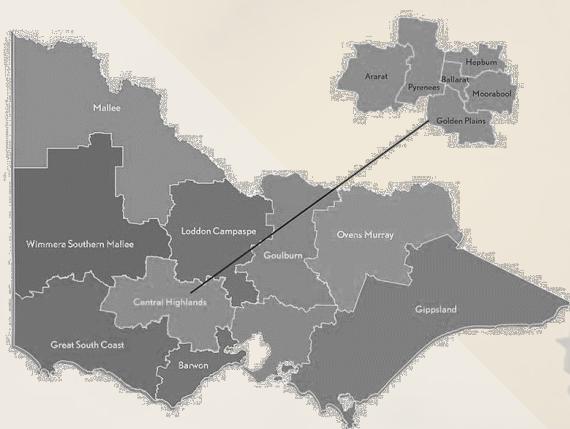


REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS CENTRAL HIGHLANDS



We respectfully acknowledge the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional custodians of the land. We reject all forms of racism and intolerance. We promote inclusion, mutual respect and a shared commitment to genuine engagement, partnership and participation of our indigenous communities.

Our eastern boundaries are less than an hour from Melbourne. The region's bustling major centre, Ballarat, has the fastest growing population of any regional city in Victoria, and our region also takes in Ararat Rural City in the west, the beautiful Pyrenees, the mineral springs at Daylesford, peri-urban Bacchus Marsh in the east and the golden plains of Bannockburn in the south.

Our region is renowned for its career prospects in manufacturing and agriculture, and continues to grow in health, retail, education, tourism, property, financial services and construction.

Diversity is the theme across the Central Highlands: from historic towns and cities steeped in our golden past, to the finest contemporary produce, cuisine and wine to grace a table. It's a place where you don't simply live; you immerse yourself in the sheer variety of natural and man-made wonders.

The outcomes we are striving to achieve

Our region is striving to achieve the following long term social and economic outcomes for the individuals, families and communities who live in and visit the Central Highlands. The roadmap overleaf 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

- 

Better health
A healthy community that embraces physical activity and healthy eating
- 

Transport connectivity
Integrated and accessible transport across Central Highlands
- 

Digital connectivity
Digital access for all
- 

New and Renewable Energy
Sustainable, secure and affordable energy
- 

Agriculture
Productive, diverse and resilient food and agriculture industry
- 

Social Welfare and community
Responsive, place-based social services
- 

Visitor Economy
A vibrant, growing visitor economy
- 

Education and training
Meaningful engagement in employment and education
- 

Advanced manufacturing
An innovative, collaborative manufacturing industry
- 

Workforce planning
A strong labour force that meets the needs of job markets
- 

Shared services
Transformational rural and regional Council service delivery

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



What success looks like for Central Highlands

Some key challenges we are facing

How our partnership is responding



The actions and key projects we are focussing on

Better Health

A healthy community that embraces physical activity and healthy eating



A **community that values health**, with at least a 5% increase in the number of people meeting **healthy eating** and **physical activity** guidelines, significantly improving the **health and wellbeing** of families and communities resulting in **population health gain** at a regional level.

Our community is facing an **increase in preventable chronic disease**, with the percentage of residents recorded as either pre-obese or obese amongst the highest in the State. Rising morbidity rates are placing **growing strain** on our **health system** and impacting every aspect of the **wellbeing of people in our community**, including preventing **workforce and social participation**.

We are partnering to explore **new and innovative ways** to get the **message out to community** about the benefits of **healthy activities and healthy eating**, with a strong focus on **working in partnership** across the region to **tackle preventable disease**. Education and awareness are underpinning the approach.

- Advocacy for investment in projects like the 'Prevention Lab' and innovative, health improvement initiatives including a new model for Integrated Health Prevention funding in the region
- Expanding research capability across the region through the Ballarat Innovation Research Collaborative for Health Program
- Supporting projects like the Western Bulldogs Sons and Daughters of the West programs
- Developing a regional plan for our health infrastructure and physical activity programs

Transport Connectivity

Integrated and accessible transport across Central Highlands



Seamless transport connectivity across roads and public transport, with the ability to **'get from A to B' easily within our region and beyond**, making it easy to do business in the Central Highlands and enhancing our **economic vibrancy and social cohesion**.

Our region needs **transport connectivity and frequency improvements** to meet growth. Community often has **restricted access to health, education services and important economic and agricultural industries**. This affects **liveability**, re-enforces disadvantage and social isolation, inhibiting economic growth.

We are passionate and committed to enhancing transport connectivity across the Central Highlands. Completing the program of development for **Ballarat rail is the immediate priority**, and this work is complemented by a focus on important **road projects and transport options** that will **connect our towns**, link transport corridors and **open up our region**.

- Advocacy for full implementation of the Ballarat Line Upgrade Stage 1 and 2 as committed under the Regional Rail Plan
- Prioritising road projects, with a focus on link roads, local roads and the *Western Highway Bypass for Ararat and Beaufort*
- Supporting projects like *the Central Highlands Transport Forums* to develop local transport solutions and create rural connections

Digital connectivity
Digital access for all



We are committed to digital equity across Central Highlands, with universal access to **consistent, quality services** regardless of where you live, work or visit our region. Strong digital connectivity will unlock **improved productivity and better education, employment, health and lifestyle outcomes** for our community.

Digital connectivity is fundamental to people's lives, however, many in our region are **disadvantaged** when it comes to **accessing quality digital infrastructure and services**. We also have a gap in knowledge about how digital technologies can be harnessed to **increase our economic and social participation and support businesses**

Our region is taking steps to **reduce the digital divide**, targeting areas of low digital connectivity and black spots. We are also supporting efforts to understand the ingredients for **digital success in our region** with a view to enhancing our digital literacy and uptake, and leveraging technology to achieve economic and social outcomes for Central Highlands' communities.

- Establish Local Community Connectivity Centres (LCCCs) in 6 pilot locations across the region
- Undertaking a comprehensive region wide mapping process to understand the current state of digital connectivity
- Researching digital literacy and service levels as they relate to population density across Central Highlands
- Advocacy for mobile black spot removal at priority locations identified across the region

New and renewable energy

Sustainable, secure and affordable energy



We are striving for Central Highlands to be a **regional leader in climate change adaptability** and technologies, delivering **sustainable, secure and affordable energy** for the region and generating **economic growth and community benefits**.

We are experiencing a **shortfall of energy** in the system. Our current **transmission infrastructure is inadequate** and this will limit our ability to achieve **energy innovation**. Without innovation and investment in new, green technology, communities will continue to face **rising energy costs** due to reliance on expensive, non-renewable energy options.

Our region is seizing the opportunity to become **innovators in new energy technologies**, fulfilling a strong vision for a **low-carbon future** and achieving affordable and **sustainable energy options** for communities. To do this, we are advocating for projects that will enhance Central Highland's reputation as a leader in the sector as a champion of sustainability, biodiversity and renewable energy solutions.

- Advocacy for investment ready projects including the Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre, Hepburn New Energy pilot and City of Ballarat New Energy Future Projects such as the Ballarat Waste to Energy Facility, Materials and Energy Innovation Centre and All-Waste Interchange Facility.
- Grampians New Energy Taskforce (GNet) established and tasked to create a roadmap to achieve a zero emissions target for the Central Highlands Region
- Advocacy for increased transmission network capacity across the Grampians and exploration of alternative energy sources including Hydrogen.

Agriculture

A productive, diverse and resilient food and agriculture industry



An outstanding food culture supported by an **innovative and connected agriculture industry**, with diverse **employment opportunities** and career pathways that strengthen the **resilience** of the Central Highlands economy.

The region has an established and diverse agricultural sector valued at **\$992.5bn agricultural production and \$1.5bn food processing**¹. While food and agriculture are critical pillars of our local culture and economy, a **lack of planned and cohesive investment puts our full economic potential and our status as a hub for outstanding agriculture at risk**.

There's an opportunity to grow the Central Highland's **strong reputation** as a **gastronomic destination**. We are advocating for an evidence base to inform a **cohesive strategy for regional economic growth**. We are also advocating for **investment in important infrastructure development** to support our **food and agriculture industry**.

- Advocacy for projects that drive innovation in our food and agriculture industry, including establishing a 'Hub for Premium Produce Program' and the 'Institute of Gastronomy'
- Establish 'Agri Atlas', a Central Highlands agri business advisory group
- Support projects that provide vital industry infrastructure, like the Regional Land Use Planning Strategy and the GWM Water East Grampians Water Pipeline



What success looks like for Central Highlands

Some key challenges we are facing

How our partnership is responding

The actions and key projects we are focussing on



Social welfare and community
Responsive, place-based social services

We are committed to nurturing a culture of **active cooperation and collaboration** in and around the social sector. We will support services and government to **work in partnership to tackle key welfare issues** and develop **localised responses**, improving health and wellbeing outcomes, breaking the cycles and patterns of disadvantage.

Population growth in our region is placing **increasing pressure on welfare and community services** and existing community facilities. These pressures are compounded by **systemic challenges** including affordable **housing, homelessness and disadvantage**. Agencies need support to work collaboratively and be **locally responsive**.

We are bringing together the best minds to **tackle homelessness** in the region, **identifying strategies that address root causes** and structural issues. We are also supporting practical steps to **improve community amenities** and create new spaces for **community sports and recreation**. We are helping the region bring a balanced focus across prevention, early intervention and critical response.

- Research homelessness scale and trends to accurately understand size, scale and future trends of homelessness
- Supporting a Feasibility Study and Business Case for a 'Central Highlands Housing First Response' pilot
- Advocacy for investment in community wellness, including upgrades to Daylesford Town Hall, Community hub in Lexton, the Regional Animal Facility and the Bacchus Marsh Regional Community Sports Hub



Visitor Economy
A vibrant, growing visitor economy

Our region has a wealth of natural and built **visitor attractions** that position us uniquely as a **destination of choice**. We want to leverage, connect and unlock those assets to drive jobs growth and **promote future investment** across the Central Highlands Visitor Economy.

We need to **attract** international, local and interstate **visitors to our region**, through **coordinated investment in infrastructure and visitor experiences** in our region. We are missing an opportunity to **capitalise on our significant arts, entertainment and cultural attractions**.

We are committed to putting ourselves in the shoes of our visitors and consumers by **supporting strategic investment in regional arts, cultural destinations and attractions** in order to unlock and strengthen the tourism potential of our region and connect our visitors to each corner of the wonderful Central Highlands landscape.

- Advocacy for new regional and rural focussed funding streams and for World Heritage Listing of the Goldfields Region. Support enhancing Regional Tourism Board (RTB) collaboration
- Prioritise investment in iconic attractions including the Sovereign Hill Hotel Development, Sovereign Hill Beyond 50, Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat
- Invest in non-nature based attractions such as the Vic Motor Sport Hub at Fiskville, Grampians Region Cycle Routes and Wine Tourism



Education and Training
Meaningful engagement in employment and education

Community, especially young people, are **thriving and meaningfully engaged in employment and education**. We have a deep knowledge of local capability and **skill gaps**, and these are addressed by strong and sustainable **pathways and collaboration between education and industry**.

While **nationally youth are overrepresented in unemployment**, Ballarat experienced a **9.9% decrease** from 16.5% to 6.6% in youth unemployment in 2016 to 18². The drivers behind this change in our region are unclear. **Without clarity on the drivers, we risk returning to higher rates of youth unemployment**.

Our region wants to **develop a clear understanding of the drivers behind the youth unemployment rate** and then make a **firm plan for action to address the underlying issues** – from education through to job and training opportunities. We will work in partnership with Government and the private sector to **identify local solutions**.

- Working collaboratively with industry, education services and government to undertake a 'State of Play' research project mapping problems, activity, to develop a Framework for Action to tackle youth unemployment



Advanced manufacturing
An innovative, collaborative manufacturing industry

Creative thinkers are supported to **drive innovation in advanced manufacturing**, matching new ideas with **industry needs** and achieving **strong culture of industry collaboration**. We are passionate about fostering the enterprising spirit of our advanced manufacturing industries.

Without innovation, industries can falter and **cease to exist**. In our region, innovation has been siloed and we have not connected our **advanced manufacturing ecosystem** in a way that encourages joined-up innovation and capitalises on the **creativity and talent** of our industry workforce.

We are committed to establishing a **globally recognised advanced manufacturing sector**, using the advanced manufacturing network to identify sustainable industry led clusters that build on regional strengths and create an **expanded regional network that enhances industry capability**.

- Support the establishment of advanced manufacturing clusters, comprising research and development, industry and education
- Support the establishment of business innovation spaces
- Advocacy for 'investment ready' regional manufacturing precincts including the Golden Plains Food Production Precinct, Parwan Employment Precinct, Ararat Manufacturing Precinct and the Ballarat West Employment Zone



Workforce Planning
A strong labour force that meets the needs of job markets

A **strong culture of workforce planning** in the region, positioning Central Highlands as an **employment and community destination** by increasing the number of long term work opportunities through **planning and decentralisation**.

Our region faces **growth in population without a growth in local employment opportunities**. This means our regional centres are facing **significant economic and social challenges**, particularly with the threat of **job losses** with the closure of traditional manufacturing operations.

We will **support decentralisation policies** that create more Federal and State **government roles in our region**. We are also supporting efforts to commence **detailed, long term workforce planning** for Central Highlands.

- Undertake demand profile of skills in the region
- Address skills development, housing and transport connections in the region
- Supporting the relocation Federal and State government services to our region



Shared Services
Transformational rural and regional Council service delivery

Central Highlands Councils provide **transformational regional service delivery**, achieved by stronger local governance and investment in **stabilising at risk Shires**.

Rural and regional council sustainability is at risk due to a number of drivers, including the ability to build local capacity, protecting critical services and **ageing infrastructure**.

We are advocating to **secure the future of our regional councils** by progressing a proposal with 8 Local Government Areas to develop a **shared services, shared procurement and shared service delivery model** for the region.

- Supporting Central Highlands LGAs to work with Local Government Victoria to develop an application to secure funding for a business case from the Rural Councils Transformation Program

References

- 1 Victorian Government analysis using 2016 ABS Agricultural Census data; Victorian Government estimate based on 2016 REMPLAN data and 2011-12 RISE data
- 2 ABS Census 2018, Datacube RM1 – Labour force status by region (ASGS SA4), sex and age, October 1998 onwards