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# Regional Development Review

Thank you very much for the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Economic Development's Economic Development regional service delivery model and the best practice policies to drive economic growth in regional Victoria.

## Background RE: G21- Geelong Region Alliance

G21 - Geelong Region Alliance is an alliance of local government, business, industry and community organisations in the Geelong region.

The G21 - Geelong Region Alliance was established in 2002 by five Geelong region municipalities (Geelong, Queenscliffe, Surf Coast, Golden Plains and Colac Otway) with the support of the Victorian Government and a wide range of local organisations.

We have over 185 members spanning all three levels of government, non-government organisations, businesses and community groups.

Under the G21 - Geelong Regional Alliance we have brought together our region's leaders to develop a high level strategic regional plan, The Geelong Region Plan, determine regional priority projects and advocate for their implementation.

We represent the voice of the G21 region and have a formal role as the Regional Strategic Planning Committee in advising the State and Federal Governments on regional issues and priorities.

The G21 region is one of the two sub-regions under the Barwon South West RDA Committee and is also represented at the BSW Regional Management Forum.

## The G21 Region

The G21 region covers some 10,000 sq. km and has approximately 300,000 residents.

We are home to Victoria's second city, Geelong, and its suburbs, coastal and rural townships, productive farmland and major tourism attractions including the Great Ocean Road and the Great Otway National Park.

Our population is increasing at a steady rate - 1.7% per annum. Our economy is diverse and in constant transition.

Historically manufacturing has played a major role in the G21 region economy with large employers being Ford, Shell, Alcoa, and Qantas.

However we have also seen considerable growth in other employment sectors over the last twenty years especially health, education, public administration, agriculture, retail and hospitality.

Deakin University and Barwon Health are now our major regional employers.

We also have major public administration employers located here including the TAC, NDIA and WorkSafe will be relocated to Geelong.

The region is also home to the national headquarters of major retail outlets - Cotton On, Target, Quicksilver and Rip Curl.

## Manufacturing job losses in the G21Region

As you would be aware, the announcement by Ford of its intention to close its Geelong operations in 2016 will have a huge impact on Ford workers, suppliers and the wider Geelong community.

There are 520 workers employed at Ford Geelong with a further 980 indirect jobs due to flow on effects.

We have seen the closure of other major manufacturers in the last year including Alcoa's operations at Pt Henry with the loss of 800 jobs.

Qantas ceased its heavy maintenance operations at Avalon last year with the loss of 300 jobs.

To add to this, two years ago we witnessed the sacking of 260 workers from Target Head Office in Geelong without warning.

The figures are stark - over 2,000 workers' jobs at major employers lost or in jeopardy in the G21 region.

These figures do not include those lost in smaller industries nor the significant multiplier effect on people employed in the supply chain servicing these industries.

Our community is therefore facing significant challenges as is the G21 region's economy.

## Economic Review

G21 is grateful for the state government's review of the service delivery model and the best policies to drive economic growth in regional Victoria. Our challenges are real, imminent and far reaching. They cut deep into the community of the G21 region.

Unemployment in the G21 region sits currently at 7.40%, well above the state and national average.

We very much see our region as deeply affected not just by the closure of Ford from 2016, but also the closure of Alcoa and the Qantas heavy maintenance operations and the impact on supply chains.

However despite the current adverse employment climate, we strongly believe there are many opportunities for investment in the G21 region to continue both the diversification of our economy and to create employment both for now and the future.

I am very pleased to be able to provide you with a range of strategic G21 documents that will assist with the identification of employment creation initiatives and opportunities for investment in the G21 region.

**The documents are:**

* **The Geelong Region Plan: a sustainable growth strategy –** launched by Premier John Brumby in 2007 following two years of consultation with the G21 region community. <http://www.g21.com.au/geelong-region-plan>

This is a high level strategic plan that looks to 2050 addressing the challenges the G21 region will face in the areas of environment, settlement, land use, community strength, economy and the way we make things happen.

* **The G21 Region Community Profile –** launched in December 2014 <http://www.g21.com.au/g21-region-profile>

This is a complete list of the latest data sets for the G21 region updating those used in **The Geelong Region Plan: a sustainable growth strategy.**

* **The G21 Regional Growth Plan –**incorporated into the State Planning Provisions Framework in April 2014. <http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/g21_regional_growth_plan_-_april_2013_-_low_res_0.pdf>

The G21 region’s population is expected to grow by another 200,000 people by 2050. This plan identifies where the 500,000 projected G21 regional population will live, work and what infrastructure is needed to support a population of that size. It is one of eight regional growth plans across Victoria.

* **The G21 RGP Implementation Plan –** unanimously approved by all five G21 Councils in November 2013 <http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/g21-rgp-ip_implementation_plan_16_dec_13.pdf>

This plan identifies the infrastructure projects needed to support a population of 500,000 across the region. These projects will assist with the diversification of our economy and provide significant opportunities for employment generation.

* **The G21 Economic Development Strategy –** unanimously approved by all five G21 Councils in July 2014. <http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/web_g21_economic_development_strategy.pdf>

This strategy identifies key economic “game changers” for the G21 region.

* **The G21 Region Public Transport Strategy –** launched in September 2014. <http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/final_g21_transport_a4_issued_29_07_2014_compact_web_version.pdf>

Following eighteen months of consultation with the communities of the G21 region, this strategy identifies the key opportunities to invest in public transport infrastructure and improve service provision across the region.

* The 2015 G21 Region Priority Projects – this document lists the fifteen projects which are ready for investment in the G21 region. All projects have been endorsed by G21’s five councils and will provide significant employment opportunities for our people. <http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/basic_page/ppweb1503012-mar-2015-1016.pdf>

I would like to expand briefly on the **G21 RGP Implementation Plan** and the **G21 2015 Priority Projects documents**.

Both of these documents detail infrastructure investment opportunities for the G21 region which would stimulate employment.

They have been rigorously assessed across a triple bottom line framework and agreed to by our five G21 Councils.

**The G21 RGP Implementation Plan**

<http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/g21-rgp-ip_implementation_plan_16_dec_13.pdf>

This document gives effect to the G21 Regional Growth Plan which details where the expected 500,000 G21 region population by 2050 will live, work and what the infrastructure will be needed to service a population of this size.

Around 240 infrastructure projects are identified in the Plan for investment over the next 30-40 years.

The projects are listed under five infrastructure themes:

* Transport
* Utilities
* Community
* Business
* Environment

Critical projects that will be catalytic in supporting the region’s growth to 500,000 people and stimulate employment growth include:

* Improving transport connections to Melbourne particularly to address the congestion issue on the Westgate Bridge.
* Connection of the Geelong Ring Road to the Bellarine Peninsula.
* Geelong Ring Road and rail freight connections to the Port of Geelong and the Geelong Ring Road Employment Precinct
* Major upgrades to the Great Ocean Road and key connecting routes to the Princes Highway.
* Geelong Port shipping channel access and berthing improvements.
* Avalon Airport precinct development and rail link.

Other key projects include:

* Princess Highway duplication to Colac.
* Midland Highway duplication to Bannockburn.
* Upgrades to key transport links from Geelong to growth areas in Armstrong Creek and Torquay/Jan Juc.
* Enhancement of public transport across the G21 region.
* Potable water supply to intensive agriculture opportunities in Golden Plains Shire.
* Redevelopment of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre
* Redevelopment of the Portarlington and Apollo Bay Harbours.

## G21 priority Projects 2015

<http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/basic_page/ppweb1503012-mar-2015-1016.pdf>

The five G21 Councils prioritise investment opportunities which align with The Geelong Region Plan each year for government’s consideration.

The level of agreement around these priorities is an enormous strength for our region and assists the state and federal governments to identify their investment priorities.

The 2015 G21 Priority Projects are:

* Addressing disadvantage
* Apollo Bay Harbour redevelopment
* Armstrong Creek urban growth area
* Avalon Airport including international terminal
* Central Geelong revitalization
* Cruise ship destination – Yarra St Pierre
* Geelong Convention and Exhibition Centre
* Geelong Future Cities Project including the redevelopment of GPAC and the Geelong Gallery
* Geelong Ring Road Connection to the Bellarine Peninsula and the Port of Geelong
* Geelong Ring Road Employment Precinct
* G21 Regional Trails Project
* Land 400
* Portarlington Safe Harbour
* Regional Rail Links
* Transport Links to Melbourne

## Other Investment Opportunities

## GROW – G21 Region Opportunities for Work

<http://grow.g21.com.au/>

In conjunction with Give Where You Live, the region’s major philanthropic organisation, G21 is developing a ground breaking initiative to address place based disadvantage through training and employment creation using the collective impact framework.

Give Where You Live has allocated $2m over ten years to GROW plus we received $300 from the Alcoa Foundation.

Last year the state government allocated $100,000 to assist with the business case development which will be released in April.

## Carbon Fibre Production

<http://www.g21.com.au/news/new-carbon-fibre-facility-forefront-manufacturing>

Deakin University through its Australian Future Fibres Research and Innovation Centre has the only carbon fibre research capability in the southern hemisphere.

This economic potential for the commercialization of this research with carbon fibre production in the G21 region is enormous.

We have already seen this with the international growth of a local carbon fibre wheel producer, Carbon Revolution.

Both of these projects have the capacity to provide manufacturing hobs to replace those that our region will lose.

They also provide our region with the capacity to retain highly skilled people.

## Agribusiness

<http://www.g21.com.au/news/agribusiness-investment-brings-new-jobs-g21-region>

The G21 region is home to many thriving agricultural businesses plus Marcus Oldham Agricultural College.

The sector has the potential to grow considerably in the future and contribute significantly to the regional economy.

## Research Capability

The G21 region is also home to world leading research facilities including AAHL, AFFRIC, GCEID, Deakin University and Barwon Health.

There are many opportunities to leverage future regional economic development from these facilities.

## Transport and Logistics

Geelong is ideally located to be the transport and logistics hub for Victoria.

Proximate to Melbourne, our region has road, rail, port, airport facilities to service the transport and logistics needs for much of Victoria’s produce.

## Tourism and Events

The G21 region is a world renowned tourist destination being home to the Great Ocean Road, magnificent ocean coastline and the forests of the Great Otway National Park.

The Bellarine Peninsula affords wonderful bay views and has a thriving boutique winery industry. The historic town of Queenscliff also is major tourism destination.

The region has a reputation for hosting international events and festivals including the Rip Curl Pro, the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, the Queenscliff Music Festival, the National Celtic Festival, the Meredith and Apollo Bay Music Festivals.

There are many local businesses and suppliers supporting our region’s significant tourism industry.

## Information Technology

The G21 region has a growing industry centreed on information technology. ICT Geelong is a netowrk of local ICT businesses including SkySoftware and FE Technologies, who export globally.

## Baywest

G21 welcomes the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria and looks forward to its consideration of the best place to locate a future containment port for Victoria.

## Conclusion

The G21 region is not complacent about the challenges we face as some of our major employers leave our region with the loss of at least two direct thousand jobs and many more indirect jobs.

I hope the Review Panel recognizes and acknowledges the deep challenges we face which have the potential to seriously undermine our economic future.

However I hope the Review panel also can see that our region, through G21, has worked together to proactively plan for our future by identifying infrastructure and social change projects that are not only ready for investment but will stimulate considerable employment outcomes for our people.

These projects are identified in submitted documents, the G21 Regional Growth Plan Implementation Plan and the G21 Priority Projects.

We also recognise the opportunity afforded to us by the potential to develop the next generation of combat vehicles here in Geelong and to commercialise the carbon fibre research undertaken by Deakin University.

I strongly encourage the Review Panel to take the time to digest these considered strategies which will provide a focus for your work and hopefully help shape future state government investment.

Thank you very much for providing G21 with the opportunity to make a submission to the Review - our region thanks you.

Elaine Carbines

Chief Executive Officer