

# Mallee Regional Partnership

At a glance

## Our story so far

Since 2016, the Mallee Regional Partnership has been listening to the voices of our community and to stakeholders from across our region.

Through three widely-attended Regional Assemblies and numerous smaller meetings across the region, the Partnership has heard what is important to people in the Mallee and it has taken these voices directly to Government.

Government has listened and, as a result of the Partnership's efforts, a range of projects have been funded.

For example, Victoria's inaugural Cross Border Commissioner – a priority of the Mallee Regional Partnership – was appointed in October 2018, while the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre officially opened in May 2019.


But the Partnership has achieved much more than simply winning funding.

As well as advocating for our region, the Partnership has also played an important role in bringing together diverse groups, as well as stakeholders from across governments, departments and sectors, to work together to address issues facing our region.

It has led to a focus on local issues and Government policies, and their impact, at the local place-based level.



Supporting small towns is a Mallee Partnership priority



**REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS MALLEE**

The outcomes we are striving to achieve

Our region is striving to achieve the following long term economic and social outcomes for the individuals, families and communities who live in and visit our region. The roadmap overlaid outlines the challenges we face in achieving these outcomes, the actions we are taking and what success looks like for our region.

**Our Outcomes Roadmap**

- Increased growth in the agriculture and food manufacturing sectors
- A more diverse economy
- A skilled workforce meeting current and future industry needs
- Connected communities with equitable access to services
- Resilient small Mallee townships and settlements
- Health and wellbeing for all

This roadmap reflects the views of the Mallee Regional Partnership. The roadmap is a living document that will be updated regularly by the Regional Partnership.

Mallee Regional Partnership - December 2018 (current as of 15 May 2019)

## Our priorities

Early in 2019, after hearing from hundreds of people from across our community, the Partnership published its first Outcomes Roadmap – a summary of the key, long-term strategic areas of focus for the Partnership moving forward.

The Roadmap is a summary of where the Partnership is looking to make a real difference.

The long-term outcomes the Mallee Regional Partnership is striving to achieve are:

**Increased growth in the agriculture and food manufacturing sectors**

**A more diverse economy**

**A skilled workforce meeting current and future industry needs**

**Connected communities with equitable access to services**

**Resilient small Mallee townships and settlements**

**Health and wellbeing for all**



## What difference is the Mallee Regional Partnership making on the ground?

The Mallee Regional Partnership has been involved in driving projects across our region.

This map shows a small selection of initiatives with which the Partnership is involved.

**Food Next Door:** The Partnership has been advocating for funding for Food Next Door, a Mildura based initiative. In Budget 2018/19, the organisation received \$600,000 for a demonstration farm that will enable newly arrived migrants to collaborate in growing diverse crops using regenerative farming practices.

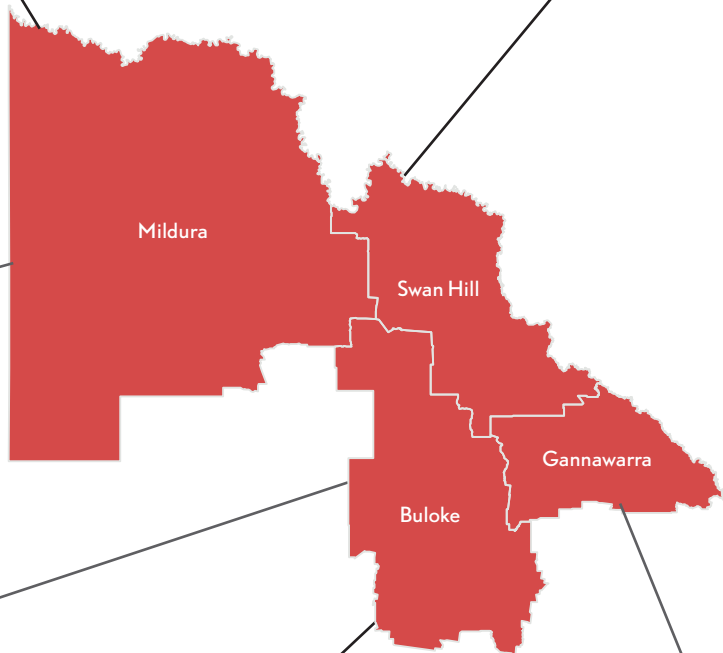
**The Mallee Regional Innovation Centre (MRIC):** The Partnership's focus on supporting the region to be more prosperous, with high tech jobs and opportunities, has led to the establishment of MRIC, to drive innovation in the horticulture, environment, energy and water sectors.

**The Victorian Cross Border Commissioner:** The Mallee Regional Partnership was successful in drawing attention to the many compliance and regulatory issues that affect cross-border communities in the region and beyond. To address those issues, making business and service delivery simpler and more effective, a Cross Border Commissioner has been established. Luke Wilson was appointed Victoria's inaugural Cross Border Commissioner in October 2018 and is getting on with the job of making life simpler along Victoria's borders.

**Enhancing our Tourism Assets:** Following advocacy by the Partnership, the Victorian Government has provided \$2.3 million to develop the tourism opportunities at Lake Tyrrell near Sea Lake, \$500,000 to undertake the detailed planning required to build the first stages of the Murray River Adventure Trail between Koondrook and Echuca, and \$300,000 to expand the Mallee Silo Art Trail.

**Regional Skills Demand for the Mallee:** The Partnership supported the first regional skills taskforce resulting in the Victorian Skills Commissioner's report "Regional Skills Demand for the Mallee".

**Small Town Big Difference Fund:** This is a proposed project to enable small communities to expand access to funding that improves small town liveability and attraction. An operational model has been finalised that spells out how the potential fund contributors (Local Government Areas; state Government and the Community Banking sector) could work together to achieve these aims. The Partnership is driving this proposed initiative.





## Driving research and innovation in the Mallee

A new centre is up and running in the Mallee, with plans to drive research and innovation across the Mildura and Swan Hill region.

A partnership between the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University, the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre (MRIC) will combine the world-leading research capabilities of both institutions with the knowledge of regional partners, with a strong emphasis on building collaborations.

The Mallee-based SuniTAFE is also a key partner in MRIC and will be delivering training to address emerging skills requirements in the horticulture sector.

The new centre will specifically focus on research and innovation in the horticulture, environment, energy and water sectors.

Establishing MRIC was an early Mallee Regional Partnership priority which came out of the Partnership's first Regional Assembly in Mildura.

The Victorian Government supported the project with \$1.7 million in the 2018/ 19 Budget, with the centre expected to bring economic benefits to the region including through increased agricultural production and irrigation water savings.

MRIC Chief Executive Rebecca Wells explains that the new Centre – which is based in Mildura – expects research and development proposals to emerge from the community,

including from peak industry bodies, governments and businesses, as key stakeholders come together to generate ideas.

She adds that the Centre will prioritise research projects that address key challenges for the region, pairing in-depth knowledge of the local area and leveraging local leadership and expertise through a Strategic Advisory Panel. It is anticipated proposals will include innovative solutions to tackle the impact of climate change.

“MRIC will capitalise on existing research in the Mildura and Swan Hill regions,” explains Ms Wells. “Being place-based, the Centre will drive real impact and build capacity within communities adding a new focus on research and development for innovation.”

MRIC, which was officially opened in May, has already had a visit from academics from La Trobe University investigating a project in automation for the horticulture industry; while several PhD candidates are expected to begin field work shortly.

“This region has a tradition of collaboration and thinking outside the square, so we want to continue and expand on these qualities,” explains Ms Wells. “As a region, we are not well recognised as an innovation hub. But I want MRIC to challenge that and to change where we sit on the innovation scale.”

You can find more information at [eng.unimelb.edu.au/mric](http://eng.unimelb.edu.au/mric)



## Next steps

With clear long-term priorities identified in the Outcomes Roadmap, the Mallee Regional Partnership is now entering a new phase.

The Partnership will continue much of its existing work, including developing a Digital Plan for the region. But, over the next year, rather than holding a large-scale Regional Assembly as in previous years, the Partnership will undertake more focused, deep-dive engagements with key stakeholders in a small number of priority areas.

These areas will be:

- Addressing the Structural Impact of Poverty in the Mallee
- Enabling thriving small towns and
- Encouraging investment into the Mallee.

Each matches with the Partnership's long term priorities.

These engagements will bring together the key players from our region, and elsewhere, to understand the issues and how they affect the Mallee region.

It will lead to further focusing of effort to enable real change on the ground.



## Who we are and how to find us

The Mallee Regional Partnership is one of nine Regional Partnerships working across the state. Each was established by the Victorian Government in 2016.

The Partnership has been led since its inception by Win Scott, who has extensive experience in the vocational education and training sector – most recently as Chief Executive Officer of Sunraysia Institute of TAFE until her retirement in June 2016.

Joining her on the Partnership are five other community and business members, as well as the CEOs of each of the Mallee Local Government Areas (LGAs), a Victorian Government Deputy Secretary, and a representative of Regional Development Australia (RDA), ensuring local, state and Commonwealth Government involvement in the Partnership.

You can find more information on the Mallee Partnership on our webpage, <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/mallee> and you can follow us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/malleeRP/>