Bendigo
- the central role Bendigo plays in providing high level services and facilities to the region and surrounding regions
- the central location of the region within Victoria, making it highly accessible from other areas and a strong location for business
- the Calder transport corridor and other major transport corridors, which provide easy access for both passenger and freight transport
- a well-established agricultural industry, including significant irrigation infrastructure
- environmental assets including forests, rivers, lakes and wetlands.

THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN MAP



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

LEGEND

SETTLEMENT NETWORK

-  Bendigo - Regional city - Significant growth
-  Regional centres/towns - Manage and support growth
-  Encourage sustainable growth in Bendigo's hinterland towns
-  Towns and rural centres
-  Designated identified growth centre in Plan Melbourne⁽¹⁾
-  Maintain settlement break
-  Areas within 100 km of central Melbourne
-  Bendigo hinterland

(1) Plan Melbourne (Chapter 6 – State of Cities) identifies Gisborne as a peri-urban town with potential to attract housing and population growth out of Melbourne.

CONNECTIVITY

-  Key transport corridor
-  Opportunity for freight-related activities
-  Freeway
-  Road
-  Rail

ECONOMIC

-  Facilitate ongoing agricultural productivity and new opportunities that respond to climate change through ongoing adaptation and flexibility.

ENVIRONMENT

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

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

The Loddon Mallee South region is growing in population, the economic profile is changing and so is the means of rural production. The quality of landscapes is at risk from land use changes and needs strong custodianship. Understanding the challenges of growth and responding to opportunities are critical for developing a longer-term plan for the region.

Challenges for growth

- ▶ the uneven distribution of both population and economic growth across the region, and the need to support smaller communities
- ▶ managing growth so that it does not overwhelm the environmental and social attributes that are attracting growth
- ▶ ensuring land supply for employment and housing
- ▶ adapting to the potential impacts of changing climate
- ▶ managing growth in a way that protects the environmental assets and natural resources of the region
- ▶ ensuring all growth is supported by sustainable reticulated or independent infrastructure services, such as water, power and waste and resource recovery in particular
- ▶ supporting residential and commercial growth of centres throughout the region and access to employment, education and services, including from dispersed settlements
- ▶ stimulating sustainable growth over the long term while maintaining the distinctive character of the region's rural areas and towns
- ▶ maintaining the extent of the region's agricultural areas recognising its importance to the region's economy
- ▶ managing the risk to settlements from natural hazards such as bushfire and flood
- ▶ supporting capacity enhancements to infrastructure to enable sustainable growth
- ▶ future-proofing transport routes to support efficient freight and people movement
- ▶ the ongoing maintenance and replacement of ageing infrastructure.

LIVING IN LODDON MALLEE SOUTH

The demand for growth in individual settlements varies across the region with some locations, such as areas closer to Melbourne, experiencing high demand and other locations experiencing more modest growth.

The plan identifies key settlements where growth is to be directed while avoiding sites of high natural hazard such as bushfire and flood, and protecting environmental assets. An overview of growth for the region's key towns is overleaf.

Plan Melbourne proposes that peri-urban town plans be developed in partnership with local government to increase the supply of land for housing and attract population growth out of Melbourne.

Future directions

- ▶ focus growth to the region's existing settlements with capacity for growth
- ▶ reinforce the role of Bendigo as the regional city, offering a range of employment and services as an alternative to Melbourne
- ▶ target new growth to settlements including Bendigo, Maryborough, Castlemaine, Gisborne and Kyneton
- ▶ plan for settlement growth that avoids areas of high risk from natural hazards such as bushfire and flood
- ▶ manage settlement growth to limit the impact on agricultural productivity, natural resources and ecological values
- ▶ value the region's unique and connected communities
- ▶ support the ongoing role of the region's small towns and settlements
- ▶ acknowledge the non-urban population's contribution to the region
- ▶ invest in liveability, infrastructure and urban design initiatives to make the region's towns great places to live
- ▶ build community connectedness and reduce areas of social disadvantage
- ▶ build a skilled and adaptable workforce by attracting skilled workers and providing access to high quality education and training opportunities, which provide pathways to employment
- ▶ plan for the facilities and infrastructure needed for delivery of education and training to support growth.

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

City of Greater Bendigo

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	105,600
2021	122,600
2031	139,800

BENDIGO

Regional City

Promote growth – As the region’s major city, Bendigo will accommodate the majority of growth in Loddon Mallee South. It has an aspiration to grow to 200,000 people over the next 30 years. This will require significant infill and higher density development with a strong urban edge in areas at higher risk of bushfire. More student housing will support the city’s growing universities. This growth will require an additional 25,000 to 40,000 new jobs to attract and maintain residents of working age. In the medium to long term better transport links will be created between Bendigo and Eaglehawk and Epsom.

MARONG

Towns and rural centres

Sustainable growth in Bendigo’s hinterland towns – Marong is expected to grow to a settlement of around 8000 residents over the next 20 years. This growth will be supported by the development of the 300-hectare Marong Business Park, providing industrial and business land.

HEATHCOTE

Towns and rural centres

Heathcote has the potential to grow to around 3000 people, providing services to outlying areas. Providing reticulated sewerage infrastructure is likely to be a priority in the short- to medium-term.

Central Goldfields Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	12,800
2021	13,500
2031	14,000

MARYBOROUGH

Regional Centre/Town

Support growth – Maryborough is expected to grow from its current 8000 people with tourism and retail activity continuing to increase. Vacant industrial land provides the opportunity to attract large-scale manufacturing to supplement existing major businesses. Transport links to other towns, particularly Bendigo and Ballarat, are good and are expected to continue to improve.

Loddon Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	8000
2021	7800
2031	7600

BRIDGEWATER AND INGLEWOOD

Towns and rural centres

Sustainable growth in Bendigo’s hinterland towns – Bridgewater and Inglewood have the potential to develop as alternative townships in the hinterland of Bendigo. Inglewood Hospital, aged care facilities and schools will continue to service many surrounding towns, while Bridgewater’s village atmosphere can attract residential growth that is carefully planned to minimise the risk of bushfire.

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

Towns and rural centres – seek to protect character and amenity of smaller settlements

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

Sustainable growth in Bendigo’s hinterland towns - means identified towns with growth potential due to their proximity and accessibility to Bendigo

Macedon Ranges Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	43,200
2021	51,300
2031	58,900

GISBORNE

Regional Centres/Towns

Support growth – Gisborne will develop its role as a sub-regional employment and service centre with capacity to grow to around 17,000 people. An increase in local and regional jobs will reduce the need to commute to Melbourne for employment. Gisborne is identified in *Plan Melbourne* as a potential town for growth.

KYNETON

Regional Centres/Towns

Support growth – Kyneton currently has capacity for up to 8600 residents who are likely to be drawn to the town’s picturesque qualities, a range of employment opportunities and the ease of access to Bendigo and Melbourne.

RIDDELLS CREEK

Towns and rural centres

Riddells Creek is expected to grow to a population of about 6000 people catered for by both greenfield housing and infill development. The town will continue to be an attractive alternative to Gisborne with its train connection, service industries and businesses.

ROMSEY

Towns and rural centres

Romsey has the potential to grow to around 6000 people. This growth is likely to drive the demand for better transport links and infrastructure while recognising the value of the town’s unique village atmosphere.

Mount Alexander Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	18,400
2021	20,100
2031	21,900

CASTLEMAINE (INCLUDING CAMPBELLS CREEK)

Regional Centres/Towns

Support growth – Over the next 20 years, Castlemaine will play an increased role as a sub-regional employment centre. Shop-top and medium-density housing within the town’s boundaries will be required to accommodate growth and ensure new housing is not at risk of bushfire or flooding. Any development will need to respect the historic character of the town.

HARCOURT

Towns and rural centres

Sustainable growth in Bendigo’s hinterland towns – Harcourt’s strategic location adjacent to the Calder road and rail corridor, 30 kilometres from Bendigo means it has potential to grow beyond its current boundaries. Any growth would need to take into account the surrounding horticultural land and bushfire hazard.

REGIONAL ECONOMY

The regional economy is diverse and based on traditional sectors such as manufacturing, earth resources and agriculture, as well as service-based sectors such as healthcare and finance. The region encompasses a broad range of agribusiness activity including forestry, fishing and processing. Milk production, livestock processing and crops are strong basic economic sectors. These are supported by growing sectors including finance, health and education, as well as retail and wholesale trade and tourism-related industries.

Developing a broad range of employment options that build on existing economic strengths and opportunities will contribute to the overall wellbeing of the region's communities. Around 50,000 new jobs will be required to support a projected regional population increase of 120,000 people.

Future directions

- ▶ enable residents to work and participate in the region by continuing to expand the region's diverse economy
- ▶ leverage greater employment and investment outcomes from growth sectors such as health, education and professional services
- ▶ develop employment areas that are located, serviced and sited to take advantage of water, infrastructure, transport and energy connections
- ▶ support and develop emerging and potential growth sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, resource recovery and other green industries
- ▶ facilitate ongoing agricultural productivity and investment in high value agriculture
- ▶ support ongoing adaptation and flexibility in the agricultural sector
- ▶ facilitate ongoing agricultural productivity and new opportunities that respond to the potential impacts of climate change
- ▶ support the sustainable use of rural land, including the development of regional catchment strategies and other suitable tools
- ▶ encourage and facilitate development in renewable energy, other new energy opportunities and in carbon sequestration activities
- ▶ protect water quality and quantity.

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

The region has rich and diverse environmental and heritage assets. Natural ecosystems, rural landscapes and water catchments are critical to the region's attractiveness, liveability, cultural heritage and economy. Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage have a significant influence on land use patterns and decisions in the region.

Communities value their natural environment highly and want to see it protected from inappropriate development while allowing opportunities for tourism and other economic diversification. Balancing these pressures, along with natural hazards such as bushfire, flood and salinity, are key challenges for the region and require more detailed local planning.

Future directions

- ▶ protect and improve the condition of the region's important environmental assets such as the forests, wetlands and rivers
- ▶ protect identified visually important landscapes and cultural and built heritage places
- ▶ plan for settlement growth to occur in locations that avoid areas of high risk from natural hazards such as bushfire and flood
- ▶ manage settlement growth to limit the impact on agricultural productivity, natural resources and environmental assets
- ▶ maintain the non-urban breaks between settlements
- ▶ minimise the impacts of land use change and development on areas with significant environmental assets.



REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Directing growth to locations with good existing infrastructure and infrastructure that can be enhanced is a priority. Many of the towns earmarked for significant growth in the region have good existing infrastructure such as transport links that enable growth to take place. Upgrades to the Calder Freeway and the Bendigo rail line over the past decade have helped support strong growth in the movement of people and goods.

It is essential that planning for growth is undertaken alongside planning for infrastructure investment to enable economic and settlement growth in strategic locations.

Future directions

- ▶ strategically renew, maintain and develop infrastructure to maximise opportunities and services to meet anticipated need
- ▶ favour development proposals that maximise existing infrastructure and provide significant economic or community benefit
- ▶ ensure that the current and future operation of major infrastructure of state and regional significance, including highways, railways, airports, communications networks and energy generation and distribution systems, is not adversely affected by urban development in adjacent areas
- ▶ prioritise infrastructure that connects the region's communities through physical and electronic means, such as transport and internet access
- ▶ strategically direct growth to locations with good existing infrastructure and infrastructure with the capacity for enhancement
- ▶ provide adequate waste and resource recovery infrastructure and services to support new developments and population growth in the region
- ▶ protect water quality and quantity
- ▶ provide for the future of waste management and resource recovery.

DELIVERING REGIONAL GROWTH

The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan has identified a series of actions that will help realise the vision for the region. Some of these things will happen almost immediately, others will evolve over time.



Outcomes

- ▶ a greater diversity of housing choice and density around major transport links in Bendigo, Maryborough, Castlemaine, Gisborne and Kyneton
- ▶ development of a business park in Marong with the potential for freight and logistics precincts in Marong and Maryborough
- ▶ better commuter links between towns, including cycle paths
- ▶ improved technology that enhances employment flexibility
- ▶ improved sewerage connections to small towns
- ▶ the extension of reticulated gas supply across the region as well as investment in infrastructure that supports renewable energy production
- ▶ better coordination between government agencies to provide public and community facilities, including new education facilities
- ▶ growth in the finance, health and education sectors
- ▶ better planning to ensure the protection of towns subject to natural hazards such as bushfire and flood
- ▶ protection of environmental assets.



FURTHER READING AND INFORMATION

www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans

Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan

Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan Background Report

Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan – Southern Region (2010)

Cover images (clockwise from top left)

1. Bendigo Bank, image by Peter Charlesworth, photographer
2. Inglewood Streetscape, image by Peter Charlesworth, photographer
3. Bendigo Hospital, image by Peter Charlesworth, photographer
4. Spring Gully, Verne's Panning Area, Goldfields, image courtesy of David Bannear, Regional Development Victoria, Bendigo
5. Tulips and War Memorial, Bendigo, image courtesy of A.Warren
6. Hanging Rock Winery, image courtesy of Hanging Rock Winery
7. Castlemaine State Festival 2013, image courtesy of Castlemaine State Festival
8. Maryborough train station, image courtesy of Peter Bennetts for VicTrack

Opposite: Ancient Loddon River bed, image courtesy of Regional Development Victoria

