



HUME REGIONAL PLAN

*The **Hume Strategy** for sustainable communities*

2010-2020



A Victorian
Government
initiative



JULY 2010

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On behalf of the Hume Regional Management Forum I acknowledge that the Hume Region has a rich environment which has been nurtured and cared for by Indigenous people for over 40,000 years. We recognise the importance of the land we now occupy and commit to working together for a sustainable future.

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2. Members of the Hume Strategy Executive Group for their expert project management advice and guidance.

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Angela Verde

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The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities (Hume Strategy) is an integrated regional strategic plan that builds on the strengths of a multi centred network of settlements within the four sub regions that make up the Hume Region in North East Victoria. The Hume Strategy provides a framework for long-term cooperation and investment within the region.

The region is characterised by a network of high functioning regional cities and centres located along major transport routes which support and are supported by a network of district towns, towns and villages. Unlike other regions in provincial Victoria there is no single dominant major regional city in the Hume Region.

In contrast to other regions in provincial Victoria where this single voice dominates the regional interests, in Hume Region collaboration at the sub regional and regional level has been identified as the key to creation of a 'unified voice' to provide the foundation for strengthening regional competitive advantage. Consequently in 2007 the Hume Regional Management Forum – comprising local government Chief Executive Officers and Regional Directors (or equivalent) of state government departments and authorities – determined that an integrated regional strategic plan needed to be developed.

This unique role and function of regional cities and centres servicing distinct sub regions means that when compared to other Victorian regions who have a dominant centre, different approaches to infrastructure development, service provision and settlement growth must be utilised to advance the environmental, social, economic, transportation and land use priorities of the Hume Region.

It is imperative that this difference is recognised in any future legislative framework.

The Hume Strategy project, established in May 2008, was resourced by multiple funding sources and in-kind contributions from state and local government for a period of two years to develop the regional strategic plan. The development of the Hume Strategy was sponsored by the Hume RMF and day-to-day management was undertaken on behalf of the RMF by the Department of Planning and Community Development – Hume Regional Team.

Advice was provided at key points by a group of community and business leaders from across the region who had a diverse range of experience related to social, environmental and economic fields.

The development of the Hume Strategy has highlighted that the Hume Region has some exceptional opportunities that can be capitalised on through a collaborative approach at regional level, as well as within and between its sub regions.

The region is characterised by a well developed network of regional cities and centres, district towns, towns and villages with varying levels of access to high quality education, health and social services located within the region. Many settlements are recognised as being of strategic importance to the future sustainability of Victoria and the nation.

Over the next 25 years the population in the four sub regions is projected to grow by over 100,000 people from 300,000 to 400,000 people. Managing anticipated growth sustainably is a challenge for the region.

FOREWORD



The Hume Region contains two of Australia's major transport routes, the Hume and Goulburn Valley transport corridors. This is an exceptional competitive advantage for the region. Transport infrastructure has contributed significantly to the region's economic opportunity and social capacity and it will continue to be important for future prosperity.

Hume Region's water resources and the agricultural production supported by them, its biodiversity and ecotourism attractions, are highly significant on a national scale and are underpinned by a climate that is characterised by four distinct seasons. Public land plays a major role in the region, providing important habitat, water, timber, and a wide range of tourism and recreational activities and opportunities.

Hume Region is a net exporter of goods and services and this means that global economic conditions, international commodity pricing and terms of trade are important to the economic health of the region. Agriculture is a major industry therefore the evolution and restructure of agriculture will continue to create opportunities. The regional workforce is recognised for its productivity and reliability, whilst some sectors would benefit from expansion of skills in specific areas.

Manufacturing, agriculture, processing and tourism are significant to the Hume Region's economy. Environmental factors have a considerable influence on economic wellbeing. Climate change will encourage the region to generate new and innovative solutions to adaption needs.

Given the Hume Region is characterised by four inter-related sub regions serviced by a network of regional

cities and centres supported by district towns, towns and villages, a collaborative approach is regarded as critical to ensuring the region capitalises on its capacity to grow and develop sustainably into the future.

The Hume Strategy is the strategic framework for this collaboration. It provides the foundation for a consolidated sense of purpose, a collective approach and a high level of cooperation.

The Hume Regional Plan and the four sub regional plans are companion documents. It is recommended that the documents are read in their entirety as they comprise inter-related themes that form an integrated plan.

The Hume Strategy is a tool that provides advice and makes recommendations. The Hume Strategy recognises that different issues, challenges, needs and priorities exist at a regional and sub regional level, and are capable of being supported within a single strategy.

Given the strengthened support for regional planning at state and national levels through the Victorian Government *Ready for Tomorrow* blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria and the establishment of Regional Development Australia by the Commonwealth Government, we are confident that the Hume Strategy will support government, institutions, business, industry and communities to grasp opportunities and respond to future challenges through integrated planning and strategic investment.

Hume Regional Management Forum



The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities is the first integrated strategic plan for the Hume Region. Set out under the five themes of environment, community, economy, transport and land use, each theme comprises a comprehensive package of key directions and strategies. This package forms the basis for regional collaboration and cooperation to advance over 300 recommended actions.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR EACH THEME INCLUDE:

Environment – a broad range of activities such as climate change mitigation and adaptation measures; water availability and efficient water use; protection of the regions important biodiversity and ecosystems; regional energy planning with a focus on renewable energy, efficiency and innovation; improvements to resource recovery in the region; and green industry development.

Communities – a group of actions providing networked community spaces; promoting educational aspiration and achievement; securing specialist health and aged care service development; closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage; planning for population growth, mental health and aged care needs; encouraging development of housing stock diversity; guiding improvements to infrastructure and access to arts, culture, sport and recreation; and community safety.

Economic – a package of activities that includes workforce skill development and attraction, workforce retention strategies, opportunities to provide adult learning; agribusiness development, transition and diversification; tourism coordination, promotion and infrastructure; freight and logistics capacity; next generation ICT; and reliable energy supplies.

Transport – a raft of actions that call for integrated transport systems, including public transport, underpinning networked communities; major infrastructure upgrades and improvements to the regions rail links; expansion of east-west public and freight transport links; greater freight transport capacity; innovation for energy efficiency and low carbon emission; and encouraging further construction and use of cycle and walking paths.

Land Use – a series of land use management and development activities within regional cities and centres and small settlements, and along the Murray River corridor; improvements to the way the region coordinates land use, infrastructure and service planning; measures to assist the region plan for population growth; steps to further rural land use strategies; and strengthening the region's land use planning expertise.

For a list of current projects nominated as ready to advance, please refer to the *Hume Strategy Executive Summary* which is available as a separate volume.

HIGHLIGHTS



INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THE HUME STRATEGY – PURPOSE AND REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities (Hume Strategy) is a ten year strategic plan. It is an integrated regional plan that has been developed to provide advice and make recommendations to inform decision making and investment in the Hume Region.

The Hume Region is a grouping of 12 local government areas in north east Victoria. The region extends from the outskirts of Melbourne in the south to the Murray River in Victoria's north, and encompasses the nationally significant Hume and Goulburn Valley transport corridors. The Hume Region is characterised by a number of regional cities and centres that are supported by a network of district towns, towns and villages within four distinct but inter-related sub regions. This is different from other rural regions in provincial Victoria which have a dominant centre.

The four sub regions are based around broad communities of interest and existing relationships, and comprise local government areas as follows:

Upper Hume: Indigo, Towong, Wodonga

Central Hume: Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta

Goulburn Valley: Greater Shepparton, Moira, Strathbogie, Campaspe

Lower Hume: Mitchell, Murrindindi

For planning purposes, the Hume Regional Management Forum [RMF] agreed that Campaspe Shire in the Loddon Mallee Region would be included in the Goulburn Valley sub region because of shared interests.

By 2036, the combined population of the four sub regions is projected to grow by over 100,000 people from 300,000 to 400,000. This growth outlook could generate demands for 72,000 new homes and more than 41,000 extra jobs. The importance of sustainably managing this growth is a central thread underpinning the Hume Strategy.

The key objectives in developing the Hume Strategy were to:

- > Establish a framework for managing regional growth and change.
- > Define the region's competitive advantages and ways to build on existing assets.
- > Identify actions that will have regional and sub regional significance.
- > Develop leadership capability in the region to progress implementation of priorities.

The Hume Strategy seeks to anticipate impacts and harness the benefits of growth and change in order to develop sustainable communities in a prosperous, environmentally healthy and liveable region. The Hume Strategy is founded upon an agreement by stakeholders that partnerships and collaboration are crucial to building a sustainable future for the region.

This report — the *Hume Regional Plan* — is a major product of the Hume Strategy planning process. The four sub regional plans are companion documents to the regional plan, and together with the reference documents and implementation tools, make up the complete set of resources for the Hume Strategy (Figure 1).

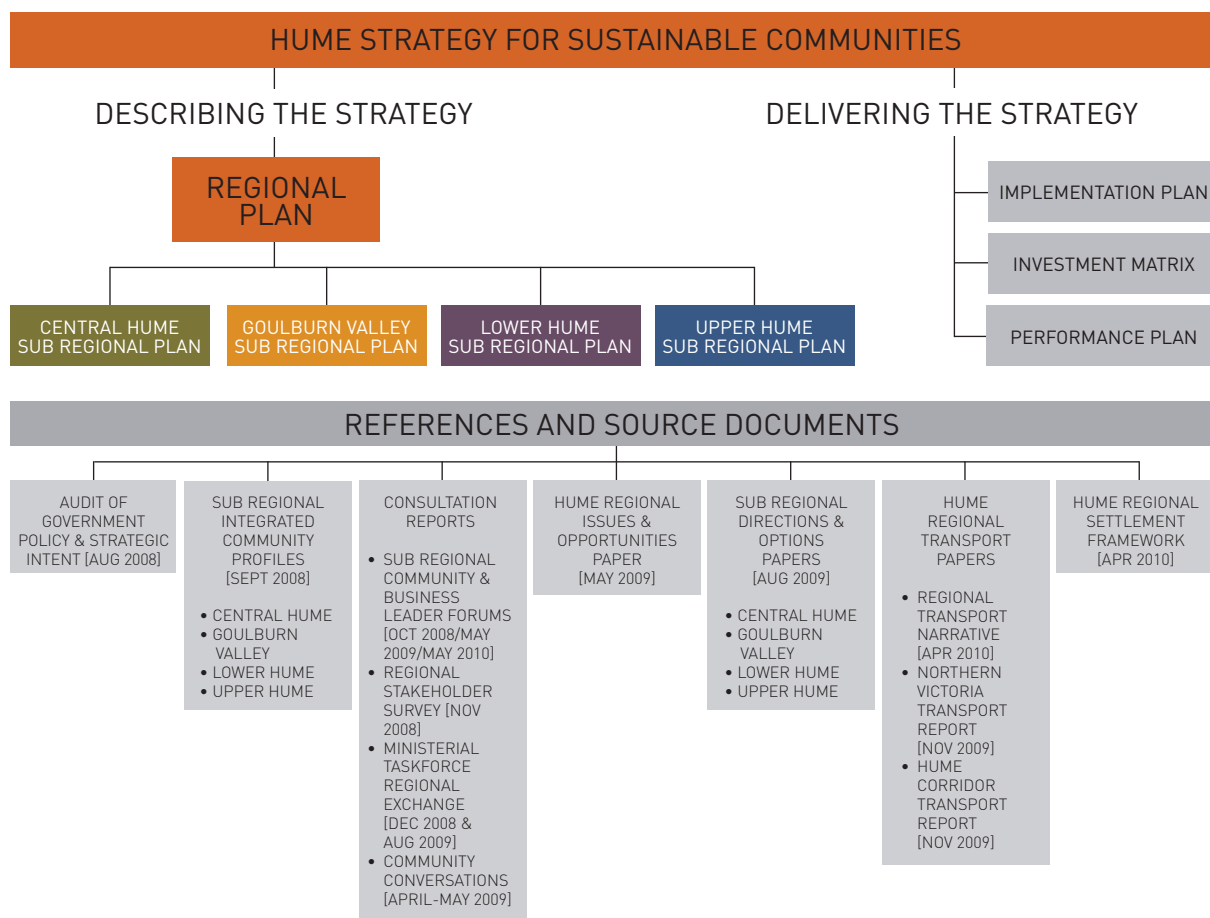
The Hume Strategy has been developed on the understanding that it will:

- 1. Be framed from a regional and sub regional perspective.**
Investment in infrastructure, facilities and service provision will be based on current population and needs as a consequence of growth. Through networked transport and communication, residents will have access to a range of services and opportunities in localities, neighbourhoods and regional cities and centres. Residents throughout the Hume Region will experience opportunity and equity of access to what this region has to offer.
- 2. Allow the region and sub regions to build on already established strengths.**
This is a diverse region. Population growth will be managed by following the established settlement patterns in a way that maintains the distinctive characteristics of the environment. This will be reinforced by strengthening transport and communication links. Economic growth will capitalise on the identified strengths and creativity of the region and its communities.
- 3. Embrace a triple bottom line approach to the growth of the region and sub regions.**
Growth in the region and sub regions will not happen for growth's sake, but in a sustainable manner that enriches the liveability attributes for residents and protects environmental values.
- 4. Continue to evolve as the requirements of the region are further defined and understood and new opportunities and options arise.**

The Hume Strategy is a genuine attempt to recommend regionally grounded directions that will encourage partnerships for the benefit of communities. It does not seek to duplicate or restate existing policies, plans or strategies, unless they need to be reaffirmed or extended.

The Hume Strategy is **not** intended to be:

- > a vehicle to duplicate or restate existing policy, strategy, processes or plans unless there is a reasonable rationale for doing so;
- > simply a literature review;
- > a summary of existing government or organisational policy; nor
- > a compendium of Council Plans.

**FIGURE 1. HUME STRATEGY DOCUMENT STRUCTURE**

Moreover, the Hume Strategy only deals with matters at a regional and sub regional level.

To achieve this, the following criteria were applied:

Regional: Those matters that extend over or impact beyond a sub region.

Sub Regional: Those matters that extend beyond a single municipality, but are unlikely to have a region wide impact.

Local: Those matters that are unlikely to service or extend beyond the municipality concerned.

Accordingly the Hume Strategy does not deal with matters identified as being important only at a local level. These matters are considered generally to be the province of individual councils, to be addressed in their respective council plans and strategies.

The Hume Strategy has been structured so that it can accommodate future changes in circumstance. In addition, the regional plan and sub regional plans have been developed through an integrated process and should be read with this in mind.

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) will provide leadership and support to ongoing regional strategic planning and Hume Strategy implementation arrangements will be clarified through an implementation plan setting out timelines and responsibilities, an investment matrix and a performance monitoring and reporting schedule.

The Hume Regional Plan is presented in four parts.

Part 1: Setting the Scene identifies the region's competitive advantages and challenges, as well as describing the four sub regions. The vision and a description of themes, goals and key directions for the region are presented in summary form. These themes describe high-level future conditions that have been identified from the comprehensive research and consultation that occurred throughout the life of the Hume Strategy regional strategic planning project (2008 – 2010).

Part 2: A Regional Framework for Action develops the five themes. They are each expressed through a goal, context, key directions and priority strategies. These are outlined in detail and provide advice and recommendations to assist the region to manage future growth, build on its existing strengths, capitalise on its competitive advantages and harness future opportunities.

Part 3: Foundations for Implementation of the Hume Strategy presents the context for establishing the implementation processes and structures, including future leadership and governance as well as a suggested framework for monitoring, reporting and review.

Appendices include a full list of regional actions which provide finer grained detailed advice and recommendations for implementation and achieving the vision. The regional actions are presented as an appendix to the regional plan and are presented similarly in the four sub regional plans where they are listed with the sub regional actions. The project governance structure, the schedule of consultation and engagement activities and abbreviations for terms used in the Hume Strategy are also included as appendices in the regional plan.

The four Sub Regional Plans are presented in three parts.

Part 1: Setting the Scene provides a description of the strategic context for the sub region.

Part 2: The Sub Regional Framework for Action develops the five themes in a sub region context, provides a link to the key directions, priority strategies at the regional level and identifies additional actions at the sub regional level.

Part 3: Appendix presents a list of regional and sub regional actions.

The Hume Strategy provides a solid basis for directing where energy should be focussed to achieve maximum benefit from effort, it will continue to evolve as the needs of the region are further defined and new opportunities arise in the future. This is an important consideration as the region moves into the implementation phase.

Whilst it was originally an initiative of the Hume RMF, the Hume Strategy now sits within a broader context as the Hume Region contribution to the state-wide regional planning program. The Victorian Government established this program in June 2008 with the formation of the Ministerial Taskforce for Regional Planning and establishment of the Regional Strategic Planning Initiative (RSPi). The resulting *Ready for Tomorrow* blueprint for regional and rural Victoria released in June 2010 provides high level government policy support for regional planning.

Commonwealth Government support for regional planning has been expressed recently through the establishment of Regional Development Australia (RDA). The RDA Hume Committee which was formed in October 2009 will provide community based advice to Commonwealth and State Governments on priorities identified through regional planning processes.

PART 1: SETTING THE SCENE



1 | WHAT MAKES THE HUME REGION UNIQUE

The Hume Region is comprised of four distinct and inter-connected sub regions. The region is characterised by a network of high functioning regional cities and centres located along major transport routes which support and are supported by a network of district towns, towns and villages. Unlike other regions in provincial Victoria there is no single dominant major regional city in the Hume Region.

The role and function of the region's network of regional cities and centres, as well as its district towns, towns and villages establishes the Hume Region as a multi-centred region within the context of a multi-centred state

Examined collectively, this network of regional cities and centres in the Hume Region has a similar capability to that of major regional cities in other Victorian regions to sustainably accommodate future growth.

This is the point of difference for the Hume Region and it has implications for state and local government approaches to strategic planning and investment as well as any future application of state-wide settlement policy and principles.

It is imperative that this difference is recognised in any future legislative framework.

This unique role and function of regional cities and centres servicing distinct sub regions means that when compared to other Victorian regions who have a dominant centre, different approaches to infrastructure development, service provision and settlement growth must be utilised to advance the environmental, social, economic, transportation and land use priorities of the Hume Region.

All sub regions except Lower Hume which has an interface to Melbourne, are serviced by key regional cities and centres. Shepparton services Goulburn Valley, Wodonga services Upper Hume and Wangaratta supported by Benalla services Central Hume.

2 | HUME REGION COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The Hume Region has a number of outstanding competitive advantages that distinguish it from other parts of provincial Victoria. In summary, these are:

- > Four sub regions with distinct and varied identities serviced by regional cities and centres and supported by district towns, towns and villages, which form the building blocks for the future prosperity of the region.
- > High performance interstate road and rail transport routes – the Hume and Goulburn Valley corridors – that support regional connectivity and are a key competitive advantage of national importance for the region.
- > High quality water resources, rivers, streams and water storages that are significant on a national scale.
- > Pristine environments and landscapes that are passionately valued by residents and visitors.
- > The availability of education at all levels of the learning spectrum and opportunities for learning and skill development at key locations across the Hume Region.
- > A diverse economic base built upon manufacturing, agriculture and food processing, human and health services networks and facilities, tourism, haulage and logistics industries.
- > Tourism products based largely around the quality of the natural environment and the region's heritage assets, focussing on the Murray River, alpine environments, valleys, snow fields, cycling, historic sites, fine food and wine.
- > A genuine commitment to leadership and participation in civic life at many levels that generates tangible benefits for communities. Strong leadership exists in government and in the business community. Civic participation is evident in the vast array of sporting, cultural, environmental, business and social groups that exist in the region.

A major strength of the Hume Region is the network of regional cities and centres that have the capacity to be linked and integrated to the main economic drivers of the state. This will contribute to a more equitable distribution of economic and human growth and opportunity at all levels. Hume Region is well positioned to maximise the potential offered by this structure of urban settlements, economic activity and transport systems.

Public land plays a major role in the region, providing important habitat, water, timber and a wide range of tourism and recreational activities and opportunities.

Transport infrastructure has contributed significantly to the region's economic opportunity and social capacity and it will continue to be important for future prosperity, especially if the role of rail in the future delivery of passenger and freight transport movements can be increased substantially. The Hume and Goulburn Valley transport corridors cater for public transport and high numbers of private vehicles. Most importantly, they also carry a volume of freight unequalled in any other part of Australia. This has encouraged the development

of significant population centres with manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, haulage and logistics industries in proximity to these highways and railways.

The headwaters of many of Victoria's major rivers are located within the Hume Region and the catchments contribute almost half the total inflows to the Murray Darling Basin. The region's rivers provide water for domestic and industrial use and support high-value agricultural production that makes a major contribution to the national output of primary products. Large storages on the Murray, Goulburn and Mitta Mitta rivers have environmental, recreational and economic value for the region. Several reservoirs are also used to generate hydroelectricity.

3 | HUME STRATEGY SUB REGIONS

The Hume Strategy recognises four sub regions, based on communities of interest and inter-relationships at a broad level [Map1]. The sub regions represent a key strength. Each sub region contains a network of settlements that are linked to each other and to other settlements within Hume, as well as to urban centres outside the region.

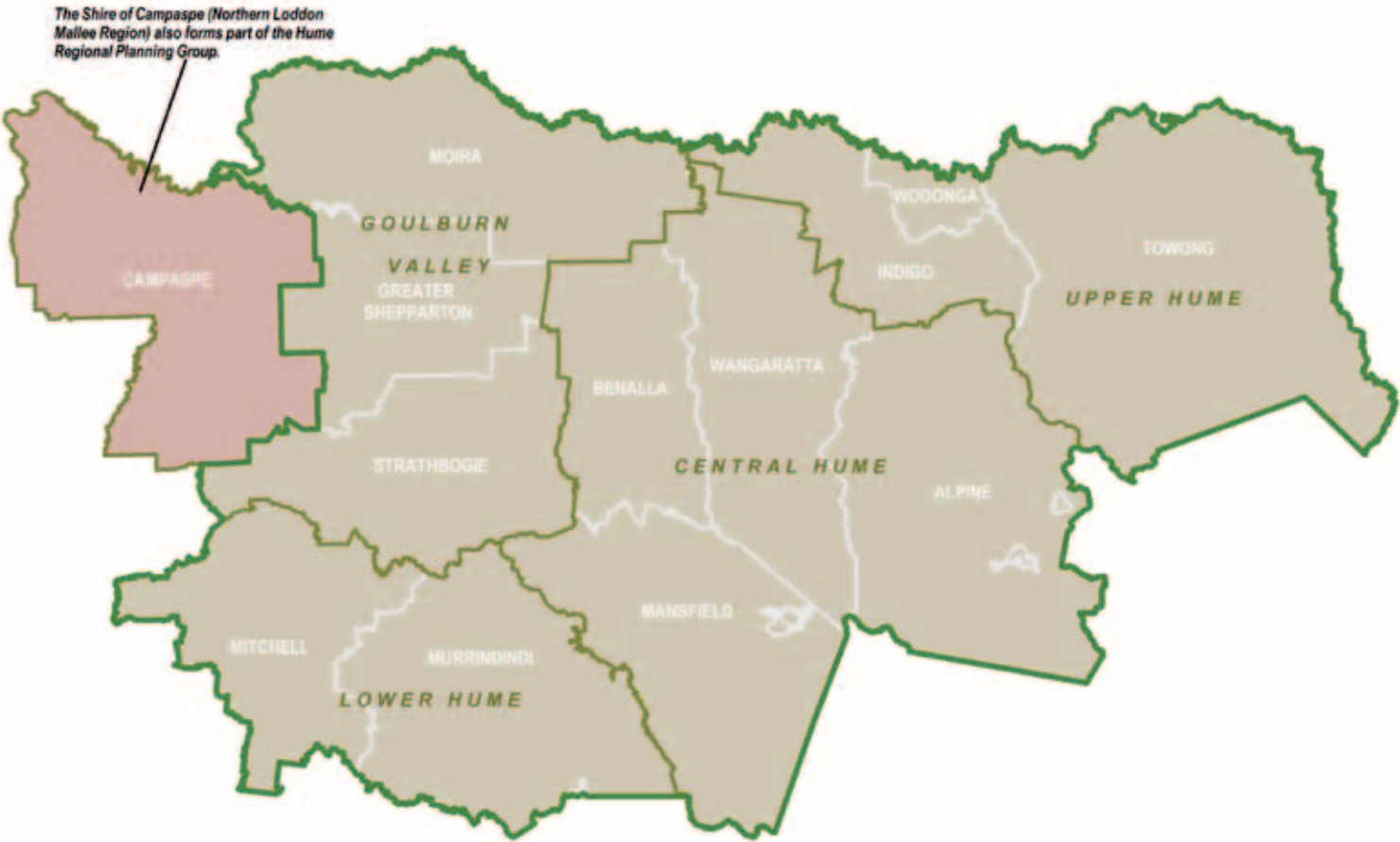
The sub regions are defined as:

- > **Upper Hume** – City of Wodonga and the Indigo and Towong Shires.
- > **Central Hume** – Rural City of Wangaratta, Benalla Rural City and the Alpine and Mansfield Shires.
- > **Goulburn Valley** – Greater Shepparton City and the Moira, Strathbogie and Campaspe Shires. (Note: Campaspe Shire has shared interests with the Goulburn Valley sub region so has been included in the Hume Strategy as part of the Goulburn Valley sub region for planning purposes.)
- > **Lower Hume** – Mitchell and Murrindindi Shires.

All sub regions except the Lower Hume are based around regional cities and centres. Lower Hume has a focus towards an interface with Metropolitan Melbourne.

Upper Hume contains the major centre of Wodonga, which is growing strongly and provides an important focus for economic activity, higher education, cultural activities and recreational amenity. Wodonga has strong links to Albury in New South Wales. Wodonga also has a major base in manufacturing with many national companies established as well as a significant defence force presence. These provide a substantial and diversified employment base for the sub region. The Hume Freeway and Melbourne – Sydney rail link through Wodonga provide a platform for freight transport and logistics industries, in addition to passenger rail and bus transport. The Murray Valley Highway provides an important east-west linkage. Grazing accounts for over three-quarters of agricultural land use in Indigo and Towong Shires. The sub region has a number of townships whose heritage, recreational assets and environmental values are important attractions for tourism. It also contains the major water bodies, Lake Hume and Dartmouth Dam. Planning for this sub region presents a challenge due to the dichotomy between the rapid growth of Wodonga, its young population profile and its hinterland, which contrasts with an ageing, dispersed and often declining population in the more remote areas of the sub region. However this hinterland provides both a quality of living and accessibility that make these areas vital for the sub regional growth. Upper Hume has a significant Indigenous population living predominantly along the Murray River corridor.

Central Hume has major manufacturing and retail centres in Wangaratta and Benalla. Many smaller settlements in the surrounding Alpine high country, foothills and river valleys, enjoy the lifestyle advantages of rural community living in an attractive natural environment. The headwaters of many of Victoria's major rivers are located within the sub region and the availability of water close to its source



MAP 1. HUME SUB REGIONS

0 25 50 75
Kilometres

Hume Region Boundary
Sub Region Boundary
Local Government Area Boundary

is a driver for high value agriculture. The sub region also supports a softwood plantation industry and a secure timber supply for industry. The Central Hume sub region is renowned for its vibrant tourism industry, based on snow sports, cycling, nature-based recreation, wine and fine food. There is a range of high quality tourism products and opportunities on offer in Central Hume and the Falls Creek, Mt Hotham, Dinner Plain, Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resorts are significant economic assets for the sub region. The Hume transport corridor runs through the centre of the sub region providing a unique level of accessibility to freight, passenger and vehicle movement along the east coast of Australia, as well as connectivity to other infrastructure and services. Central Hume has an ageing population and Indigenous communities in Wangaratta and Benalla.

Goulburn Valley includes the alluvial flood plains of the Murray, Goulburn and Ovens Rivers, which provide fertile agricultural land, desirable tourist locations and an important habitat for native species and ecosystems. Shepparton is the primary location for health, cultural and higher education services. Shepparton, like Cobram, has a culturally diverse population, with the largest Indigenous population in provincial Victoria living in Shepparton-Mooroopna. The Goulburn Valley area is of national significance for dairying, horticultural production and secondary processing, with a strong rural economy based on irrigated and dry land agriculture. The Northern Victoria Food Bowl Irrigation Modernisation Project is investing \$2 billion to secure water savings and drive industry efficiency into a new era of competitiveness.

Lower Hume has both the smallest geographical area and the largest growth rate, due to its rural amenity and peri-urban development pressure resulting from proximity to the northern and eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Significant population growth will increase demand for services, particularly in Mitchell Shire, and also put pressure on water supplies for urban development. There are a number of large settlements in the sub region — Yea, Seymour, Wallan and Kilmore. Seymour has a strong potential to evolve into a larger centre for the sub region in future. The sub region has vibrant agricultural and timber industries that provide local job opportunities, but many residents commute to metropolitan Melbourne for employment, goods and services. The sub region overall has an ageing population, although this is more marked in the rural areas. The Indigenous population in Lower Hume is more dispersed than in other sub regions. The Lake Mountain Alpine Resort is a significant tourism destination for the sub region. Substantial parts of Lower Hume were devastated by the February 2009 bushfires, resulting in the need for extensive rebuilding and support for recovery.

4 | CHALLENGES

The Hume Region is facing a number of demographic, economic and environmental challenges over the next 30 years. From 2010 to 2036, the population of the four sub regions is expected to grow by over 100,000 people, generating demand for 72,000 new homes and more than 41,000 extra jobs. The Hume Strategy seeks to respond to projected population growth as well as social, economic and environmental changes and variability the region is likely to experience in that time.

Social challenges include:

- > The effects of an ageing population will lead to changing demands and methods of providing health, education and community services. There is a need for more flexible transport systems and a greater diversity of housing stock. Volunteering is fundamental to maintaining regional communities, but the way communities 'volunteer' to sustain community services and local organisations is likely to change as the population ages. Finding these new methods and harnessing new volunteers will be important.
- > Differential growth across the region, with the population growing steadily in some areas whilst others have more stable or declining populations. Projections for the future anticipate increased concentration of people in major settlements, while some smaller settlements — particularly in areas that have reduced access to water — may experience decline. This will present challenges to the way services are provided in smaller settlements.
- > Out-migration of young people seeking education, training, employment and life experience opportunities in regional and metropolitan cities. This highlights the need for expanded local choices in learning and skills development. Retaining young people and attracting new residents requires improvements in affordable transport links between settlements and to the major transport corridors.
- > A more culturally diverse population, including Indigenous people and new residents from non-English speaking backgrounds, whose needs vary across the region and require localised responses.

Economic challenges include:

- > Global economic conditions, which have added to the risk of business failure and job losses in vulnerable sectors in the past two years and still involve some uncertainty. Global factors are also affecting the viability of manufacturing, with the effects likely to be felt particularly in areas such as Wodonga, which rely heavily on this sector.
- > Agricultural restructuring, which is already having significant effects. This is likely to accelerate under conditions of prolonged drought and a changing climate, and require strengthened economic and social responses. Fluctuating commodity prices on international markets are likely to be a continuing challenge.

- > Skills or workforce shortages in some industries – including health, hospitality and manufacturing – that must be overcome if the region is to prosper in future. This implies a need to improve access and choice in education and training, as well as attract skilled migrants to the region.
- > The potential for water availability to diminish and water security to reduce in the future. Ensuring that water is allocated to achieve the maximum return on investment will be important for the environmental, economic and social health of the region. Water efficiencies achieved through renewal of irrigation infrastructure as well as water lost through buyback may compensate and benefit agriculture, industry and the communities that depend on these systems for their livelihood.
- > Increasing costs of transport, which threaten one of the key competitive advantages of the region: the ability of people and product to connect.
- > The constraints presented by the linear configuration of the main transport corridors and relatively undeveloped structure of transport systems that provide east-west movement within the region.

Environmental challenges include:

- > How to sustain environmental values in rivers, streams and wetlands, while at the same time providing for domestic, agricultural and other industrial use.
- > Finding resources and developing techniques to protect and enhance biodiversity and reinforce the resilience of natural systems, including improving connectivity between key habitat areas.
- > Environmental, social and economic pressures which demand that efficient, affordable and sustainable energy sources are widely available to the community.
- > Changing the region's view of waste as a problem to seeing it as resource that can be reused, recycled or utilised as an energy source.
- > Overcoming problems in attracting investment to the region to trial alternative energy and waste management projects.
- > Responding to the needs of an enthusiastic community of landholders, keen to protect and enhance biodiversity which requires ongoing assistance through incentives, education and support.
- > Managing development pressures.

One of the most challenging issues facing the region is climate change. Failure to deal with climate change will have social, economic and environmental impacts, with effects predicted to include:

- > Increased severity of natural disasters such as fires, storms, floods and droughts.
- > Reduced water for individuals, communities, industry and the environment.

- > Constraints on personal mobility due to fuel price rises likely to result from transition to a low-carbon economy.
- > Impacts on the key freight and logistics and agricultural industries, as input costs rise.
- > Decreasing snow cover, depth and reliability, with consequences for the Alpine Resorts and the local tourist industries that support snow-based recreation.
- > Increased health problems due to hotter temperatures and spread of disease vectors.
- > Increased costs of cooling or heating, or investment to adapt dwellings, workplaces and industries to changed temperature regime.
- > New opportunities in technologies, industries and markets to help businesses and communities adapt to the effects of mitigation measures and to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

In a future growth scenario, it will be increasingly important to ensure that the region's settlements are better networked to provide opportunities to further develop their roles and to accommodate a higher share of the state's continuing economic development and population growth.

The issues and needs of specific cultural demographic groups such as Indigenous people and residents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are not homogenous across the region and warrant detailed localised responses. Volunteering is an important asset in many communities, and there is concern that the pool of volunteers to sustain community services and local organisations may decline.

Some of the region's settlements are continuing to grow steadily, but in other locations population numbers have stabilised or are declining. An increased concentration of people in regional cities and centres is anticipated. The popularity of rural residential living is increasing, challenging the capacity of the environment and service infrastructure to accommodate growth, particularly in settlements which do not have available capacity in existing services.

Economic factors impacting on the region include the proximity to Melbourne's domestic and international markets, cross border developments in New South Wales and global economic conditions adding to the risk of business failure and job losses in vulnerable sectors. Agricultural restructuring continues to have significant effects on the Hume Region. This is likely to accelerate under conditions of prolonged drought and a changing climate, and require strengthened economic and social responses.

The major north – south transport corridors of the Hume Region are rail and road based. The east – west transport corridors are road based and the region is serviced by seven airports. The road and rail transport corridors represent a significant competitive advantage, especially if the role of rail in the future delivery of passenger

and freight transport movements can be increased substantially. The Goulburn Valley and Hume transport corridors cater for public transport and high numbers of private vehicles. Most importantly, they also carry a volume of freight unequalled in any other part of Australia.

This has encouraged the development of significant population centres with manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, haulage and logistics industries in proximity to these highways and railways.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Managing the aftermath of the 2009 'Black Saturday' bushfires is a significant challenge for the Hume Region and Victorian community. The devastating February 2009 bushfires had a major impact on the Hume Region, resulting in unprecedented loss of life and property. Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires felt the effects of the bushfires most heavily, but parts of Alpine, Indigo and Towong Shires were also affected. Recovery and rebuilding efforts in bushfire-affected areas will take some years and will require continued support and resources. The Hume Strategy acknowledges the need for this commitment. Additionally, the findings and recommendations of the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission will need to be evaluated and a response developed on actions required by the region.

5 | OPPORTUNITIES

Key opportunities for managing growth and change for sustainable communities at the regional level were identified as:

- > Developing a networked, multi-centred region, built on improved equity of access to services and infrastructure through links between communities in the Hume Region as well as to other communities in regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne.
- > Using integrated planning for mobility as the basis for facilitating growth and managing change. Settlement planning must include explicit planning for the delivery and funding of an integrated transport system.
- > Protecting and managing the natural environment, particularly water and biodiversity.
- > Strengthening communities, improving social inclusion, and increasing access to community services and infrastructure.
- > Encouraging economic diversity and developing a skilled workforce capable of adapting to change.
- > Providing 'state-of-the-art' infrastructure, energy and telecommunications technology to support residential, commercial and industrial growth.
- > Supporting the development of future leaders across community, business and government sectors to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of communities in the region.

6 | OBJECTIVES OF THE HUME STRATEGY

The Hume Strategy has been developed from a regional perspective that acknowledges the economic, social and environmental competitive strengths and capabilities of each sub region, as well the challenges they are facing.

The Hume Strategy supports and seeks to strengthen the network of distinctive, diverse and thriving settlements that currently exist in the region and to enhance the resilience of communities and their ability to adapt to change.

The Hume Strategy recognises the critical importance of the natural environment to the future of the region and seeks to ensure that biodiversity is protected and enhanced and the amenity and productivity of rural land is maintained.

The Hume Strategy, along with municipal planning schemes, aims to provide sufficient supply of land for residential, commercial and industrial uses to meet anticipated needs in the short, medium and long term.

The Hume Strategy will enable government, regional and local authorities, institutions, business, industry and communities to grasp opportunities and respond to future challenges.

In this context, the following objectives have been defined to inform the future implementation of the Hume Strategy:

- > Develop a regional perspective that will build on the strengths and capabilities of each sub region to respond sustainably to growth and changing environments.
- > Support a network of unique, diverse and economically prosperous settlements which have resilient communities able to adapt and change.
- > Acknowledge the importance of rural and natural features and their contribution to the region's liveability.
- > Ensure our communities are liveable, safe, healthy places where the wellbeing of residents and visitors alike is nurtured and supported through access to education, health and transport.
- > Encourage an integrated strategic planning response which acknowledges and seeks to share roles and responsibilities between settlements.

7 | ACHIEVING THE VISION

A vision for the Hume Strategy has been developed from the collective advice provided by community and business leaders, local government councillors and staff of organisations and agencies over the life of the project.

The vision is a broad statement capturing the essence of the future condition that stakeholders want to achieve for the Hume Region:

The Hume Region will be resilient, diverse and thriving. It will capitalise on the strengths and competitive advantages of the four sub regions, to harness growth for the benefit of the region and to develop liveable and sustainable communities.

The vision will be advanced by focusing effort on the five key themes of environment, community, economy, transport and land use. Part 2 of this document describes the strategic framework that will be applied to both the regional and sub regional plans. The framework is articulated through a set of key directions. Underpinning each key direction is a series of recommended strategic priorities for action.

ENVIRONMENT THEME

"Natural resources protected and enhanced for current and future generations"

GOAL

Conserve the region's natural resources in order to protect their intrinsic values and support sustainable communities. Plans for urban growth and rural land use change will ensure that they do not impact adversely on the region's important natural assets, including biodiversity and water resources.

KEY DIRECTIONS

- 1 Anticipating and adapting to the effects of climate change
- 2 Managing our water resources sustainably
- 3 Protecting native habitat and biodiversity
- 4 Harnessing renewable energy sources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pursuing innovative waste management approaches

COMMUNITIES THEME

"Healthy, vibrant and resilient communities"

GOAL

Strengthen communities by enhancing their liveability and sense of connectedness. Access to services, facilities and other opportunities will lead to more healthy, vibrant and resilient communities. The capacity and quality of leadership in our communities will continue to be exceptional and its value will be recognised.

KEY DIRECTIONS

- 5 Embracing learning for life
- 6 Providing appropriate and accessible social services and infrastructure
- 7 Developing innovative and flexible service delivery models
- 8 Strengthening communities, increasing resilience and enhancing liveability

ECONOMIC THEME

"A thriving and dynamic economy"

GOAL

Capitalise on the region's competitive advantages, opportunities and strengths, in order to continue to deliver prosperity and vitality. New infrastructure and enhancements to existing infrastructure will support the future competitive potential of commerce and industry. Improving access to key transport corridors will expand opportunities for manufacturing, agriculture and tourism business development. Supporting development of a skilled workforce will augment and stimulate industry growth. Settlements across the Hume Region will have access to advanced Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

KEY DIRECTIONS

- 9 Strengthening a capable workforce
- 10 Adapting and diversifying agriculture in an environment of change
- 11 Facilitating research and innovation in tourism, manufacturing and industry to encourage new and evolving business
- 12 Developing ICT and energy infrastructure that builds on existing competitive advantages

TRANSPORT THEME

"An integrated network of efficient and high functioning transportation systems"

GOAL

Develop a network of integrated transport infrastructure and services to ensure that Hume Region will be a mobile region, with a capable transport system that provides quality, fast, safe and efficient links for rural and regional communities. Mobility planning for communities and individuals will enhance their access to suitable and affordable transport.

KEY DIRECTIONS

- 13 Enhancing integrated planning for mobility
- 14 Developing a proficient land transportation system
- 15 Linking communities through improved public transport and transport linkages
- 16 Strengthening the sustainability of the transport system

LAND USE THEME

"An efficient and sustainable pattern of urban and rural land use and development"

GOAL

Consolidate the development of four sub regions with high functioning networked centres. Sub regions will be serviced by regional cities and centres supported by district towns, towns and villages in the sub region, which together provide quality services and meet diverse needs. Communities will exist within a setting of attractive and productive rural land and a healthy natural environment. Stronger linkages will be developed between regional cities and centres in terms of transport, economic, social and environmental connections. Linkages to other key regional cities and centres outside the Hume Region and to Melbourne will help to drive the competitive advantages of the region.

KEY DIRECTIONS

- 17 Directing future population growth to settlements with the greatest capacity to accommodate it
- 18 Maximising the use of existing infrastructure and services and facilitating strategic investment in future infrastructure and services
- 19 Retaining productive rural land for agriculture and other compatible rural uses
- 20 Ensuring efficient use of land use planning resources in the region

The Hume Strategy has been structured around these key themes and strategic directions. The following chapters expand on the settings needed to achieve the outcomes. They recommend strategies and actions that will help the region to progress towards these goals, through integrated planning and targeted investment. This volume of the Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities – the Hume Regional Plan – contains a list of actions in Appendix 1 that are of significance at the regional level, while the actions of significance at the sub regional level are included in the accompanying sub regional plans. Actions range from further investigative work to major capital projects.

8 | KEY CONCEPTS

The guiding principle for the Hume Strategy is to 'build on existing strengths'. The following sections explain important concepts that are central to understanding the intentions of the Hume Strategy.

NETWORKED SETTLEMENTS

The Hume Region has a dispersed pattern of settlements spread out across the region and is unlike other regions in Victoria, as it is not dominated by a single large major regional city. The region has a unique network of high functioning regional cities and centres located along major transport routes. This network of regional cities and centres has a good base of existing services and facilities supporting and supported by a network of district towns, towns and villages. Within this network there are elements of a 'hub and spoke' relationship that exist between larger centres and their surrounding communities.

To build on this existing unique pattern and characteristics, a model for Hume Region of a 'networked multi-centred region' will apply in the context of a multi-centred state. Integrated planning for mobility and transport will be a key concept underpinning strategic approaches to planning for settlements in the Hume Strategy.

MOBILITY

The major road and rail corridors and other transport links play crucial roles in connecting settlements and making services and facilities accessible to communities in the Hume Region.

Achievement of equity of mobility is fundamental to approaches to planning for transport and access in the Hume Region. The concept operates in two directions – it seeks to improve the ability of individuals to fulfil their travel needs for employment, education, health, household needs and leisure, but it also recognises that in some cases it may be more efficient to bring services to people, rather than people travelling to a centralised location for services.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Competitive advantages are the characteristics of a region or area that give it an edge over other comparable places. They may be natural assets, such as mountains, rivers or fertile soils or built assets such as attractive towns and historic villages. They may be locational advantages such as proximity to large population centres or to major interstate land transport networks. They may be the results of a combination of these factors, which lead to clusters of particular types of industries, which in turn generate demands for additional services.

Building on existing competitive advantages is likely to be much more effective as a development strategy than, for example, trying to attract businesses that have no particular reason to locate in the region or have other specific requirements that are difficult to meet. Building on competitive advantages is a fundamental tenet used in the Hume Strategy to frame actions for future success.

PART 2: A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION



ENVIRONMENT THEME

NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTED AND ENHANCED FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

GOAL

Conserve the region's natural resources in order to protect their intrinsic values and support sustainable communities. Plans for urban growth and rural land use change will ensure that they do not impact adversely on the region's important natural assets, including biodiversity and water resources.

CONTEXT

The Hume Region seeks to maintain a healthy environment and will be proactive in ensuring lifestyles are matched to environmental capability. Climate change will be one of the key drivers shaping the region's future. Hume aims to become a recognised leader in adapting to temperature increases, water shortages and constraints on the use and cost of non-renewable energy. Renewable energy sources will ultimately replace those based on carbon in providing for the region's energy needs. Buildings will be constructed or retrofitted using energy efficient designs and building methods. More of the community's basic needs—food, energy, fibre and building materials—will be sourced from the local area. The results of these efforts will be a clean, attractive, environmentally responsible community that embraces the value of protecting and enhancing the resilience of our natural resources for a sustainable future.

Maintaining the integrity of the natural environment is critical to the Hume Region's future prosperity and sustainability. Biodiversity will be enhanced and protected through a regional approach to waterway management, creation of biodiversity corridors ('biolinks') and protection of remnant vegetation. The vegetated areas of the region will continue to provide services and benefits to the community including clean air, high quality water and pristine environments that are resilient to natural disturbances. The social, economic and environmental benefits provided by the landscapes of the Hume Region will be highly valued by residents and visitors and will continue to be enhanced through best-practice land management.

It is recognised that there are increasing pressures on biodiversity in the Hume Region. The Hume Strategy seeks to respond to this urgent issue through the delivery of actions which support protection, management, sustainable land use planning and effective partnerships, which all aim to enhance regional biodiversity. The Hume Region's natural resources will be managed and carefully protected whilst supporting sustainable communities. Plans for urban growth will ensure the protection of the region's important natural assets including its biodiversity and water resources. Public land will be managed to protect important natural assets

and continue to be a major attraction for local residents and visitors. The importance of water, both quality and quantity, will be a deciding factor in where people live and what they do. Our river systems will be healthier through improved cooperative management by the states and commonwealth. There will be significant changes to the agriculture sector including agricultural diversification, modernisation, more efficient distribution of water and more intensive land use.

The Hume Region will be recognised as an innovator in sustainable green technologies, renewable energy sources, alternative power sources and waste minimisation and reuse, and will position itself as the green technology leader of Victoria. Sustainable water practices including improvements in irrigation, distribution and storage will be implemented. Primary industry practices and priorities will be reorganised based on research and development and environmental protection, leading to increased sustainability and adaptability to climate change.

The Hume Region will utilise its natural resources sustainably, ensuring that the available water is allocated to achieve the maximum return on investment for the environmental, economic and social health of the region. Water will be provided to sustain optimal environmental values in rivers, streams and wetlands. Water efficiencies achieved through renewal of irrigation infrastructure will benefit agriculture, industry and the communities that source their water and their economic prosperity from these supply systems.

KEY DIRECTIONS – SUMMARY

- 1 Anticipating and adapting to the effects of climate change
- 2 Managing our water resources sustainably
- 3 Protecting native habitat and biodiversity
- 4 Harnessing renewable energy sources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pursuing innovative waste management approaches

The sections below outline the reasoning behind each key direction and list the priority strategies and major actions associated with them. Details of all actions and initiatives flowing from the strategies are listed in Appendix 1 and in the sub regional plans.

KEY DIRECTION 1

ANTICIPATING AND ADAPTING TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

To tackle the effects of climate change proactively, the Hume Region will develop a comprehensive and integrated regional approach. This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help residents and industries adapt to the effects of a changed climate and capitalise on opportunities arising from climate change. Programs and strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change will be underpinned by knowledge and science. They will be applied through an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach that focuses on the links between agriculture, land use planning, housing, industry, health and natural resource management. Support for innovative and creative solutions will enable the region to build a sustainable community into the future.

The Hume Region's efforts will be directed to: reducing the region's carbon footprint; collecting data and setting targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; understanding and contributing to climate change research; harnessing and promoting local leadership initiatives and networks; and integrating planning in all sectors to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Climate change adaptation refers to any action taken to minimise the adverse effects of climate change or to take advantage of any beneficial effects. Adaptation is the primary means of dealing with the unavoidable impacts of climate change. It is a mechanism used to manage risks, adjust economic activity to reduce vulnerability and to improve business certainty. The Hume Region will pursue resources to support research into climate change risks and impacts on the region. This knowledge will support change in industry and the agriculture sector, as well as identifying opportunities to create local value-added products.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Reducing the Hume Region's carbon footprint
- 1.2 Being informed about climate change
- 1.3 Local leadership supporting local initiatives
- 1.4 Harnessing opportunities
- 1.5 Integrated planning approaches

KEY DIRECTION 2

MANAGING OUR WATER RESOURCES SUSTAINABLY

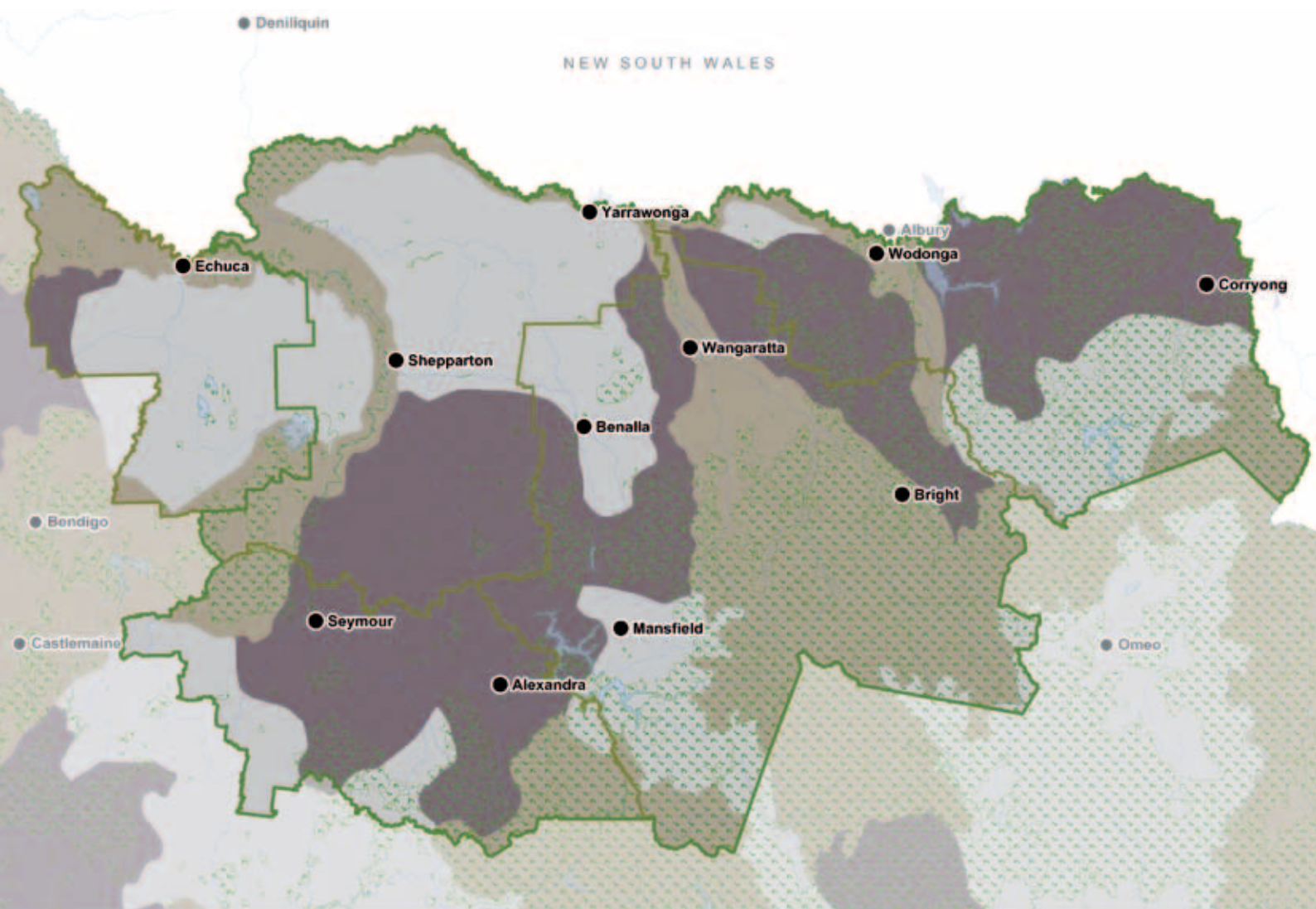
The region has a vital network of rivers, wetlands and floodplains providing habitat for ancient River Red Gums and a diversity of other plants and animals, amenity and pleasure for residents and visitors and business opportunities from tourism. The water resources of Hume Region are highly significant environmental assets, as well as being critical to the region's position as a major food-producing area of the state.

The impact of the ongoing drought on the supply of water for farming, industry, agriculture, residents and the environment is a significant challenge for the region. After more than a decade of low flows many of Hume's rivers are in moderate to poor condition. Climate change modelling indicates that water availability may reduce even further in future, so the region's water resources need to be planned and managed to take this into account. Climate change impacts will affect water quality as well as availability. For the natural environment this means a continuing high degree of stress.

Innovative approaches to water conservation include large-scale water efficiency measures such as: water sensitive urban design; upgrades to irrigation infrastructure; use of alternative water sources; and best practice water design demonstration projects. The region must become smarter in its use of water, to reflect the limited availability of this precious resource. Strategic approaches to ensuring a sustainable water supply for the region will secure the environmental health and prosperity of the region into the future. The Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy provides strategic government policy that aims to support communities, industry and the environment in adapting to the impacts of climate change and variations in water availability.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 2.1 A water view for the region
- 2.2 Water management through innovation
- 2.3 Water guiding planning outcomes
- 2.4 Valuing ecosystem services of rivers, streams and wetlands



MAP 2. HUME REGION FLAGSHIPS & BIOLINKS



- River
- Water Body
- Hume Region Boundary
- Hume Sub Region Boundary
- Flagship Region
- Biolink Region

0 15 30 45
Kilometres

KEY DIRECTION 3

PROTECTING NATIVE HABITAT AND BIODIVERSITY

Biological diversity — known as biodiversity — is the variety of all life on earth including the different plants, animals and microorganisms, their genes, and their terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems. Protecting the remnant native vegetation and faunal habitat is very important for the future of the Hume Region. The Victorian Government's White Paper Securing Our Natural Future identifies 13 'flagship' areas for biodiversity conservation and a number of state-significant 'biolinks' that will be developed progressively to improve connectivity between key areas. In the Hume Region the flagship areas are the Mega Murray, Goldfields, Central Highlands and Victorian Alps (see Figure 3). The key biolink identified in the White Paper is a broad band running from the Murray River above Lake Hume generally south-west along the Hume corridor.

The Hume Region is strongly placed to establish regional biodiversity networks to link biodiversity assets across the landscape, thereby improving the resilience of ecosystems in the face of future change. Long-term strategic planning at a local and regional level will allow identification and protection of biodiversity assets, to ensure that development is placed appropriately to avoid adverse impacts on the region's biodiversity.

Building on existing incentives, landholders, community groups and government will be supported to continue to improve their management of high priority biodiversity sites and to protect and enhance native vegetation communities. A biodiversity awareness program will be delivered across the region, to strengthen efforts to protect and enhance regional biodiversity. A key aim will be to build the capacity of the Hume community to contribute actively to the preservation of our natural assets.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Management of regional biodiversity
- 3.2 Land use planning and biodiversity
- 3.3 Protection and management of native habitat
- 3.4 Education, incentives and community

KEY DIRECTION 4

HARNESSING RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES, REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND PURSUING INNOVATIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

Innovation is vital to reducing regional energy use and waste generation. The Hume Region is currently heavily reliant on carbon-intensive coal fired electricity generation and burning of wood for its energy supplies. In the future, the region has a great opportunity to grow renewable energy and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions substantially. Renewable energy sources include wind, solar, hydro-electricity and waste-to-energy processes utilising methane from municipal landfills and primary processing industries. Attracting investment for renewable energy projects within the Hume Region will position it as a 'region of excellence' for alternative energy technologies. Expansion of the natural gas reticulation network, aligned to the Hume Region networked centres model, would provide economic and environmental benefits to the region in its own right and also function as a key transition strategy while alternative energy sources are scaled up to commercial production.

Waste can be viewed as a resource, rather than a problem. Active community involvement in waste awareness initiatives will assist in strengthening regional efforts to increase reuse and recycling. Improvements in financial analysis for waste segregation, transport and recovery options are required regionally to better inform decision making processes. Better waste management would contribute to improved resource recovery and a reduction in the generation of greenhouse gases. Opportunities for reuse and diversion of waste from landfill will continue to expand through initiatives such as the conversion of organic wastes into stable and reusable organic material, advocated in the Regional Waste Management Plans. Clustering of related industries has potential benefits in management of energy use and reduction of waste generation, now and into the future.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 4.1 Regional energy planning
- 4.2 Energy and innovation
- 4.3 Regional energy action
- 4.4 Waste management and innovation

ACTIONS

Each priority strategy listed under the four key directions within the themed outcome of *Natural resources protected and enhanced for current and future generations* has a set of regionally significant actions provided in Appendix 1.

The actions relate to a broad range of activities including: regional energy planning with a focus on renewable energy, efficiency and innovation; protection of biodiversity and ecosystems; water availability and efficient water use; climate change mitigation and adaptation; improvements to resource recovery in the region; and green industry development.

Delivering these actions will require prioritisation and implementation planning by project leaders and stakeholders in the next phase of the Hume Strategy.

COMMUNITIES THEME

HEALTHY, VIBRANT AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

GOAL

Strengthen communities by enhancing their liveability and sense of connectedness. Access to services, facilities and other opportunities will lead to more healthy, vibrant and resilient communities. The capacity and quality of leadership in our communities will continue to be exceptional and its value will be recognised.

CONTEXT

Developing healthy, vibrant and resilient communities in the Hume Region requires a focus on:

- > Embracing 'learning for life' through expanding quality opportunities in education and promoting a culture of excellence and aspiration in learning.
- > Providing social infrastructure and services that are relevant, accessible and responsive to community needs.
- > Developing and implementing innovative and flexible service delivery models at the regional and sub regional level, particularly in health, aged care and post compulsory education.
- > Building social capital, strengthening liveability and fostering development of strong, resilient and diverse communities.

The Hume Region contains a number of well-served, dispersed settlements enveloped by productive agricultural and natural landscapes. This settlement pattern provides opportunities to build on the concept of networked centres, sharing facilities and services, without the domination of a major regional city. Some communities also access services from Melbourne or major centres in adjoining regions in Victoria or New South Wales.

A healthy, vibrant and resilient Hume Region requires appropriate, accessible and responsive health, education and community services. Social infrastructure, housing and services need to keep pace with population growth, respond to demographic changes – including an ageing population and increasing cultural diversity – and meet the needs of children, youth and families. New service delivery models to underpin liveable communities will need to be supported by more flexible transport and mobility options, clean energy and advanced communications technology.

Education is critical for achieving equality of opportunity in life and education attainment is an indicator of workforce skill levels. To build strong communities all children must have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The Hume Region's educational outcomes are the lowest in provincial Victoria on a number of measures, including tertiary entry by young people. Strengthening opportunities for education and learning for life is fundamental for the region's future, as is improving access to post compulsory education and training.

This will be achieved through provision of accessible, quality education facilities across the Hume Region. Centres for higher education and research will provide opportunities for research and training in key areas related to local opportunities, knowledge building and skill requirements.

Diversity within and between communities will be valued. Planning for community services and infrastructure will recognise sub regions, catchments and communities of interest, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach for the region. Collaboration, coordination and sharing of resources, particularly at the sub regional level, will value-add to services and reduce social disadvantage.

Efforts to 'close the gap' in Indigenous health, education, training and employment outcomes will be a key commitment. There is still a need to resolve some cross-border issues relating to access to infrastructure and services.

Planning for growth requires a focus on amenity, as well as dwelling stock diversity, choice of residential location, housing affordability and employment location.

Communities in Hume Region are characterised as engaged, connected, inclusive, safe and diverse – all qualities that contribute to community resilience, or the ability to withstand adversity and respond positively to change. It is essential that the region continues to improve its adaptive capacity and mitigate the negative impacts of change, particularly in vulnerable communities.

Community leadership development contributes to innovation and entrepreneurship. Community strengthening activities can increase resilience, particularly when linked with community participation and volunteering.

KEY DIRECTIONS – SUMMARY

- 5 Embracing learning for life
- 6 Providing appropriate and accessible social services and infrastructure
- 7 Developing innovative and flexible service delivery models
- 8 Strengthening communities, increasing resilience and enhancing liveability

The sections following outline the reasoning behind each key direction and list the priority strategies and major actions associated with them. Details of all actions and initiatives flowing from the strategies are listed in Appendix 1 and in the sub regional plans.

KEY DIRECTION 5

EMBRACING LEARNING FOR LIFE

Learning is a fundamental building block that shapes a person's life opportunities. In Hume Region there is a need to:

- > Expand quality opportunities in education and learning for life.
- > Promote a culture of excellence and aspiration in learning.

Research illustrates that investing in education helps to achieve the best life outcomes for children, families and communities. The first eight years of a child's life are the foundation for future social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. Some students will require support to achieve effective transitions to higher levels of learning. Education provides the skills for operating in an information rich world and knowledge helps develop the ability to make informed and responsible decisions in life. The Hume Strategy recognises that learning development at any stage of a person's journey through life requires nurturing in healthy, safe and stimulating environments. Applying a partnership approach to creating a region-wide framework for education that addresses quality of education in schools, educational outcomes and the sustainability of local communities will help individuals achieve their potential.

The Hume Region is and will continue to be characterised by a pattern of dispersed but inter-related settlements. As a result, transport to key locations that provide desired learning opportunities can be a challenge, particularly for residents of settlements outside regional cities and centres.

Schools play an integral part in developing vital and sustainable communities, which demonstrate a commitment to education and learning. However, communities are not homogenous, so innovation and local solutions are needed in order to achieve the right learning environment for each particular circumstance. Schools are particularly important in rural areas, where the local school is often the hub that defines the community. Despite their centrality to the life of their area, there is a risk that without additional support, some small schools may lack the critical mass and funding to provide the range of quality learning and social experiences needed by students.

With the exception of Wodonga, which has a relatively high proportion of young people, the Hume Region population profile has a 'gap' in the number of young adults aged 20 to 29 years. This is partly due to young people moving to areas where they can access post compulsory education and employment. While some young people wish to move away after leaving school, there are others for whom this is not a preferred option. Still others are unable to afford to live away from home and thus may be prevented from following the career of their choice. Innovation is required to fuel development and increase the range of opportunities and to diversify the methods of delivery in education and training.

The region has two university campuses, a strong TAFE sector and a range of post compulsory education providers. This offers an opportunity to foster improved partnerships and relationships within the tertiary education sector by working together in regional cities and centres to improve economies of scale, education pathways and outcomes for students. The region's education assets and abilities are important for social, cultural and economic development as well as for retaining and attracting young people and should be built upon. Strengthening opportunities for young people and adults to access on-campus and off-campus education can also play a role in encouraging participation in community life and developing a more capable community equipped to respond to future challenges.

Excellence and aspiration are fundamental aspects to promoting a culture of learning and valuing the benefits that learning can provide. A culture of learning is more than achieving future employability in a global economy, it is about fostering and encouraging the development of people as successful learners, confident and creative individuals, well rounded informed citizens capable of being actively engaged in civic participation and decision making on behalf of communities.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 5.1 Create 21st Century spaces for communities through growth and sharing of resources
- 5.2 Provide opportunities for young people to engage with learning through multiple pathways and seamless transitions
- 5.3 Foster a culture of excellence and aspiration in learning

KEY DIRECTION 6

PROVIDING APPROPRIATE AND ACCESSIBLE SOCIAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Providing appropriate social services and infrastructure in the Hume Region and improving access to them requires:

- > Developing new and building existing services and infrastructure to keep pace with population growth and emerging needs.
- > Connecting communities to the major transport corridors and key service points in regional cities and centres.
- > Ensuring equitable access to social services and infrastructure.

The strength and cohesiveness of a community is underpinned by the ability of its people to access services and participate in social, economic and community life. Access to human services, such as health, early childhood, education and aged care are particularly important.

The Hume Strategy networked centres model provides a sound basis for access to community service and infrastructure development through service nodes located along the major transport corridors and in other key locations. Services are accessed in Melbourne with its highly specialised health, education and cultural services, as well as cities in adjoining regions. Hume has two regional health services — Goulburn Valley Health and Albury Wodonga Health — reflecting the population distribution in the region.

It is important to ensure that a balance of health service provision is maintained, so that localised access is not diminished as a result of service aggregation. One way of retaining this balance will be through the creation of 'centres of excellence' in sub acute care in key locations in the region.

Access to more complex and specialist services in areas such as cancer care and renal dialysis is a major issue for the region and demands will continue to grow. This will be addressed over the next decade by developing specialist health care services in the region.

Promoted strongly in the Hume Strategy is the need to ensure communities have well-developed transport and telecommunications infrastructure, that is linked to other communities across the Hume Region as well as to Melbourne and other parts of provincial Victoria. These communities are the locations for many of the region's social services, health, education, arts and cultural facilities, employment, public transport, retail and manufacturing industries.

The cultural profile of the region is changing with inward migration of residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Tailored sub regional responses to provision of services for refugees and recent migrants will be developed, to cover settlement services, health, education and social integration.

Arts, culture, sport and recreation are important for the region in terms of participation in community life, encouraging creativity and fostering a sense of purpose and belonging. They provide stimulating environments for social connection and promotion of healthy living.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 6.1 Build networked communities
- 6.2 Expand service access pathways
- 6.3 Develop and renew services and infrastructure
- 6.4 Enhance participation in arts, culture, sport and recreation

KEY DIRECTION 7

DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE AND FLEXIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

Developing innovative and flexible service delivery models that encourage opportunities for engagement with individuals and communities in Hume Region can be achieved by focusing on:

- > Sub regional service delivery and infrastructure planning.
- > Service delivery coordination and resource sharing.

The Hume Strategy recognises that the Hume Region has four distinct but inter-connected sub regions. This structure contributes to the region's ability to plan and develop place-based service delivery models that are responsive to local characteristics and interests at the sub regional level. Coupled with this, the capacity of Hume Region to build on its strengths and competitive advantages is largely dependent on the ability of multiple regional cities and centres and towns to connect to each other and to the major transport corridors that run north – south through the region.

The age characteristics of communities across Hume Region are not uniform, nor are the trends in population growth or decline. Prosperity also varies substantially across the region, with pockets of severe economic hardship and social disadvantage. The most highly disadvantaged communities are located within regional cities and centres, predominantly in areas with concentrations of social housing; however there are also areas of high relative disadvantage in a number of smaller townships across the region.

Health service needs will alter with changing demographic characteristics. Traditional models for how services such as aged care are provided must adapt and respond to the emerging needs of communities. Dementia is anticipated to be the leading cause of death for Australians within 20 years, with a quadrupling of the number of persons affected by 2050. Dementia must be a major focus of future aged care planning for the region.

The prevalence of drought and bushfire in the past decade has had a detrimental effect on psychosocial health, underlining a need for better regional responses to mental health and wellbeing, covering the spectrum from health promotion to treatment. The impact of bushfire has highlighted a need for continued support over an extended period of time to affected communities to address ongoing psychosocial needs.

A Hume Region plan for mental health amounts to a reform agenda. New approaches to mental health require: a considered approach to working with 0 – 24 year-olds through the education sector; emphasising health promotion through the sub regional Primary Care Partnership (PCP) groups; providing opportunities and support to persons with mental health issues to remain connected with and integrated in community life; and supporting women with new infants in the peri-natal stage when there is a relatively high risk of depression.

Whilst the lower elevation areas of the Hume Region have a denser settlement pattern and more diverse opportunities for access to social and community infrastructure and services, the Alpine areas contain many small, relatively

isolated communities. Rural areas furthest from regional cities and major towns tend to have the oldest populations, although concentrations of older people are also found in the hinterlands of the larger regional cities and centres. The Alpine areas are increasingly promoting year-round adventure activities and events such as paragliding, hang-gliding, mountain biking and road cycling. Athletes and spectators attracted to the region provide an economic boost, but place stresses on community services that are primarily resourced to meet the needs of the resident population.

Each of the four sub regions has a significant Indigenous population, with the Goulburn Valley and Upper Hume sub regions having relatively large communities and a number of culturally specific Indigenous services in Shepparton-Mooroopna and Wodonga. The Central Hume and Lower Hume sub regions have a more dispersed Indigenous population reliant on mainstream services. Continued commitment to and resourcing of the Hume Region's strategies for 'Closing the Gap' in Indigenous disadvantage will address service needs and gaps, cultural competency, the particular needs of young women, smoking impacts and other educational, health, employment and social issues for Indigenous people.

The regional cities and centres within the Hume Region are attracting the bulk of regional population growth, largely due to their economic, educational, health and cultural opportunities. This is likely to continue.

A variety of delivery models for health and community services exist within the Hume Region including central access points in regional cities and centres, satellite services located in some larger townships and outreach or mobile services to some smaller settlements. Some these service delivery models are planned and supported by appropriate resources, but some arrangements are ad hoc and/or have limited capacity to respond to changing community needs. An example of effective planning is the integration of health services provision in Albury-Wodonga, which will deliver better services to the community. This is a priority the Upper Hume sub region and for the Hume Region as a whole.

Developing place-based sub regional models from planning through to service delivery can take account of the diversity of places and people across the region. There is potential for government to do its business by collaborating better across departments on place-based tasks and to significantly improve service delivery through resource sharing, service coordination at the sub regional level and the innovative and flexible use of new technologies. Sub regional approaches to the future planning and provision of health and community services should recognise training and workforce development needs.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

7.1 Sub regional service and infrastructure planning

7.2 Service coordination and resource sharing

KEY DIRECTION 8

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES, INCREASING RESILIENCE AND ENHANCING LIVEABILITY

Community strengthening and liveability in Hume Region can be achieved through:

- > Engagement and capacity building of individuals and communities.
- > Increasing housing diversity including affordable housing and enhancing local amenity.
- > Developing safer and more capable communities, able to respond to hazardous events and incidents.

Primary factors contributing to liveability are: access to services and infrastructure, such as transport, education, health and telecommunications; the strength and cohesiveness of communities; opportunities for social and economic participation; availability of appropriate, affordable and accessible housing; and local amenity.

Opportunities exist to build social cohesion and improve wellbeing by strengthening the capabilities of people and communities, developing leadership and support networks and encouraging participation in community life. Education and learning contribute to social cohesion by developing skills for participation in society and extending understanding of different ways of living. These include skills for communication, for living, working and investing in a national and global context and for engaging with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Communities across the Hume Region are already dealing with changing conditions as a result of drought, fluctuating commodity prices and the global financial crisis. The challenges of climate change, particularly in relation to water security, wildfire risk and predicted increases in fuel costs will further impact on liveability and economic viability and will test the resilience of some communities. Leadership is required at all levels from governments, community organisations, businesses, schools and individuals, in order to achieve future prosperity. Mechanisms that encourage integration across interests and collaboration and sharing of leadership learning experiences will support innovation and entrepreneurship as well as fostering a sense of global citizenship.

The forecast increase in older people as a proportion of the population will require the development of a range of new and innovative measures to support individuals and communities as the profile of the working population changes and demand increases for health and aged care services.

Some parts of the region are experiencing growth in demand for new housing whilst population numbers in other areas are declining. Housing needs change as communities evolve and also vary for households depending on age, stage of life cycle and disposable income. From a planning perspective, key considerations are: how to maintain the supply of land for residential development in cities and towns that are identified as locations for major growth; how to encourage the development industry to provide a range of housing choices suitable for different types of households—

including young people, lone person households, single parent families and older people wishing to 'age in place'; and how to improve housing affordability for individuals and households on low incomes and for seasonal workers.

Local amenity — including the natural and built environment — makes a major contribution to the liveability of settlements and localities across the region. Management of residential development must seek to meet quality of life expectations, retain rural character, protect heritage values and promote community safety and identity. Planning also needs to address the competition for land for different uses, including agricultural, industrial and residential activities, whilst maintaining environmental values.

Social justice principles — including access, equity, participation and inclusiveness — are also important considerations in planning for sustainable and liveable communities.

Parts of the Hume Region are at risk from natural hazards, including bushfire, drought and floods and the area has experienced a number of traumatic events over time. In the past decade, the region has experienced the ongoing impacts of drought as well as bushfires in 2003 and 2006-07. The February 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires devastated communities and resulted in unprecedented loss of life and property.

The number of vehicle movements on the region's road systems for freight, commuter, business and tourism travel contributes to personal safety risk and the potential for road trauma.

The region needs to be prepared for response to and recovery from hazardous events, both natural disasters and other incidents. In this way communities will be more resilient and able to recover more rapidly from the physical and emotional effects of emergencies and traumatic events.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 8.1 Engagement and capacity building of people and places
- 8.2 Housing diversity and local amenity
- 8.3 Safer and capable communities

ACTIONS

Each priority strategy listed under the four key directions within the theme, *Healthy, vibrant and resilient communities*, has a set of regionally significant actions provided in Appendix 1. The actions relate to a broad range of activities including; networked community spaces; educational aspiration and achievement; specialist health and aged care service development; closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage; planning for population growth, mental health and aged care; housing diversity; improved infrastructure and access to arts, culture, sport and recreation; and community safety. Delivering these actions will require prioritisation and implementation planning by project leaders and stakeholders in the next phase of the Hume Strategy.

ECONOMIC THEME

A THRIVING AND DYNAMIC ECONOMY

GOAL

Capitalise on the region's competitive advantages, opportunities and strengths in order to continue to deliver prosperity and vitality. New infrastructure and enhancements to existing infrastructure will support future commercial and industrial competitive potential. Strengthening alignment and access to key transport corridors will expand opportunities for manufacturing, agriculture and tourism business development. Supporting development of a skilled workforce will augment and stimulate industry growth. Settlements across the Hume Region will have access to quality 'next generation' telecommunications technology.

CONTEXT

The Hume Strategy is framed around an understanding that to be successful, the region must:

- > Build on its strengths and competitive advantages.
- > Implement actions to manage future growth and respond to growth needs.
- > Foster the development of future leadership and capability across the region.

Capitalising on competitive advantages, opportunities and strengths will contribute to an economically thriving and dynamic Hume Region. The key outcomes sought by the Strategy will be achieved by encouraging and supporting regionally connected communities, underpinned by integrated planning including mobility for individuals, freight transport and land use and development.

The region's economy is driven by access to high quality dry land and irrigated land for agriculture, a quality workforce and its strategic location in the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane national freight corridor.

Existing infrastructure and proposed enhancements to it must contribute to future community, commercial and industrial competitive potential.

Effective workforce development will occur through industry and government collaborating on projects that enhance workforce capability. Opportunities for business development in manufacturing, service industries, agriculture and tourism will be expanded by stronger alignment with and access to key transport corridors. Agriculture will continue to be a major economic driver of the Hume Region. Agricultural production and associated food processing is a significant contributor to the region's economy and includes industries such as dairying, food processing, wine production, manufacturing and technology. On a national scale, the region contributes enormously to Australia's food security, that is, the ability to access safe and nutritious food to meet our dietary needs for an active healthy life. The Goulburn Valley, one of Australia's major fruit and dairy production regions, exports to countries all over the world.

It is likely there will be movement to a smaller, more intensive and more efficient irrigation sector. Clusters of intensive agriculture will become more varied in nature and more widely distributed across the region. High value niche agriculture opportunities will be developed and linked with farm-based tourism or food and wine tourism. Energy farming and organic produce are expected to increase in importance, while traditional use of land for grazing and cropping is likely to decline.

There is likely to continue to be pressure on rural land from 'lifestyle' purchasers. This type of development can have a number of negative consequences including: loss or fragmentation of, or pressure on, agricultural or other rural land uses; difficulty of servicing dispersed communities; and increased vehicular travel. The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) provides for protection of agricultural land. When rural residential development is considered, a number of questions need to be addressed to ensure it only occurs if it supports sustainable housing and settlements and does not compromise Victoria's agricultural, natural, environmental, landscape and infrastructure resources.

The two major interstate transport corridors are outstanding assets for the Hume Region. The Hume transport corridor, the major spine that runs through the region, accommodates national transport movements, major population centres and vital telecommunications infrastructure, as well as acting as a conduit for tourism in north east Victoria. The Goulburn Valley transport corridor is an important link between Melbourne and Brisbane and provides state rail connections for passengers and freight between Melbourne and the Goulburn-Murray district. Maximising the capacity of the major transport corridors for the benefit of the whole region is a distinct challenge but also an opportunity not available to other regions in Victoria.

Economic competitiveness in the region will be driven by the development and efficient use of carbon neutral renewable energy sources and high quality telecommunications and information technology.

KEY DIRECTIONS – SUMMARY

- 9 Strengthening a capable workforce
- 10 Adapting and diversifying agriculture in an environment of change
- 11 Facilitating research and innovation in tourism, manufacturing and industry to encourage new and evolving business
- 12 Developing ICT and energy infrastructure that builds on existing competitive advantages

The sections following outline the reasoning behind each key direction and list the priority strategies and major actions associated with them. Details of all actions and initiatives flowing from the strategies are listed in Appendix 1 and in the sub regional plans.

KEY DIRECTION 9

STRENGTHENING A CAPABLE WORKFORCE

Focusing workforce development in the Hume Strategy Regional Plan can be achieved through:

- > Training and skill development.
- > Education.
- > Employer and employee incentives.

The Hume Region is one of Australia's fastest growing regional areas and has a working population of over 111,000. A thriving economy will continue to be built around a skilled workforce that is able to meet employment market needs, as well as contribute to the stimulation of further industry growth and diversification. Models for 'cross-industry' workforce strategies such as the North East Industry Workforce Development Strategy will be developed for attracting and retaining workers in the Hume Region, and in specific areas where skills shortages are hampering development. This must include provision of enhanced settlement services for skilled migrants and additional jobs training for Indigenous people and their communities.

Education attainment is a dominant positive influence on workforce participation and there is a growing need for advanced technical skills in the region. Investment in education is crucial to economic prosperity and meeting future workforce demands. Hume Region has the lowest tertiary entrance rate of young people of any region in Victoria. Promoting vocational courses in secondary schools will increase school retention rates and address skills shortages in trades and other sectors. RDV and organisations such as the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) are vital contributors to addressing this need.

Building on the existing strengths of the tertiary education sector, developing regional learning hubs and 'centres for higher education and research' is a priority action that will strengthen the skills base of the Hume Region and provide wider access to training and development. A stronger alignment is needed between high quality agricultural land, resources, infrastructure and access to labour and skills.

There are particular workforce dynamics that need tailored responses. The human services sector broadly is focused on recruitment, retention and leadership development in its workforce so as to ensure an appropriately skilled labour pool to meet the future community service needs of the Hume Region. There is an opportunity to promote regionalisation of government services through consolidation and further expansion of government employment in regional cities and centres. In the health sector, the ageing of the Home and Community Care (HACC) workforce translates into the need to plan for workforce renewal. In addition, there is a shortage of allied health practitioners.

New approaches are needed to secure training for rural doctors and attract graduate doctors to practice in regional areas. In education, the region needs to work on methods to attract and retain well-qualified teachers of children of all ages from kindergarten through to senior secondary school. Robust careers advice in schools is required to help young people understand their options and make informed decisions about their future paths in life. These examples highlight the need for specific, tailored workforce measures for different sectors.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 9.1 Matching skills to employment needs
- 9.2 Improving, expanding and retaining a skilled workforce
- 9.3 Fostering links between schools, employers and post compulsory education providers
- 9.4 Stimulating business and jobs growth

KEY DIRECTION 10

ADAPTING AND DIVERSIFYING AGRICULTURE IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF CHANGE

The critical areas for adapting to change in Hume Region are:

- > Agriculture restructuring.
- > Water investment.
- > Drought impact.

Compared with other regions, Hume Region has a significant proportion of Victoria's high quality agricultural land, water supplies and infrastructure. The water resources of Hume Region are highly significant environmental and tourism assets, as well as being critical to the region's position as the major food-producing area of the state. The riverine plains of the Murray, Goulburn and Ovens Rivers provide fertile agricultural land of national significance for dairying, horticulture, irrigated and dry land agriculture. The region contributes over 25 per cent of milk production and 35 per cent of the fruit and vegetables grown in Australia, including stone fruits, berries, tomatoes, citrus, vegetables, herbs, olives, wine grapes, nuts and other horticultural products.

In districts that are outside of the core irrigation network or are likely to become so in the future (the new 'dry land') and in existing dry land farming areas across the region, significant structural adjustment will be required due to a range of economic, social and environmental factors. A coordinated response is required, involving land owners, state agencies, local government, economic development bodies, social welfare services and industry.

The Hume Region presents significant opportunities, as well as challenges, for forestry and aquaculture industry development. Plantation forestry is already a major contributor to regional wealth. Continuing drought and concerns about effects on catchment water yields present challenges to timber industry expansion. Development of future carbon sequestration markets may stimulate interest in further plantation establishment. Access to adequate water supplies will be a continuing challenge for aquaculture development.

The prolonged drought and its consequences, as well as national and international issues such as emissions trading and world commodity prices demand structural adjustments in agriculture if the sector is to prosper and be sustainable in the future. It is this dynamic which demands the pursuit of opportunities to increase agricultural productivity and efficiency and options to assist industry to remain competitive through diversification, transition and change.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 10.1 Supporting the next generation of agricultural opportunities
- 10.2 Ensuring the future viability and adaptability of productive rural land

KEY DIRECTION 11

FACILITATING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN TOURISM, MANUFACTURING AND INDUSTRY TO ENCOURAGE NEW AND EVOLVING BUSINESS

Developing innovative business opportunity in Hume Region can be strengthened in:

- > Research and development.
- > Tourism, strategic planning, product development and marketing.
- > Understanding the development capacity of the region to support manufacturing and industry expansion.

Manufacturing is the biggest employer in the Hume Region, followed by agriculture and retail trade. Manufacturing includes textiles, plastics, electrical equipment, defence munitions, steel fabrication and farming equipment, medium density fibreboard and corrugated paperboard. The strong agricultural base supports opportunities for specialist dairy foods, high-value food processing and niche products.

Research and development is an important component contributing to the region's future prosperity and capitalising on its strengths. The Hume Region is committed to building capacity within the local economy through research and development, industry cluster development, advocacy for key regionally significant projects and venture capital structures. Industry innovation is led by industry and supported by government. A number of research and development bodies already operate in Hume Region and support industry. This has led to the region being acknowledged as innovative with many examples of research and development initiatives in the fruit and vegetable, irrigation and ICT sectors.

Hume Region has identified the need to foster interest and practical application of research and development more actively across the region. For instance, there are three major projects being undertaken or investigated that are of potential national importance and illustrate leadership in the Hume Region: the Bruck Textiles Centre of Excellence for Technology in Wangaratta; the University of Melbourne Dookie campus International Centre of Excellence in Water Management and Farming Efficiency, and the Wangaratta Council's endeavours to provide an alternative model for post graduate training across a number of disciplines through a proposed Centre for Medical Excellence. These initiatives are illustrations of the work that is being piloted in Hume to enable communities to adapt to change in order to remain sustainable and to grow through investment in leadership.

It is important to prepare for future growth by identifying regional industry and employer needs so that the right mechanisms can be developed to support future business investment and development.

Tourism is an economic and employment growth sector for the region with over 2.5 million visitors to the region annually. Tourism is driven by the region's proximity to Melbourne, its natural attractions and a diversity of events and festivals on offer throughout the year. In addition to winter visitation focussed on the snowfields, there is significant summer tourism based along the Murray River corridor at towns such as Echuca, Cobram and Yarrawonga, and in the valleys and historic townships of the Upper Hume and Central Hume sub regions. High quality food and wine products are substantial contributors to the region's economy. Winton is home to a motor raceway and future wetlands development. Nagambie and Yarrawonga have large water based activity areas with a constant water supply available.

Strengthening the tourism industry by establishing a regional tourism body will facilitate strategic planning for product development and marketing opportunities that can be coordinated across the whole region. Developing and promoting socially and environmentally responsible tourism opportunities will have tangible benefits for everyone in the region.

A unique opportunity for the region is to strengthen and expand its cycling economy. This will involve building on existing strategic concepts as well as an expansion of cycling trails to create a network of links throughout the region that will add to the variety of the tourism experience. Trails will also attract many users by providing access for visitors to unique landscape opportunities. Incorporating planning for cycling as part of a reference for the regional tourism body will deliver leverage and efficiency gains for the region.

Encouraging the development of community-based enterprises particularly in smaller settlements, is a way of stimulating additional business growth and expansion.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 11.1 Strengthening a tourism industry that builds on the competitive advantages of the Hume Region
- 11.2 Facilitating leadership in innovation, research and development
- 11.3 Identifying development capacity that will contribute to stimulating industry expansion

KEY DIRECTION 12

DEVELOPING ICT AND ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE THAT BUILDS ON EXISTING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Developing the region's infrastructure means building on existing competitive advantages. The areas that offer key competitive advantages are:

- > ICT
- > Energy

Manufacturing, retail trade, forestry, education, health and human services generate over 130,000 jobs for the region's economy. The contribution of agriculture alone to the region from dry land and irrigation farming is in the order of \$1.6 billion per annum. Therefore, the ability to export product to markets in the most efficient way is crucial for a competitive future in the Hume Region.

The Alpine Resorts of Falls Creek, Mt Hotham, Mt Buller, Mt Stirling and Lake Mountain are important economic drivers of year-round tourism and economic development for the region. For these resorts to operate to their most efficient capacity and maximum economic potential, they rely heavily on a stable and uninterrupted supply of electric power, which is currently not guaranteed.

Reticulated natural gas is currently available to the major cities and towns and to some areas in the north of the region [Map 3]. The Shires of Towong, Alpine, Mansfield and Murrindindi do not have access to natural gas. Extension of natural gas reticulation throughout the region would have major benefits for industry in these areas, as well as for households. It would also contribute to reducing consumption of electricity and thereby reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Approaches to the mitigation of carbon pollution and adaptation to climate change provide opportunities for the region. By taking advantage of government assistance to create markets for renewable energy and implementing these practices within existing industry, new enterprises can also be attracted.

Opportunities for developing new businesses and strengthening existing ones in the region will be achieved by capitalising on the proximity of important networked settlements and upgrades to critical infrastructure in the principal transport corridors. There is also a need to investigate the latent capacity of existing commercial and industrial areas and to identify and plan for new commercial, industrial and residential capacity. This approach will realise opportunities to build on the region's strengths in freight, logistics and distribution.

World class ICT requires investment in 'new generation' technology and Hume Region needs to position itself to be the first region in Victoria to take advantage of the Commonwealth Government's 'National Broadband Network' (NBN). ICT is a core part of the way people and business work in a globally competitive environment. A high quality ICT service is no longer an 'add on' but an absolute 'must have' for business to achieve maximum productivity and prosperity. Access to high-speed

telecommunications services for delivery of curriculum and student contact is vital to support schools and other education providers, especially those outside major regional cities. Parents, carers, teachers and students of the future will be linked by sophisticated information technology systems, which will also provide school-to-school communications. Ensuring service access and quality is essential to maintain the region's competitiveness. Fibre optic cables are an under-utilised asset that run through the region and should be universally accessed.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 12.1 Securing world class ICT infrastructure and services for the Hume Region
- 12.2 Establishing the future of the Hume Region as a centre of excellence for renewable energy technology and infrastructure

ACTIONS

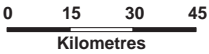
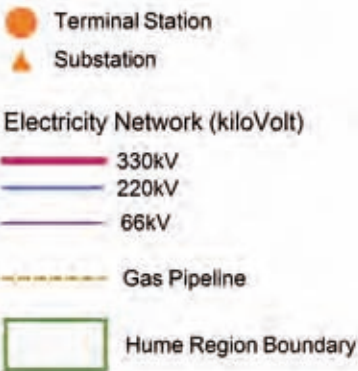
Each priority strategy listed under the four key directions within the theme – *A thriving and dynamic economy* – has a set of regionally significant actions provided in Appendix 1.

The actions relate to a broad range of activities including: workforce skill development and attraction, focussed retention strategies and adult learning opportunities; agribusiness development, transition and diversification; tourism infrastructure; freight and logistics capacity; next generation ICT; and reliable energy supplies.

Delivering these actions will require prioritisation and implementation planning by project leaders and stakeholders in the next phase of the Hume Strategy.



MAP 3. HUME REGION – ENERGY MAP



TRANSPORT THEME

AN INTEGRATED NETWORK OF EFFICIENT AND HIGH FUNCTIONING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

GOAL

Develop a network of integrated transport infrastructure and services to ensure that Hume Region will be a mobile region, with a capable transport system that provides quality, fast, safe and efficient links for rural and regional communities. Mobility planning for communities and individuals will enhance their access to suitable and affordable transport.

CONTEXT

The transport system is vital to the economy and social fabric of the Hume Region, including the functioning of its settlements and the viability of its industries.

The transport system must grow and evolve to respond to the growth anticipated in the region. It must provide for choice of travel modes and at the same time seek to reduce the impact of the transport system on the natural environment – particularly in regard to its generation of greenhouse gases.

In the next 25 years, the population of the four sub regions is expected to grow from the current 300,000 people to 400,000 people, freight movement will increase to a projected 58 million tonnes annually, with the Hume Freeway freight task projected to grow by 50% over the next 20 years. Visitor numbers to the region are projected to rise well above the current 2.5 million that already come to the region each year. As a result, the region will require a high quality transport system, built upon choice in private and public transport networks of road, rail and air.

The road system and the public transport network will need to mature through upgrades and improvements to infrastructure and service links traversing east-west as well as north-south across the Hume Region. These links will provide mobility within the region and to locations outside of the region and will support a strong, robust network of connected settlements.

Improving mobility will capitalise on population and industry growth and attract people who want to take up those opportunities, to make the new business investments and enjoy the lifestyle benefits on offer in Hume Region.

As existing industry develops and new industries emerge, a system that is capable of providing fast, efficient and cost effective freight capacity is paramount.

The Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Program is providing \$2 billion capital injection into modernisation of the irrigation infrastructure, predominantly in the Hume Region. Efficiency gains from this program are expected to contribute to future regional growth and confidence and thus, potential for increased demand for freight transport capacity.

Meeting people's travel needs for employment, education, accessing health services and engaging in social activities will demand a flexible, dynamic system of infrastructure and services linking the network of connected centres.

The region's transport system will improve access to economic activity thereby reducing the cost of doing business. Public transport services will also need to respond to the constraints on individual mobility that may result from more scarce and expensive fuel supplies.

The Hume Region needs to take a strategic approach to planning for mobility, to ensure that it is not disadvantaged and in competition for scarce government resources for funding major infrastructure. Decision-making should focus on identifying those investments that will deliver the maximum social, environmental and economic benefits for the region.

In the future, the Hume Region will be recognised as a leader in delivering major sustainable efficiencies in all forms of freight, private and public transport.

The environmental impacts of transport will be reduced by a greater emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport, in addition to adopting new energy, fuel and propulsion technologies for transport.

Efficient movement will optimise the road and rail infrastructure and available service capacity in the Hume and Goulburn Valley transport corridors, which provide a unique competitive advantage to the Hume Region. Recent developments include rail standardisation from Wodonga to Seymour and freight rail upgrades on the Oaklands Line. Links such as these will continue to provide high quality north-south travel between Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, to inland New South Wales and Queensland, as well as supporting the existing pattern of settlements within the region. Regardless of the chosen alignment, the proposed inland rail link to Brisbane will provide benefits to the region. Upgrading and expanding public transport commuter services and infrastructure to key transport hubs in the region will stimulate and support the region's future potential in terms of role, function and population growth.

Mangalore Airport, north of Seymour, has the potential to add an air transport logistics hub to the region.

The region will benefit from a 'transit oriented development' approach to the provision of public transport hubs in regional cities and centres and enable communities to better access and link to the major centres.

In the Lower Hume sub region, Seymour is acknowledged for its importance as a strategic location, although it does not yet meet all the requirements of a regional centre. Seymour is the Hume Region's gateway to the northern suburbs of Melbourne and is only one hour from the Melbourne central business district, as well as being

sited at the confluence of the Hume and Goulburn Valley road and rail transport corridors. Seymour will play an increasingly important future role as a transit node in and out of the region, addressing the service demand created by peri-urban growth in the southern part of the region and the proposed expansion of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary.



FIGURE 2 – HUME TRANSPORTATION ARCS

Improvement of east-west transport links is vital to the future of the Hume Region. The networked centres model of interconnected settlements encourages the development of a series of east-west mobility 'arcs' linking settlements across the region and connecting to other important regional cities and centres outside the Hume Region, such as Bendigo. These transportation 'arcs' will contribute and strengthen future planning for Victoria as a multi-centred state (Figure 2).

Planning strategically will ensure the transport system is adaptable, able to take advantage of and adjust to any changing environmental, social and economic circumstances. Settlement and land use planning will assist in anticipating the future pattern of population distribution and industrial or agricultural production, taking into account the impacts of climate change, reduced water supplies, changing social needs and environmental impacts.

The proposed transport model for Hume Region provides a robust, comprehensive framework that will provide confidence to individuals, business and government in making decisions about future investment in major infrastructure and services.

KEY DIRECTIONS – SUMMARY

- 13 Enhancing integrated planning for mobility
- 14 Developing a proficient land transportation network
- 15 Linking communities through improved public transport and transport linkages
- 16 Strengthening the sustainability of the transport system

The sections following outline the reasoning behind each key direction and list the priority strategies and major actions associated with them. Details of all actions and initiatives flowing from the strategies are listed in Appendix 1 and in the sub regional plans.

KEY DIRECTION 13

ENHANCING INTEGRATED PLANNING FOR MOBILITY

Successful integration of land use and transport planning is vital for managing and maximising the competitive advantages that can be realised through future population and economic growth in the region. Continued major investment in public and private transport will create opportunities to maximise the potential of current and future developments for the region.

The mix and location of activities influences the use and efficiency of road and rail transport networks, with impacts for the economy, the environment and access to services such as health and education.

Integrated planning for mobility provides the region with a development and management framework for transport infrastructure and services. This is about translating strategic objectives and broad policy approaches into detailed strategies for the region and sub regions. Integrated mobility planning will be spatially based, to recognise that municipalities share interconnected transport facilities and needs. Planning needs to examine movement between the transport corridors and across the region. It will link existing and proposed land uses and identify opportunities to develop a more sustainable and equitable transport system.

A regional strategy to integrate planning for mobility with land use planning will draw together opportunities across all forms of transport – including walking, cycling, road, rail, air, private, public and freight – and ensure they are considered from the perspectives of access, equity and capability for all users. For the public transport component, this represents an opportunity to recommend service levels for linking the region's settlements.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 13.1 Plan and advocate for a high quality regional transport system
- 13.2 Building an integrated transport system

KEY DIRECTION 14

DEVELOPING A PROFICIENT LAND TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Accelerating the completion of transport projects of regional significance can help to reduce transport costs in the Hume Region, as well as contributing to national reform agendas. These projects will provide major economic and social benefits to both industry and communities. The \$600 million North East Rail Revitalisation project – to create an interstate rail freight superhighway – is nearing completion. Trains will be able to operate more efficiently along the major corridor from Melbourne to Wodonga, opening up opportunities for significant commercial investment and further economic growth.

Achieving the next generation 'high performance freight vehicle (HPFV) network' set out in the Victorian Government's Freight Futures strategy will require major upgrades of the Hume Freeway and the Goulburn Valley Highway. Upgrades will also be necessary in other areas to support a growing freight task and will contribute to the enhancement of the region's mobility 'arcs'.

Freight movement in the Hume and Goulburn Valley transport corridors is expected to rise from 32 to 58 million tonnes per annum by 2020. The Hume transport corridor is the most significant inter capital freight corridor in Australia and currently handles 11 million tonnes of freight per annum. This is projected to grow and contribute to more than 18 million tonnes of freight movement per annum by 2020. The volume of heavy traffic along the Hume transport corridor is forecast to grow from the current 2,200 vehicles per day to 6,000 vehicles per day by 2025 [Map 4].

The Goulburn Valley and surrounding areas already produce 25 per cent of the value of Victoria's agriculture produce and modernisation of irrigation infrastructure is likely to increase that proportion. The resulting changes in the structure of agriculture — increased efficiencies and higher output — may also generate demands for more sophisticated transport services, with greater capacity and capability.

Having two different gauges for rail systems in the region leads to increased complexity and reduced flexibility to deal with malfunctions, accidents or scheduled maintenance. For all freight lines, gauge standardisation would provide connectivity to the national rail network and hence shipment by rail to other metropolitan centres, ports or distribution points. Any investigation of potential upgrades for rail lines in the Hume Region would need to consider the 'whole of line' end-to-end impact.

This includes not only changes to rail lines and road / rail terminals, but also: requirements for intermediate stations, particularly between Shepparton and Seymour and Seymour and Melbourne; terminating facilities, including roads and platforms at Southern Cross Station; maintenance facilities; fuelling facilities; and bogies for exchange of rolling stock.

However, investment in rail standardisation is likely to have major benefits for the future competitiveness of the Hume Region.

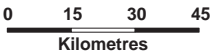
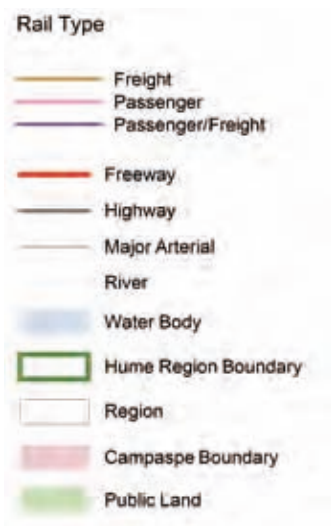
Strengthening transport connection links in Hume Region to other parts of regional, rural and metropolitan Victoria will drive jobs growth, boost the region's economy and ensure all parts of the region continue to share in prosperity.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 14.1 Accelerating the completion of high standard road links
- 14.2 Delivering important rail infrastructure
- 14.3 Future-proofing existing transport routes by maintaining a high level of service



MAP 4. HUME REGION – ROAD AND RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE



KEY DIRECTION 15

LINKING COMMUNITIES THROUGH IMPROVED PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TRANSPORT LINKAGES

The Hume Region has two major rail corridors and 319 public transport service contracts operating over 441 routes. This provides a good level of public transport service delivery and modal choice in most areas, although high levels of service are not accessible to all communities [Map 5]. Linking rural and remote populations with larger regional cities and centres — through high quality transport infrastructure and service delivery — will add to the quality of life experienced by smaller communities. Transport choice across all modes is important in meeting community needs for social and recreation activities, shopping, and access to health and specialist services.

A mobile community is one that is able to connect people to jobs and economic opportunity. Getting the right people to the right jobs in the right place is a central role of the region's transport system. Connectivity encourages industry and business to establish and operate from locations suitable to their needs, reassured in the knowledge that the workforce has the right level of mobility to access employment opportunities.

Improving connections between V/Line road and rail networks and local public transport services, through more aligned timetabling, is important particularly for smaller settlements with an older population profile. The region needs to ensure that the transport system is sufficiently flexible to enable communities and individuals access to the supports that they need.

The Hume Region has an existing network of settlements that provide services and infrastructure to communities within and outside of the region. Servicing these communities requires transport linkages between settlements and the availability of public transport. Improved transport linkages and improved public transport will mean improved equity of access to services and infrastructure. Linking Shepparton and Wodonga, the Hume Region's two most populous settlements, to other major centres outside of the region will be a vital part of improving access to services as part of an inland transport arc.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 15.1 Enhance key transport linkages between settlements
- 15.2 Provide safety upgrades of the region's land transportation system

KEY DIRECTION 16

STRENGTHENING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Sustainable travel will be encouraged through the greater use of public transport, walking and cycling. In the foreseeable future it is anticipated that many trips will still be made by private car. The transport sector contributes approximately 16% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, so reducing car dependency should be a priority. The region would benefit from expanded rail and bus services between regional cities and centres. This will contribute to more flexible, sustainable transport options and lessen the social vulnerability that can result when people are unable to drive, lack access to a vehicle, or cannot afford the costs of running a private vehicle and therefore cannot travel to access services. This will be particularly important with an older population, who may have different mobility needs. High transport costs, resulting from the increasing scarcity of petroleum and the effects of carbon pricing, are likely to impact on communities and businesses until alternative renewable fuels and transport modes are developed and commercially viable.

The Hume Region has considerable rail transport infrastructure. More convenient scheduling and improved frequency as well as including bicycle facilities at stations, on trains and specific coach services, promoting access to and from 'rail trail' bike paths by public transport will contribute to better utilisation of passenger services within the region and to Melbourne. This task requires securing a commitment to increased funding to enable more frequent, convenient public transport options to be provided. Growing urban populations will require increased capacity for passenger transport in the future. The V/Line road-coach network and good connections between rail and local bus services will continue to be important for regional communities. For smaller towns, the challenge is to ensure that transport to vital services, jobs, shops and entertainment is accessible and attractive. Reducing reliance on private vehicles is paramount, unless alternative, non-polluting fuel sources become available. Accessibility within settlements can take advantage of a greater use of walking, cycling and public transport. Road, rail and public transport infrastructure and services require expansion and improvements with a particular focus on developing energy-efficient and sustainable modes of transport.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 16.1 Develop travel options to increase public transport patronage
- 16.2 Partnerships for delivering the Hume Region transportation system

ACTIONS

Each priority strategy listed under the four key directions within the theme – *An integrated network of efficient and high functioning transportation systems* – has a set of regionally significant actions provided in Appendix 1.

The actions relate to a broad range of activities including: integrated transport systems, public transport, underpinning networked communities; infrastructure upgrades and improved rail links; east-west transport links; freight transport capacity; innovation for energy efficiency and low carbon emission; and cycle and walking paths.

Delivering these actions will require prioritisation and implementation planning by project leaders and stakeholders in the next phase of the Hume Strategy.



MAP 5. HUME REGION – PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

0 15 30 45
Kilometres

- Bus Service
- Rail Service (passenger)
- Freeway
- Highway
- Major Arterial
- River
- Water Body
- Hume Region Boundary

LAND USE THEME

AN EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE PATTERN OF URBAN AND RURAL LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

GOAL

Consolidate the development of four sub regions with high functioning networked centres. Sub regions will be serviced by regional cities and centres supported by district towns, towns and villages in the sub region, which together provide quality services and meet diverse needs. Communities will exist within a setting of attractive and productive rural land and a healthy natural environment. Stronger linkages will be developed between regional cities and centres in terms of transport, economic, social and environmental connections. Linkages to other key regional cities and centres outside the Hume Region and to Melbourne will help to drive the competitive advantages of the region.

CONTEXT

There is a strong correlation between the role and function of settlements and their population size. In turn, size and function largely determine inter-relationships between settlements in a network. The place of a settlement in a network and its links to other nearby settlements influence its liveability, productivity, sustainability and competitiveness.

The capability of settlements to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner varies with their role and function, topography, environmental values or constraints, land availability, accessibility, infrastructure capacity and commercial and social service provision. An understanding of these factors contributes to developing strategies to manage future growth and development in the region.

The Hume Region has a relatively dispersed pattern of settlements with a balanced functionality — not dominated by one large city, as is the case in many other Victorian regions — and strong interrelationships exist between settlements. Larger settlements are spread across the region, supporting a network of smaller settlements and making services and facilities accessible to even the most remote communities [Map 6].

The Hume Strategy will apply the ‘networked centres’ model — which is already operating effectively in the region — as the fundamental regional planning concept for the future. This model includes integrating transport-oriented development with land use planning. The networked centres model will be further extended and developed for infrastructure investment and service delivery. It will also inform critical thinking for management of population growth for the future, including detailed settlement planning to take account of demand for growth, land supply and infrastructure capacity.

The Hume Region has a number of settlements that have the capacity to accommodate growth as part of the region’s anticipated future population expansion.

There are many opportunities to increase the attractiveness, diversity, vitality, accessibility, prosperity and viability of the region’s settlements and rural areas, at the same time as enhancing their capacity to support sustainable communities.

Achieving a dynamic region with highly functioning regional cities and centres depends on developing and strengthening connectivity, particularly transport linkages between settlements. To be self-sustaining, services and infrastructure need to be regionally focused and connected, in addition to enhancing the relationship with Melbourne.

Supporting and developing the region’s settlements will ensure that existing infrastructure and services — which represent a regional strength — are used efficiently thereby making best use of existing strengths. Major growth in population and employment opportunities should occur in regional cities and centres, supported by district towns, towns and villages.

Regional cooperation in implementation of the Hume Strategy will require stronger links to be developed between land use planning processes in the different local government areas. Each municipality prepares and administers its own planning scheme and the State Government is responsible for the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme.

The municipalities in the Hume Region have geographic, economic and social differences and their respective planning schemes differ accordingly. In general terms, local government areas fall into one of four broad categories: urban, rural lifestyle, agricultural focus, or peri-urban, although some have elements of more than one type.

Despite this variation, there are common elements in planning schemes across the region, resulting from generally comparable economic and social drivers and the locational features of the region. The shared concerns include: supporting diversification of agriculture; protecting land for agricultural use; encouraging consolidation of residential development within settlements through infill and increased densities; and minimising rural subdivision and house building in rural areas, where this is not linked to agricultural use of the land.

Relatively few planning schemes in the region currently address supply and demand for land for retail and industrial uses, or analyse the housing needs for the municipality. Very few acknowledge the broader region, though Wodonga emphasises its link with Albury. Not all local governments have rural land use strategies; those that do exist are at differing stages of development or implementation.

Managing potential rural land use change resulting from adaptation to or mitigation of climate change impacts is an area that requires attention. The February 2009 bushfires have consequences for planning prompting questions such as whether development in hazardous areas — particularly those prone to fire or flooding — should be allowed or should be constrained in the future. The recommendations from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission will need to be evaluated carefully and comprehensively for their implications on planning in Hume Region.

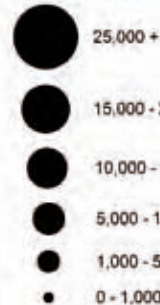
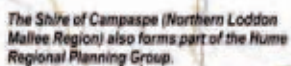
Taking a consistent, coordinated approach to common planning issues has many benefits. Coordination of planning scheme reviews across adjacent municipalities can lead to greater consistency and convergence on key matters. There are also economies and mutual benefits in undertaking joint studies, for example to develop rural land use strategies for those councils that have not yet prepared a strategy of this type. Integration of local government planning with other policy development processes, such as preparation of regional catchment strategies, also has considerable potential.










Two streams of planning support that would benefit the region have been identified. The first is a specific program of integrated strategic planning projects. The second is to support ongoing strategic land use planning capability at the local level, notably in terms of expert assistance and resources in order to adequately deliver the recommended thematic program and other land use planning activities.

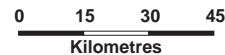
KEY DIRECTIONS – SUMMARY

- 17 Directing future population growth to settlements with the greatest capability to accommodate it
- 18 Maximising the use of existing infrastructure and services and facilitating strategic investment in future infrastructure and services
- 19 Retaining productive rural land for agriculture and other compatible rural uses
- 20 Ensuring efficient use of land use planning resources in the region

The sections following outline the reasoning behind each key direction and list the priority strategies and major actions associated with them. Details of all actions and initiatives flowing from the strategies are given in Appendix 1 and in the sub regional plans.



-  Freeway
-  Highway
- Major Arterial
-  Rail
-  River
-  Water Body
-  Hume Region
-  Hume Sub Region
-  Campaspe Basin
-  Public Land



KEY DIRECTION 17

DIRECTING FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH TO SETTLEMENTS WITH THE GREATEST CAPABILITY TO ACCOMMODATE IT

Settlements in the Hume Region vary greatly in the range of existing services they provide and the capacity of their infrastructure. Capacity in existing infrastructure and services combine with aspects such as land availability, environmental constraints and heritage values to determine the capability of settlements to accommodate growth.

The majority of population growth and employment opportunities should be directed to regional cities and centres supported by district towns, towns and villages that have capacity for expansion and access to employment growth. Regional cities and centres provide a focal point for district towns, towns and villages and for the provision of higher level services to meet diverse needs. Transport, economic, social and environmental linkages between regional cities and centres will be developed. These and other linkages to key regional cities and centres outside Hume Region and to Melbourne will be the stimulus for driving the competitive advantages of Hume Region.

Significant growth in some settlements would have an unacceptable impact on high quality rural land, environmental values or heritage assets and, generally, will be discouraged. Other settlements require additional infrastructure before they can accommodate extra population; expansion of these towns and villages will be deferred until the necessary investments have been made. Planning for population growth needs to be integrated with public transport planning and should consider sustainability issues such as the availability of water.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 17.1 Facilitate and plan for growth in regional cities and centres as the key drivers for growth and service delivery in the region supported by a network of district towns, towns and villages
- 17.2 Manage growth in small settlements

KEY DIRECTION 18

MAXIMISING THE USE OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES AND FACILITATING STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Some of the physical and social infrastructure and services likely to be required for future communities already exist. Maximising use of existing facilities and systems will contribute toward making future communities more sustainable and reduce the investment required to accommodate population increases. Where forecast growth will exceed the capacity of existing infrastructure, there is a need for targeted, strategic investment in new infrastructure and services.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 18.1 Coordinate service delivery in strongly linked settlements
- 18.2 Plan for growth in settlements within relatively close proximity to Melbourne

KEY DIRECTION 19

RETAINING PRODUCTIVE RURAL LAND FOR AGRICULTURE AND OTHER COMPATIBLE RURAL USES

Agriculture is one of the main economic contributors in the Hume Region. Agricultural land is a limited resource that should be protected against inappropriate development. Major planning decisions will be required to ensure some certainty for future agricultural development in the Hume Region. In particular, potential conflicts between agriculture and amenity land uses — such as rural residential development — need to be reconciled. Ideally, land use should be matched to land capability. Desired environmental outcomes need to be planned for more explicitly, such as the definition in planning schemes of 'biolinks' (corridors identified for enhancement of habitat for native plants and animals). Rural land use planning should consider the preferred location of a diverse range of compatible rural land uses in the region's rural areas.

Two councils have adopted Rural Land Use Strategies and a further five councils are preparing draft strategies for public consultation. These strategies (if and when adopted) need to be implemented through the relevant planning schemes. Therefore, the next step proposed is to prepare a Regional Rural Land Use Study to consider work done at a local level within a regional context and potentially guide the implementation of existing strategies and inform and support the development of future strategies. Rural land use planning should be aligned with Regional Catchments Strategies (RCS) as they are intended to cover all land management, including public land, and establish links with land use planning.

The traditional industries of the upper dry land region — grazing, dairying, broad-area cropping — will face major challenges in adjustment, particularly in areas with high land values and small allotment sizes. Future investment is likely to be concentrated on high value niche industries, particularly where this can be linked with farm-based tourism. There is some pressure for irrigated agriculture to better utilise water closer to the source, but there are structural problems to do with access to water and the pattern of land tenure and lot size.

The Hume Region has distinct advantages for the development of intensive agricultural industries (for example, feedlots, piggeries, poultry, aquaculture, hydroponics), including available space, proximity to major markets, access to water resources, and access to transport and other infrastructure. Planning for intensive agricultural industries presents a number of challenges, particularly to do with community acceptance, potential land use conflicts and protection of the environment. Continuing expansion of lifestyle farming across the Hume Region would limit the future options for intensive agriculture in the region.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 19.1 Manage land use in rural areas to sustainably accommodate all rural land uses

KEY DIRECTION 20

ENSURING EFFICIENT USE OF LAND USE PLANNING RESOURCES IN THE REGION

A key issue for the Hume Region is the current lack of capacity, particularly within local government, to address land use planning issues in a strategic manner. Using existing and future land use planning skills and resources more efficiently and providing opportunities for continued professional development of land use planning professionals will maintain and enhance capacity within the region to deal effectively with land use planning challenges.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- 20.1 A regional / sub regional partnership approach to strategic land use planning
- 20.2 Training of land use planning professionals and increasing the availability of expert advice

ACTIONS

Each priority strategy listed under the four key directions within the theme – *An efficient and sustainable pattern of urban and rural land use and development* – has a set of regionally significant actions provided in Appendix 1.

The actions relate to a broad range of activities including: land use management and development activities within regional cities and centres and small settlements, and along the Murray River corridor; coordination of land use, infrastructure and service planning; planning for growth; rural land use strategies; and strengthening the region's land use planning expertise.

Delivering these actions will require prioritisation and implementation planning by project leaders and stakeholders in the next phase of the Hume Strategy.

PART 3: FOUNDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUME STRATEGY



LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is central and fundamental to delivering a strategic plan that has positive long-lasting impacts for the region and sub regions. Community and business leaders from across the region have contributed significant time, energy and advice to inform the development of the Hume Strategy. Further, this group has provided valuable advice that has shaped the content of this part of the Hume Strategy which outlines recommendations for continuous engagement in the implementation process.

Leadership is a quality demonstrated across a broad spectrum of stakeholder interests and consequently, the Hume Strategy provides the opportunity to harness drive and enthusiasm for the plans from community, business and government at all levels. Overall, the challenge for the entire Hume Region is to address an increasingly complex world to ensure a more sustainable and competitive region.

Aspects of leadership development identified by community and business leaders included:

- > Innovation and entrepreneurship.
- > Participation and support to governance structures.
- > Resourcing and support for community leadership, capacity building and volunteering.
- > Leading by example through demonstration, pilot projects, or other initiatives.

The capacity and quality of leadership in local institutions – including business, industry, local government, regional agencies, health and human services organisations and local community groups – will be critical in determining the extent to which the region can take advantage of opportunities.

Civic participation is a hallmark of communities across the Hume Region. There is a vast array of sporting, cultural, environmental, social and business groups that exist as part of the fabric of community life. These groups and their contributions represent significant assets that need to be sustained for the benefit of current and future generations.

In this context, the following additional work has been recommended by community and business leaders that will add future value and drive to the delivery of the Hume Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER WORK

Develop a key direction and strategies for leadership that contribute to the implementation of the Hume Strategy and capture the opportunity to engage with, harness and work collaboratively with the region's leaders.

Actions to consider as part of preparing the direction and strategies on leadership:

- > Work in partnership with the region's leaders to drive the implementation of the Hume Strategy through participatory mechanisms.
- > Promote innovation in the development of engagement methods that harness the region's commitment to working collaboratively.
- > Provide an environment that recognises and enables the passion and commitment of leaders to build and grow the potential of the region.
- > Convene an annual Hume Strategy Leadership Gathering to review progress and contribute to the setting of future priorities and actions.
- > Develop leadership capability in the Lower Hume sub region by establishing and resourcing a community leadership program.

GOVERNANCE

Strong regional governance, community leadership capacity and civic participation are key elements in the Hume Region's future. Community leadership programs, such as the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program and Fairley Leadership that are based in Hume Region, play a crucial role in developing the next generation of leaders for the region.

Building partnerships between government, business and the community, as well as amongst local governments, is fundamental to future sustainability and competitiveness. Investments that improve the capacity of local governments and communities will help meet social, economic and environmental challenges.

The Hume Strategy is a project of the Hume RMF and the Victorian Government has determined that RMFs will play an ongoing role in the implementation of regional planning as the coordination point in the regional governance structure. RMFs will continue to lead the regional planning process through its development and implementation phases.

The Hume RMF as the sponsoring body for the Hume Strategy will oversee the implementation program for the Hume Strategy regional plan and the four sub regional plans. It will monitor progress and take the lead in any review of actions associated with these plans. However, many government, non-government, business and community stakeholders have a role in the implementation of the Hume Strategy and many others can expect to benefit from its success.

The establishment of RDA and more specifically the RDA Hume Committee (managed by RDV), provides an exceptional opportunity to access Commonwealth Government support in the implementation of the Hume

Strategy. The RDA Hume Committee is comprised of 10 representatives who have committed to work hard and passionately for the interests of the region.

There are also other existing programs, advisory bodies, reference structures and policy networks that can be engaged for their expertise and capacity to contribute to the success of the Hume Strategy.

A preliminary governance model has been developed to support Hume Strategy implementation (Figure 3).

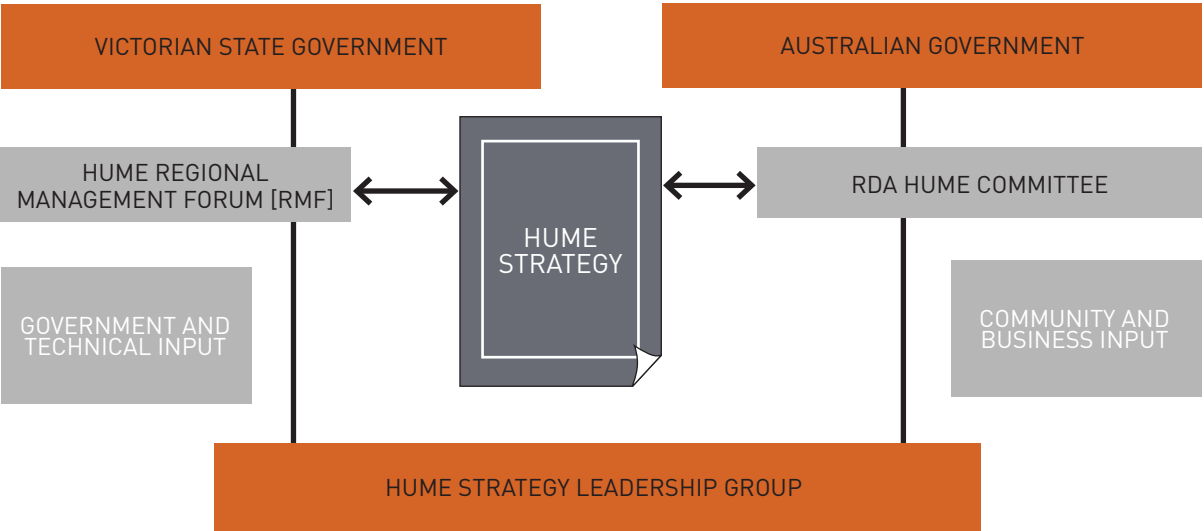
To assist in the delivery of the Hume Strategy, a detailed implementation program will be prepared, showing the links between key directions and specific projects and identifying responsibilities for implementation of actions included in the regional and sub regional plans.

It is anticipated that the Hume Strategy will be implemented in part through Victorian Government priorities identified in *Ready for Tomorrow*, the Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria. Regional priorities will also be evaluated and where agreed, supported through implementation procedures that will be developed by stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER WORK

- Develop a key direction and strategies that contribute to the governance arrangements for implementation of the Hume Strategy.
- Actions to consider as part of preparing the direction and strategies on governance:
- > Determine and resource governance arrangements to oversee and drive the implementation of the Hume Strategy.
 - > Prepare detailed implementation plans including business cases and investment requirements for regional and sub regional priorities.
 - > Utilise the Hume RMF to provide cross government support and coordination for implementation of the Hume Strategy.
 - > Establish and resource a community leadership team as a source of advice on future implementation of the Hume Strategy.
 - > Report on the implementation of the Hume Strategy annually to stakeholders.
 - > Establish a timetable for a regular and comprehensive evaluation and review of the Hume Strategy.

FIGURE 3 – HUME STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MODEL



MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENTS

Consistent with *Ready for Tomorrow*, the blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria, the Hume Strategy will adopt a 10 year outlook, notwithstanding the fact that there is information relevant to the Hume Region that considers issues from a 30 year perspective.

To successfully implement the plans set out under the Hume Strategy it is important that a performance management structure is established. Monitoring implementation and reviewing actions over the life of the plan requires identification of targets and timelines. Progress towards targets should be reported regularly to the Hume RMF, with a formal report annually that could also be made available to the Hume Region community.

Six high-level sustainability elements consistent with the themes of the Hume Strategy have been identified. These elements are proposed as the starting point for developing indicators and possible measures to be built into future performance management structures for the Hume Strategy.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT 1: A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Proposed Description:

Efficient, sensitive use of natural resources to sustain growth whilst protecting and enhancing the environmental assets of the region including biodiversity, air, soil and water quality and having regard to the needs of future generations.

Measures to be identified from:

Climate change, water security, biodiversity, river health, significant natural resources, natural attractions, eco-tourism, natural hazards and environmental sustainability issues are to be considered in this indicator.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT 2: A HEALTHY, VIBRANT AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY



Proposed Description:

There will be a strong commitment to social inclusion and cultural harmony. The unique qualities of the region's Indigenous people will be respected and valued whilst people with different cultures, backgrounds, values and beliefs will live in peace and harmony.

Equity of life opportunities, equity of access to services and facilities will be reflected in the leisure, sport, cultural and community life of the region.

Measures to be identified from:

Social and community infrastructure, including access to services and facilities (medical, educational, recreational, religious, and legal), social inclusion and connectivity, and cultural diversity and harmony are to be considered in this indicator.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT 3: A THRIVING ECONOMY



Proposed Description:

Create a diverse and vibrant economy for the region that offers job opportunities, dynamic business environments and sufficient land and facilities to stimulate economic prosperity.

Measures to be identified from:

Population, economy, employment, telecommunications and prosperity issues are to be addressed under this indicator.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT 4: MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT



Proposed Description:

Create and provide high quality, reliable, safe, affordable and sustainable transport and mobility options that connect people and communities with jobs, schools, health, recreation and other services, facilities and places.

Measures to be identified from:

Public transport, access and mobility issues are addressed in this indicator.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT 5: URBAN AND RURAL LAND USE



Proposed Description:

Create places for people to live, work and enjoy in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner. Create a sense of place, a sufficient range of housing diversity and high quality, mixed use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings for public and private use.

Measures to be identified from:

General housing issues, accommodation, affordability, residential amenity, safer neighbourhoods, healthier places, rural land capability, public and private built environment with safer and sustainable design are to be addressed under this indicator.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT 6: LEADERSHIP



Proposed Description

Responsible, representative and accountable leadership that demonstrates commitment to encouraging and facilitating community participation in decision making and offer fair and equal opportunities for all.

Measures to be identified from:

Effective and inclusive participation, representation in the implementation of the Hume Strategy and leadership should be assessed in this indicator.

IDENTIFYING READY TO ADVANCE PROJECTS

Throughout the 10 year life of the Hume Strategy a range of opportunities will emerge that enable the advancement priority strategies linked to the actions listed in Appendix 1 of the regional and sub regional plans.

It is in the interests of stakeholders to use the Hume Strategy to take full advantage of funding opportunities as they arise. This can be done by ensuring there is identification of projects that are ready to advance.

Taking advantage of funding opportunities is dependant on timing and there is merit in identifying projects in the Hume Strategy which are ready to advance at June 2010.

To commence this process, a set of criteria that will enable the identification of projects as being ready to advance has been applied by the Hume RMF and includes projects that:

- > address the Hume Region's competitive advantages or meet agreed challenges
- > have a completed plan and a well developed business case
- > are significant at the regional or sub regional level
- > are opportune (the time is right but the project will not happen without funding)

Advice will be gathered from state and local governments on regional and sub regional projects that are ready to advance and this information will be used as the basis for immediate action to take advantage of available funding opportunities.

For a list of the projects nominated as ready to advance, please refer to the current Hume Strategy Executive Summary which is available as a separate volume.

