# Submission to DEDJTR Service Delivery Review

To whom it may concern,

The Great South Coast Group wishes to make the following submission in relation to the DEDJTR Service Delivery Review.

## The Great South Coast region

Traversing 27,000 square kilometres bounded by the Shires of Colac Otway, Corangamite, Moyne, Southern Grampians, Glenelg and the City of Warrnambool, the Great South Coast is one of Australia’s most significant agricultural production regions.

Our reliable rainfall and rich volcanic soils support a robust agricultural industry, which accounts for around 60 per cent of our economy.

The manufacturing sector generates more than $4 billion annually, a quarter of which is derived from dairy products.

Other significant manufacturing includes aluminium production near Portland, mineral processing at Hamilton and wind turbine fabrication and assembly at Portland.

Forestry is an increasingly important sector, with nearly 20 per cent of the nation’s forestry in or near the Great South Coast.

The deepwater Port of Portland provides business with direct access to national and international markets. Each year, the port handles 6.2 million tonnes of trade worth $2.5 billion.

Our retail and construction sectors currently contribute more than $580 million to our economy annually. This sector is our third largest employer behind agriculture (16 per cent) and healthcare (14 per cent).

This is in part fuelled by a buoyant tourism industry. Almost half of all international overnight visits to regional Victoria are in the Great South Coast region. With its wealth of natural assets and rich cultural heritage, the Great South Coast is poised to become an important hub for nature-based and adventure tourism.

## Our challenges

The Great South Coast region faces a myriad of challenges. Chief among them:

* Upgrading and maintaining our road and rail networks and public transport links to meet the growing demands of our residents and visitors.
* Housing affordability
* Sustainable management of natural resources
* Maintaining and upgrading tourism infrastructure
* Below par education outcomes
* Sourcing an appropriately skilled workforce to meet our emerging demands
* Planning and delivering key infrastructure
* Encouraging population growth
* Ageing population
* Arresting small town population decline
* Addressing significant pockets of disadvantage
* Developing a more cohesive, connected and collaborative agricultural industry
* Fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship as a driver of growth
* Improving equitable access to services
* Strengthening neighbourhoods and community connectivity for more liveable townships
* Minimising the impacts of population growth and increased visitation on our delicate natural
* Environment

## Regional strategic planning in the Great South Coast

The Great South Coast Group is an independent Company Limited by Guarantee. Funded by local

government, its membership is drawn from all tiers of government, industry and community.

Our purpose is to collectively understand issues of regional significance and advocate with one voice to address those issues.

As an independent Company, we appreciate our capacity to collectively decide what is important to our region without fear or favour.

## Our current regional priorities

The Great South Coast Group’s current regional priorities include:

* Great South Coast Food and Fibre Action Plan
* Beyond the Bell – education attainment initiative
* Nature-based tourism – the 12 Apostles and the Grampians Peaks Trail
* Roads
* Passenger rail improvements
* New regional library service
* South West Healthcare Stage Two
* Regional placemaking.

## Key issues

The Great South Coast Group wishes to reaffirm its desire to retain its autonomy and capacity to

collectively agree upon what is important to our region.

However, we believe there is scope to work more closely with RDV to deliver regional priorities and would urge the Government to consider locating senior staff with decision-making capabilities in our regions.

We wish to make the following points in relation to the current DEDJTR review into regional service delivery:

* We wish to reiterate our strong support and commitment for regional decision-making, generally. Our region has made significant advances since the formation of the Great South Coast Group and we see significant benefit in this model of collectively identifying important regional issues and responses to those issues.
* It is our belief that RDV is ideally placed to have a coordinating role between government departments and/or the private sector to support and facilitate development in the regions.
* It is inefficient to have RDV staff located in metropolitan centres when the bulk of their interests lie in the regions. It would be more effective for RDV staff to be located in regions where they may be able to forge stronger relationships and glean better understandings of regional issues.
* Our region would be interested in working more collaboratively and closely with RDV staff to actively implement our regional priorities.
* Ideally, our senior regional government staff would have greater delegation to assist with ‘seed’ funding or funding to develop business cases for regional projects.
* We also see a role for RDV staff in advising our Board, Pillar Groups and member Councils in relation to project development. For example, RDV staff might develop a universal template to help identify the economic impacts of projects or proposals.
* The current “two-step” grant application process is viewed as a positive measure. The EOI process prevents the need to spend many hours preparing detailed submissions for initiatives that are unlikely to attract RDV funding.
* However, the current requirement to provide matching funds for all grants is hugely prohibitive to smaller regional councils and communities with limited resourcing. This is a significant barrier to advancing our regional priorities.

Our thanks for your time and consideration.

Karen Foster

Executive Officer, Great South Coast Group Inc