

Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership

At a glance

Courtesy of the West Wimmera Shire Council

Our story so far

Since 2016, the Wimmera Southern 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 Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) 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 supported.

For example, the WSM BY FIVE initiative is supporting innovation in early years provision in our region.

The Partnership has also secured funding for exciting agricultural innovation and training to improve uptake of Ag-tech on farms through the AgTIDE project.

As well as advocating for additional resources for our region, the Partnership has also played an important role in bringing together diverse groups, key stakeholders, government departments and business to work together to address issues facing our region.

It has led to finding solutions to local issues, with support from Government, and together making an impact at the local place-based level.



Growing tourism as part of a diversified economy is a Partnership priority



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 WSM Regional Partnership is striving to achieve are:

- Economic Diversification** - A vibrant economy with a thriving, innovative agriculture industry and emerging tourism opportunities
- Telecommunications** - High quality, reliable digital connectivity and services
- Connectivity** - Public Transport & Roads - safe, accessible and connected roads and rail
- Strong Local Government** - Sustainable, connected and change-ready local government
- Energy** - Affordable, sustainable and renewable energy
- Rural and Remote Funding** - Focussed funding that drives infrastructure investment and business growth into rural areas
- Early Years** - Equity of access to early years education and care
- Family Violence** - WSM Families are safe and supported
- Workforce** - A high performing, valued and empowered workforce
- Health & Education** - Quality health and education for all
- Youth Disadvantage** - Young people in WSM reach their full potential



What difference is the WSM Regional Partnership making on the ground?

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

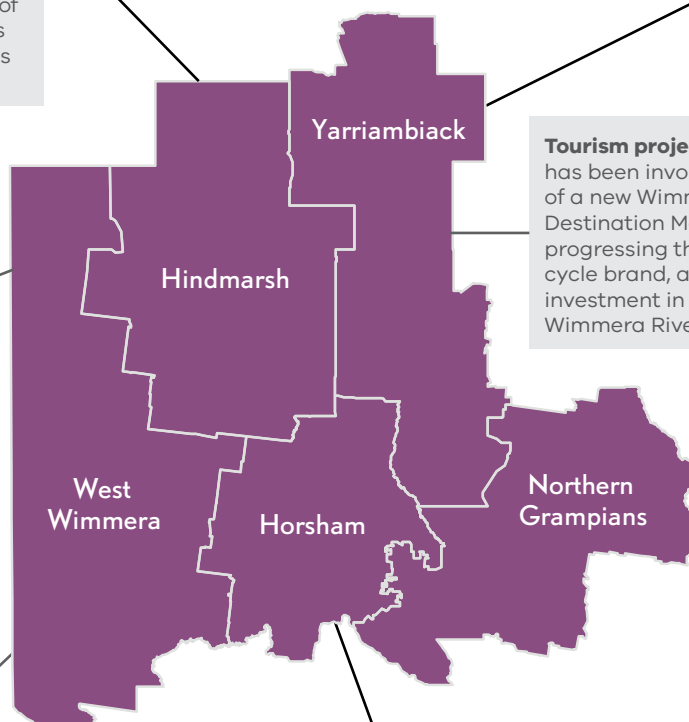
This map shows a small selection of initiatives with which the Partnership is involved.

The BY FIVE initiative: Driven by the Partnership, the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), along with support from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, this initiative involves five trials at sites across WSM with the aim of improving early years services in the region. The initiative came as a direct result of discussions at the 2016 Regional Assembly. It has also brought amazing new training opportunities to the region.

Co-designing a response to issues of family violence: Working with local groups and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Partnership helped co-design a response to issues of family violence that best meets the needs of the WSM local community. The Partnership secured more than \$1.3 million in Victorian Government funding in 2018/19 in part to purchase properties across the region which can be used as emergency accommodation.

New Mobile Blackspot Towers: The Partnership has been actively advocating to the state and Commonwealth Governments for new Mobile Black Spot towers in priority locations. Six new towers are to be built at Bellfield, Langkoop, Telopea Downs, Toolondo, Yanac and on the Grampians Road (Halls Gap to Dunkeld). The Partnership has also been working with the Victorian Government to author a **Digital Plan** for the region.

Tourism projects: The Partnership has been involved in the development of a new Wimmera Mallee Tourism Destination Management Plan, progressing the Grampians region cycle brand, and supporting investment in the first section of the Wimmera River Discovery Trail.



AgTIDE: The Partnership has secured funding from the Victorian Government for two agricultural innovation projects under the AgTIDE banner. These are a digitally enabled AgTech demonstration farm at Longerenong College near Horsham, and the AgTIDE education and training package, a collaboration with Birchip Cropping Group, Skillinvest, Federation University and the University of Melbourne to develop and deliver education programs for students, growers and agronomists on the use and benefits of AgTech on farms.

Rural Councils Transformation Program: The Partnership has been encouraging collaboration between local governments in the region to submit an application to the Victorian Government's Rural Councils Transformation Program. The application was successful with the councils picking up \$5 million to deliver a suite of regionally-shared finance and payroll services, which will deliver more than \$8 million in productivity benefits and reduced costs over five years.



Dimboola mum Hannah Young and her twins. Photo credit: Simone Conroy Photography

BY FIVE: Dimboola's new directory offers parents a helping hand

New parents in the Western Victorian town of Dimboola will soon be able to pick up a booklet full of all kinds of useful information for raising a child in the town.

Local mum-of-twins Hannah Young is one of the authors of the new directory and says it would have made a huge difference for her had it existed when her children were born.

"I didn't know anyone here," explains Hannah, who had moved to Dimboola two years before Paddy and Bede were born in 2014.

During those two years, she worked as a secondary school teacher in Horsham. "I was never here in the day," she explains, adding that she was "really isolated" when the twins arrived.

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurse visited Hannah in her home and let her know about the town's playgroup. "I was really hesitant to go," explains Hannah.

The playgroup ended up becoming a huge part of Hannah's life and she went on to be President.

It was in part through this role that she came into contact with the Wimmera Southern Mallee Early Years Project, or BY FIVE.

The project is one of the first WSM Regional Partnership-driven projects to get off the ground and is a partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), with support from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

The project came out of the Regional Partnership Assembly process with the WSM community identifying in 2016 that improving early years' outcomes in the region was a major priority.

BY FIVE is working in five clusters in the region – including in Dimboola – to see where improvements can be made to ensure early years services in each community are joined up and working effectively for families and children. It is seeking bespoke place-based solutions to meet local needs.

As part of BY FIVE, Hannah attended a series of training days in Horsham provided by the Bastow Institute. She – along with a kinder teacher, a social worker and two primary school teachers from Dimboola, and 85 others – attended the training.

"We identified that lots of professionals working with children and families travel to Dimboola from other towns and are not aware of the services available," says Hannah. Out of this was born the new directory.

"We've put in a list of possibilities, things you can do in town," explains Hannah. "We started with information on allied health services but expanded to everything. There's info on domestic violence services but also when the library is open. We found a lot of services were based in Horsham but will come out."

"This information was really lacking in our community. I spent a lot of time wanting to move to a bigger place," says Hannah. "But had I known what was available here, that would have helped. It would have made a huge difference to me if I had known there was story time at the library."

The directory will soon be available from the MCH nurse, the kinder, the playgroup and the primary school in Dimboola.



Next steps

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

The Partnership will continue much of its existing work, including supporting BY FIVE and the AgTIDE initiative 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:

- **Workforce Attraction, Retention and Training** and
- **Health Services Coordination.**

Both match 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 WSM.

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



Who we are and how to find us

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

The WSM Regional Partnership has been led since its inception by David Jochinke, a third-generation grain and livestock farmer living in North West Victoria. As well as being the Partnership Chair, David holds numerous positions including being President of the Victorian Farmers Federation.

Joining him on the Partnership are seven other community and business members, as well as the CEOs of each of the WSM 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 WSM Partnership on our webpage, <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/wimmera-southern-mallee> and you can follow us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/WSMRP>