



Regional
Development
Australia

BARWON SOUTH WEST BUSINESS PLAN

2023-2024 *(August 2023)*



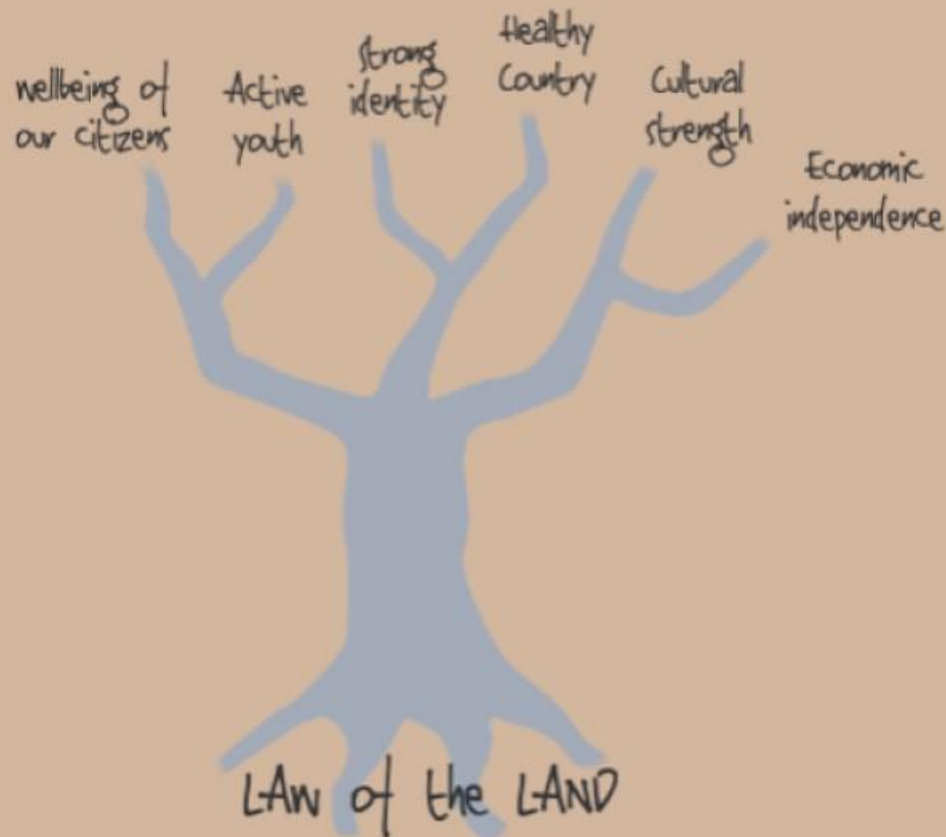


Eastern Maar
Aboriginal Corporation

"We look to a future in which we have secured our rightful place in society and on Country. A future where Eastern Maar citizens are a free people, proud of our heritage and our achievements. Where we are respected as the Traditional Owners of our lands and waters, living in harmony with the rest of society."

Our culture matters. Our Country matters. And in the modern world we live in, financial independence also matters. In our future, we will have built up our economic independence, but not at the expense of our culture or our values. We will remain true to who we are and we will continue to care for the Country that has looked after us for tens of thousands of years."

Extracted from Meerreengeyye ngakeepoorryeeyt – The Eastern Maar Country Plan
(Source: <https://easternmaar.com.au/>)



"Through Meerreengeyye ngakeepoorryeeyt - our Country Plan - we have defined our vision for the future. To help us on the path to achieving our vision, we have identified six goals that will form the focus of our efforts. For each of our goals, we have a number of objectives that we will work towards - as individuals, as a nation and in partnership with others. These goals are underpinned by the law of the land, our oral authority that dictates how we live and behave, who we interact with and how we will always care for our Country."

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and recognise the continuing connection of the Eastern Maar people to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



We will respect and support self-determination activities of the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation by acknowledging, promoting and supporting their vision for the future.

We will ensure that the six goals of Meerreengeyye ngakeepoorryeeyt and the five principles of economic independence within it are honoured in decisions and activities of the RDA Barwon South West Committee.



GUNDITJ MIRRING
Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation

"Through GMTOAC, Gunditjmara people ensure that our cultural obligations and responsibilities which arise from Gunditjmara country and under Gunditjmara law, custom and beliefs are upheld and recognised for the protection and benefit of our traditional lands and waters and for our respect to our Gunditjmara ancestors and for our Elders.

Through the self-determination of the Gunditjmara community, GMTOAC upholds the following pillars in order to advance the cultural identity and standing of Gunditjmara peoples:

- *Strengthening Gunditjmara Resources;*
- *Celebrating Gunditjmara Community and Culture; and*
- *Providing Collective Leadership."*

(Source: <https://www.gunditimirring.com/about>)



During the time of creation, Gunditjmara Country was inhabited by beings that were sometimes human, sometimes animal, sometimes neither, and these beings brought the Country into life. Their movements are written across Gunditjmara Country and give meaning to the contemporary landscape.

From at least 6,600 years ago, the Gunditjmara created an extensive and complex aquaculture network where modified channels diverted water and kooyang (short-finned eel) into holding ponds. Here kooyang grew fat and were harvested with woven baskets set in weirs built from volcanic rocks and wood lattice structures.

The story of the Gunditjmara people is intimately related to the volcanic eruption of Mount Eccles from around 30,000 years ago, when an ancestral creation-being revealed himself in the landscape.

Country is part of Gunditjmara identity as a people. It contains places with deep cultural and spiritual meanings. Country itself, as a living landscape, is Gunditjmara heritage and identity.

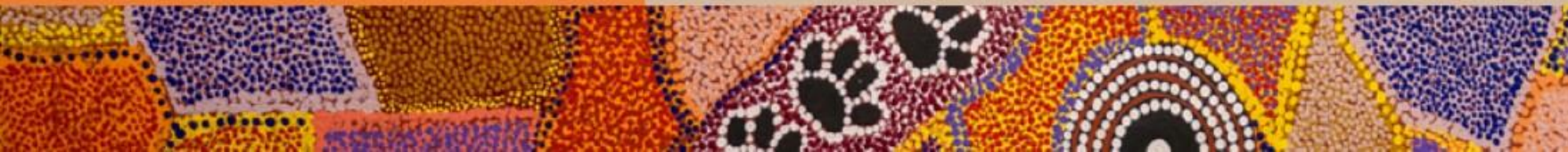
Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and recognise the continuing connection of the Gunditjmara people to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



We will respect and support self-determination activities of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) by acknowledging, promoting and supporting their vision for the future.

We will ensure that the three pillars of the GMTOAC are honoured in decisions and activities of the RDA Barwon South West Committee.





Wadawurrung
Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation

"Wadawurrung People are determined to see their unique cultural heritage protected and respected. Wadawurrung aims to restore Traditional knowledge and authority over the management of Wadawurrung Country for the betterment of those living on, prospering from and/or simply enjoying its land, waterways and coastal areas."

(Source: <https://www.wadawurrung.org.au/>)



**Gobata Dja
baap Ngubiyt**

Taking care of Country and waters



**Gobata
bengadak Hjarra**

Us Supporting Us –
Cultural Strengthening



**Wurrurrwilwa
Wadawurrung
Corporation**

Strengthening Wadawurrung
Corporation

Wadawurrung's RAP area covers over 10,000 square kilometres on the western side of Melbourne and including the major regional cities of Geelong and Ballarat. This area incorporates the activities of 11 separate local councils – including many that are experiencing very high rates of growth in terms of population, infrastructure, commercial and residential development. Wadawurrung Country also incorporates the start of the Great Ocean Road, one of Australia's most iconic and popular tourist destinations.

(Source: <https://www.wadawurrung.org.au/>)

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and recognise the continuing connection of the Wadawurrung people to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Paleert Tjaara Dja

Let's make country good together

Koling wada-ngal

Let's walk together

We will respect and support self-determination activities of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation by acknowledging, promoting and supporting their vision for the future.

We will ensure that the three programs of the *Wadawurrung Country Plan* and the 18 strategies within it are honoured in decisions and activities of the RDA Barwon South West Committee.

Wurrurrwilwa gupma bengadak Wadawurrung wurring-wurring baap dja

All people working together to make Wadawurrung Country and culture strong.



Wadawurrung
culture and people



Enterprise
and
employment



Wadawurrung
cultural sites
and places



Bush tucker,
medicines
and resources



Yulluk
Waterways, Rivers,
estuaries and
wetlands



Inland
country



Coastal
country



Warre
Sea
country



Native
animals

"These are the important things that we want to look after"
OUR VALUES - BUILDING BLOCKS



Message from the A/Chair

The Barwon South West region is experiencing unparalleled growth and development, with investments gaining significant traction.

Exciting programs such as the Australian Government's [National Reconstruction Fund](#), [Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program](#) and the [Growing Regions Program](#), all underpinned by the new [Regional Investment Framework](#), will provide targeted regional support and opportunities for growth.

We will also work with the Victorian Government to deliver a comprehensive \$2 billion Regional Package to ensure that regional Victoria receives the benefits that would have been facilitated through the Victoria 2026 Commonwealth Games.

The region is well placed to leverage this focus on regions by working with the private sector to encourage investment and growth opportunities.

The government's investment in the transition to a clean economy is at the forefront of this growth, reflecting the region's commitment to sustainability and innovation.

The recent acknowledgment by the ABS that the Great South Coast of Barwon South West is Australia's greatest agricultural producer is a testament to the region's potential for growth and development.

We will work to drive investment in our target growth areas, such as advanced manufacturing, high-value and value-add agriculture, and renewables.



To ensure sustained growth, it is crucial for the region to actively provide the government with valuable insights on key factors that facilitate and enhance this growth.

We will focus on recommending innovative solutions to bridge the skills and workforce gaps in priority sectors, ultimately fostering a resilient and dynamic labour market.

The region's tourism industry presents a significant opportunity for growth and success. To maximise public investment, we must focus on developing robust tourism products and accommodation solutions that entice visitors to explore our iconic destinations, such as the awe-inspiring Twelve Apostles and the culturally rich Budj Bim Cultural Landscape.

Priority investment in our nationally significant roads and bridges network and key worker housing are essential to pave the way for greater private sector investment.

We acknowledge the significant tasks that lie ahead during this exciting growth period for the Barwon South West region. We are ready at the helm to work with government and our stakeholders to ensure we capture the benefits of this unique opportunity.

We are committed to leading this effort and are confident that together, we will achieve great success.

Grant Sutherland
A/Chair, RDA BSW Committee





2022-2023 Achievements

Activating our networks for better collaboration

We have established a Barwon South West Executive group that includes engaging with the Victorian Minister for Regional Development and regular meetings with the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Barwon and Great South Coast Regional Partnerships to build momentum in our aligned priority areas.

Following the Spirit of Tasmania passenger and freight opportunities studies, we established new relationships with RDA Tasmania to deliver on the identified recommendations and engage in discussions for joint opportunities and collaboration.

The Chair and Deputy Chair participate in the Victorian RDA Network that has agreed on four areas of collaboration – Key Worker Housing; Digital Capability; Workforce and Skills; Renewable Energy.

We have also established regular engagement with our Local Government Associations by introducing Shire Spotlights and meetings with Mayors and CEOs.

Brown Bag Briefing Sessions

We continued to roll out our Brown Bag Briefing Sessions which provided valuable opportunities to improve awareness and alignment across priorities and enabled us to share information and coordinate advocacy. These sessions focused on Key Worker Housing in Barwon South West; Geelong City Deal Three Year Review; nbn Technology in our regions; Regional Connectivity Program and Twelve Apostles Precinct Redevelopment.

Social and Economic Futures

We continued to work with the GSC Economic Futures Steering Group and GSC Social Futures Steering Group to drive economic diversity and high-value economic outcomes and uplift place-based economic participation.



2022-2023 Achievements

Spirit of Tasmania Passenger & Freight Opportunities

We engaged with and will continue to engage with RDA Tasmania and our stakeholders to progress the recommendations from the Relocation and Impact Opportunity Assessment report to unlock value-add and freight-forwarding opportunities in the BSW region.

Unlocking Value in the Great South Coast

The work led by RDA BSW enables the region to better understand the aspirations, opportunities and associated barriers preventing higher-value and value-add opportunities from being realised. The report looked at three major commodities, dairy, meat and sawmill products, to identify tangible actions and unlock new value-add opportunities. We will continue to work with the region to activate opportunities outlined in this report.

Ministerial Online Briefings and Roundtables

We engaged with the Minister to provide advice on various topics including:

- RDA BSW Priorities
- Regional Challenges and Opportunities
- Australian Government Grant Programs
- Embracing the opportunities of the renewable economy
- Jobs and Skills Summit

Australian Government Funding Programs

We worked with the Minister to provide advice on the development and guidelines for new programs rolled out including Growing Regions Program, Stronger Communities Program, Priority Community Infrastructure Program and the National Reconstruction Fund.

We also continued to promote various Australian Government programs and encouraged applications from our stakeholders.



Regional Funding Programs

Through close and strategic collaboration, we will support the delivery of Australian and Victorian government funding programs to generate transformative and lasting change for our region.

- \$600 million [Growing Regions Program](#) – for capital works projects that deliver community and economic infrastructure projects across regional and rural Australia.
- \$400 million [Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program](#) – to deliver transformative investment in regional, rural and remote Australia based on aims of unifying regional places, growing their economies and serving their communities.
- \$15 billion [National Reconstruction Fund](#) – diversifying and transforming Australia's industry and economy.

The Victorian Government announced a \$2 billion Regional Package designed to ensure regional Victoria still receives the benefits that would have been facilitated through the Victorian 2026 Commonwealth Games. These funding programs include:

- \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund
- \$150 million Regional Worker Accommodation Fund
- \$285 million across Regional Tourism and Events, Regional Tourism Infrastructure, Visit Victoria and Regional Tourism Industry Development
- \$20 million Aboriginal Economic Development Fund

PRIORITY FOCUS

- ✓ Meeting the needs of, and providing opportunities for, **First Nations people**.
- ✓ Supporting the transformation to a **net zero economy** and decarbonisation.
- ✓ Achieving gender **equality**.

Investing in People	Investing in Places	Investing in Services	Investing in Industries and Local Economies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Listening to local voices and partnering with communities. ✓ Targeted investment in skills, education, training and local leadership capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supporting adaptive, accessible, sustainable and liveable regions. ✓ Delivering infrastructure where and when it is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhancing connectivity, accessibility and equity of services. ✓ Investment including across communications, health, water and transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Investment to help activate economic and industry growth. ✓ Supporting the conditions needed for regional industries to diversify and grow.

IMPLEMENTATION

- RDA BSW will work with government to embed engagement with communities.
- RDA BSW will work to obtain data and trends from across a range of sources including REDS to contribute evidence-based decision making and delivery of regular state and regions reports.
- RDA BSW will engage regularly and collaborate with our RDA counterparts to share information and work to leverage investments across governments.
- RDA BSW will work together with government to ensure investment is delivering optimal, joined-up outcomes for our region.

Australian Government Regional Investment Framework

Purpose

The Framework is a new approach to how the Australian Government delivers regional investment, valuing local voices and priorities, being informed by and building the evidence, operating with flexibility, integrity and transparency, and coordinating across governments to make investments work better for regions. It provides an integrated and coordinated framework for regional development regardless of a region's economic circumstances.

Guiding principles

- Realising the Government's ambition of '*no one held back and no one left behind*' requires specific regional investment across portfolios.
- Australia's regions and their economies are diverse, with each having unique strengths and challenges.
- Delivering on the potential of regional Australia requires building on each regions' unique strengths, including helping regions undergoing significant economic change to transition or adapt to specific structural challenges.
- Place-based decision making that draws on the experience of local government alongside regional bodies must guide investment in our regions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As representatives of their local communities, RDAs will:

- focus their activities and strategy on delivery of the [RIF](#) in their region, including investment in people, places, services and industries and local economics
- support regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit-sector, to seek grant opportunities that advance strategic regional priorities
- support decarbonisation efforts and the transformation to a net zero economy and enable regional linkages between sectors to achieve these aims
- build the evidence for economic development, including innovation and diversification strategies
- facilitate meaningful engagement across the three levels of government to ensure investments deliver better outcomes for regions, and
- contribute relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.

RDAs use their local, cross-sector expertise and regional voice to:

- collaborate with integrity, transparency, respect and accountability
- engage with diverse communities, especially First Nations people
- support the Government's ambition of 'no one held back and no one left behind', and
- support gender equality opportunities in their regions.

RDA Charter – 28 July 2023

Purpose

The Australian Government's vision for regional Australia is one of strong, connected regions that shape our economic growth and wellbeing; are resilient and responsive to economic and environmental shocks; are inclusive, vibrant and diverse; are regions that our First Nations people have every opportunity to engage in and shape, and where people, businesses and investments thrive.

Regional Development Australia Committees (RDAs) are critical to the delivery of this vision, including supporting the successful implementation of the Australian Government's [Regional Investment Framework \(RIF\)](#), which will guide a more coordinated approach to regional development, underpinned by local engagement.

RDAs play a role in helping to drive economic growth, innovation and entrepreneurship in regions through facilitating investment in community, industry and the environment. RDAs assist to bridge the regional development gaps in regions by working with a broad range of stakeholders across sectors and supporting the delivery of identified Australian Government strategic priorities.



An Australian Government Initiative



STATEMENT OF COLLABORATION

To amplify opportunities for collaboration and increase high-value outcomes for the region, RDA Barwon South West Committee, Barwon Regional Partnership and Great South Coast Regional Partnership will endeavour to coordinate their respective activities.

We will leverage Regional Development Victoria's representation on all three groups to coordinate high-value communications with the Victorian Government and the Australian Government.

We will use RDV's regional resources and skills to ensure our key projects and priorities are supported by:

Shared evidence	Data analysis	United voice	Joined-up priorities	City Connections
<i>Improve advocacy outcomes through use of consistent, shared evidence in BSW region business cases, projects and policies</i>	<i>Strengthen regional business cases by leveraging digital and business analysis skills of the centralised RDV team</i>	<i>Use consistent messaging and advocacy collateral to create a confident and united voice for the region</i>	<i>Identify aligned priorities and coordinate activities, resources and messaging to reduce duplication and improve outcomes</i>	<i>Engage RDA networks to advocate for regional issues, influence state capitals and inform city-based businesses on regional opportunities</i>

STATEMENT OF COLLABORATION



The Hon Kristy McBain MP
Minister for Regional Development,
Local Government and Territories



RDA Barwon South West
has a direct link to the
Australian Government
through Minister McBain

Regional Partnerships have
direct links to the Victorian
Government through
Minister Shing



The Hon Harriet Shing MLC
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Water, Minister for Equality,
Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy



RDV Barwon South West
Director of Regional Development and officers
coordinate and connect the activities of the
RDA and both Regional Partnerships



RDA Barwon South West Committee was established by the Australian Government and is supported by the Victorian Government through RDV. Chair is endorsed by both Ministers. RDA Committee members include: Industry and business members with global, national and local experience in advanced manufacturing, agriculture, education, tourism and energy, supported by the **Director of Regional Development BSW**

Barwon Regional Partnership and Great South Coast Regional Partnership were established by the Victorian Government and are supported through RDV. Regional Partnerships' members include: Business and community members, the CEOs of our Local Government Areas, an RDA BSW Committee member, the **Director of Regional Development BSW** and a senior officer (Department Secretary) from the Victorian Government

BARWON SOUTH WEST REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation • Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation • Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation • Avalon Airport • Committee for Geelong • Committee for Portland • Deakin University • GeelongPort • Port of Portland • Major employers • Peak industry bodies • Local business incubators • Tourism Greater Geelong & The Bellarine • Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism • Grampians Tourism • Discovery Coast • Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority • RICE • Geelong Chamber of Commerce • Geelong Manufacturing Council • Gordon TAFE • South West TAFE • Local Learning and Employment Networks • Barwon Water • Wannon Water • Southern Rural Water



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Regional Development Victoria (RDV)

Serving all 6 RDA Committees and all 9 Regional Partnerships with:

Shared evidence • Data analysis • United voice • Joined-up priorities • Capital city connections • Coordination • Pathways to government

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS

Diversify and strengthen our economic foundations

Add value to
and diversify
within the
agri-food
supply chain

Accelerate the
transition to new
and high-value
manufacturing
opportunities

Realise the
potential of the
visitor economy

Grow and equip
the workforce
needed to
enable future
economic
opportunities

Switch on
clean energy
and green collar
jobs

SHORT TO MEDIUM-TERM PRIORITY FOCUS

Affordable
housing for
key workers

Value-add
opportunities
in agriculture
and raw
commodities

Address
immediate
skill
and workforce
shortages

Digital
access and
capability
gaps

Harness the
momentum in
clean
economy
opportunities

Supply chain
interruptions
and freight
logistics

UNDERPINNED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REGIONAL INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

People

Putting people at the
forefront of growth, with
local voices influencing
decision making

Places

Targeted and place-based
investment that
enables communities
to thrive

Services

Investment in regional
services with a focus on
improving quality and
accessibility

Industries and Local Economies

Ensuring regional industries
and economies are positioned
for sustainable growth

Strategic Focus

Guided by the [RDA Charter](#) and [Regional Investment Framework](#) to support strong and sustainable regions, we will work in partnership with communities, other levels of government and the private sector to position our region to take advantage of a transitioning world, ensuring no one is held back or left behind.

Our **strategic focus** areas are **long-term** and aim to diversify and strengthen our economic foundations through prospective high value opportunities, leveraging the region's comparative advantages and latent potential.

Our **business activities** aim to support outcomes in our **short to medium-term** priority focus areas.

KEY BUSINESS ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT SHORT TO MEDIUM-TERM PRIORITY FOCUS

1. **Invest in and lead regional initiatives that will enable value-add and high-value growth and diversification opportunities** - continue to use our project budget to research and develop advice and recommendations to progress outcomes against our long-term and short to medium-term focus areas. This year's focus will be on leveraging our footprint in clean energy and developing a better understanding of priority enabling infrastructure projects.
2. **Drive strategic collaboration** - continue to work with the RDA network and Regional Partnerships to advance shared priorities, enhance collaboration, and provide advice to the Australian Government. Leverage the BSW Regional Executive for strengthened regional collaboration and impactful results.
3. **Social and Economic Futures** - Continue to work with the GSC Economic Futures Steering Group and GSC Social Futures Steering Group to drive economic diversity and high value economic outcomes and uplift place-based economic participation.
4. **Work with all levels of government** - deliver targeted advice on interventions and investment that support outcomes in our strategic focus areas.
5. **Australian Government Regional Funding Programs** - through close and strategic collaboration, support the delivery of the funding programs by promoting sustainable growth and prosperity that will generate transformative and lasting change for our region.
6. **Continue to deliver the regionally recognised RDA Brown Bag Briefing Sessions** - a series of out-of-session briefings and consultations with key stakeholders to share information and collaborate where appropriate on immediate barriers and opportunities in the Barwon South West region.
7. **Work with regional stakeholders** to advance recommendations in reports that RDA BSW have led work on, including Spirit of Tasmania Relocation Impact and Opportunity Assessment; Unlocking Value in the GSC; and Crown Land Utilisation for Local Economy Stimulation Strategy.



UNDERPINNED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REGIONAL INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

People

Putting people at the forefront of growth, with local voices influencing decision making

Places

Targeted and place-based investment that enables communities to thrive

Services

Investment in regional services with a focus on improving quality and accessibility

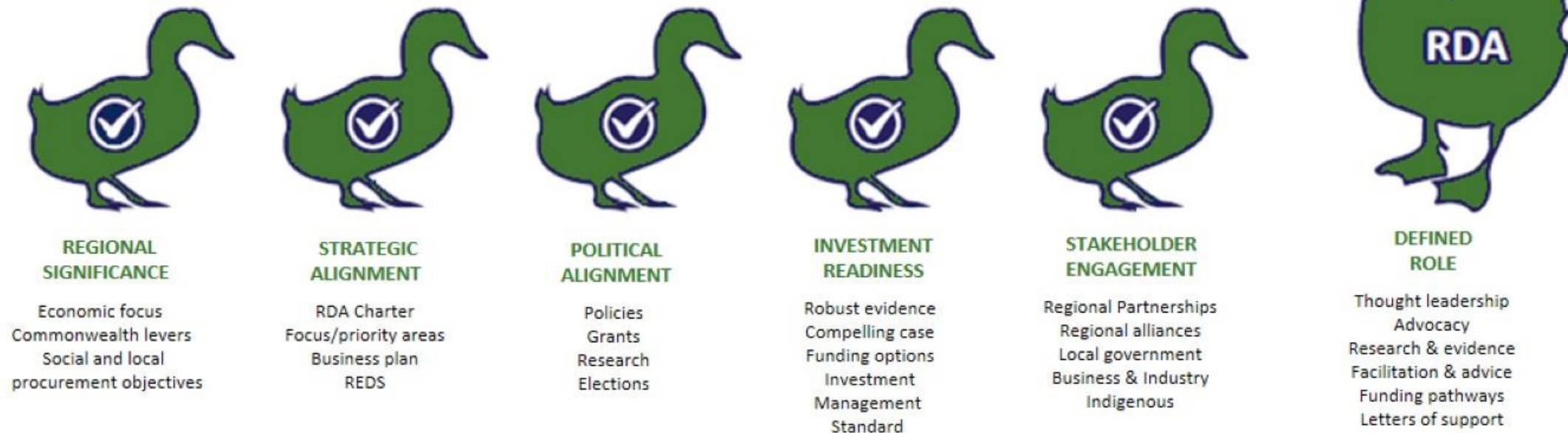
Industries and Local Economies

Ensuring regional industries and economies are positioned for sustainable growth

Investment readiness

We will focus on providing support to investment-ready regional projects and initiatives that align with our strategic focus. Rather than keeping a list of priority projects, to help these projects and initiatives succeed, we offer the following; thought leadership, advocacy, research and evidence, facilitation and advice, funding pathways, letters of support.

Our role as a facilitator in implementing regional priorities is based on an assessment of the following criteria:





Strategic Plan Alignment

Regional Economic Development Strategies

The Victorian Government has developed Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) for the Barwon and Great South Coast regions, which identify strategic directions for future economic development based on a strong evidence base. The REDS have informed the identification of the strategic focus areas for our Committee.

The REDS also identify four key factors that are critical to enabling economic growth in the region – digital connectivity, transport connectivity, workforce and housing.

In addition to providing a consistent evidence base and the strategic framing of economic opportunities to coordinate investment and activity, the REDS also identify opportunities for Aboriginal economic development.

Regional profile

Demographic, social and economic indicators

Policy insights

Review of existing policies and local plans, informed by stakeholder engagement

Comparative advantage

Analysis of the region's strengths and areas of emerging specialisation

Strategic directions

Medium- to long-term priorities for future economic development



62 to 65
Australian Digital Inclusion Index Score in Great South Coast in 2021
(Victorian Average: 71)



4.1
Overall access to roads and public transport in Barwon South West RDA region
(Reg Vic 3.2 and Victoria 4)



63.2%
Local workforce in Great South Coast was employed in skilled occupations in 2021
(Reg Vic 62.2%, Melbourne 67.3%)



0.6%
Average rental property vacancy rate in 12 months leading up to December 2022
(Compared to benchmark of 2.5%)



18.1%
Residents with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2021
(Reg Vic 20.8%, Melbourne 36.8%)



28.6%
Increase in median rent in Barwon South West RDA region from 2018 to 2022
(Victoria 12.5%, Reg Vic 29.0%)



63 to 70
Australian Digital Inclusion Index Score in Barwon in 2021
(Victorian Average: 71)



4.1
Overall access to roads and public transport in Barwon South West RDA region
(Reg Vic 3.2 and Victoria 4)



61.7%
Local workforce in Great South Coast was employed in skilled occupations in 2021
(Reg Vic 62.2%, Melbourne 67.3%)



1.3%
Average rental property vacancy rate in 12 months leading up to December 2022
(Compared to benchmark of 2.5%)



27.6%
Residents with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2021
(Reg Vic 20.8%, Melbourne 36.8%)



28.6%
Increase in median rent in Barwon South West RDA region from 2018 to 2022
(Victoria 12.5%, Reg Vic 29.0%)



Strategic directions

Barwon's five strategic directions have been identified using an evidence base that considers the region's unique attributes, existing and emerging industries, and socioeconomic context.

- **Developing future-focused products and advanced manufacturing capabilities** will, along with existing supply chains and transport infrastructure, drive new and high-value manufacturing opportunities.
- Existing innovation hubs and significant local research expertise will contribute to business incubation, productivity growth and a **future-focused education and training sector**.
- The **diverse range of tourism offerings**, including natural landscapes, creative industries, Aboriginal heritage and emerging agritourism, strongly positions the region to take advantage of changing domestic visitor trends.
- Strong population growth and changing demographics have driven **service-based sectors** with a skilled workforce – cultivating these sectors is an opportunity for long-term growth and wider economic benefits.
- **Renewable energy generation**, including rooftop and large-scale solar, wind and renewable hydrogen, complement strong community interest in resource recovery and recycling to drive sustainability in the region.

340,100
Population
(2022)

23.4%
Population growth
(2013-22)

\$18.4B
Gross regional
product
(2021)



Barwon Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

Strategic directions

- Accelerate the transition to new and high-value **manufacturing** opportunities
- Further the **innovation** and **skills** ecosystem
- Realise the potential of the **visitor economy**
- Maximise the economic benefit from expanding **service-based sectors**
- Build a **sustainable** and **climate-resilient** economy

Employment

	Barwon % (Dec 2022)	Regional Victoria % (Mar 2023)	Metro Melbourne % (Mar 2023)
Unemployment rate*	2.2	3.7	4.3
Average annual employment growth (2021-21)	2.4	0.9	2.1

Top employing sectors (2021)

Health care and social assistance	25,000
Retail trade	16,200
Construction	15,700
Education and training	14,900
Manufacturing	11,900
Public Administration and safety	11,100

Top sectors by gross value add (2021)

Construction	\$2.0B
Health care and social assistance	\$2.0B
Manufacturing	\$1.5B
Education and training	\$1.3B
Public administration and safety	\$1.2B
Retail trade	\$1.0B

Please note: Regional Partnership unemployment data lags the state release.





Strategic directions

Great South Coast's five strategic directions have been identified using an evidence base that considers the region's unique attributes, existing and emerging industries, and socioeconomic context.

- Diversification of the region's **agricultural commodities**, investment in advanced manufacturing capabilities and an increase in local value-add will ensure the region is adaptive and responsive to new opportunities.
- Local wind, solar and bioenergy generation capabilities, and the associated skilled workforce, position the region to harness other **renewable energy** opportunities (including hydrogen); there are also new opportunities in natural gas exploration and production.
- Specialised research and skills, harnessing technological change, inclusive employment and stimulating migration will ensure a **workforce** able to both capitalise on growth opportunities and meet the needs of an ageing population.
- **Investment in agritourism**, 'hero experiences', natural attractions and Aboriginal heritage such as the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape will allow the region to encourage longer stays and take advantage of changing visitation trends towards domestic travel.
- Improving cross-border collaboration and the flow of goods, services and people will bolster the region's economic potential. The existing forestry supply chain positions the region to capitalise on increasing global demand for wood fibre and to grow into a **world-leading sustainable forestry hub**.

105,300
Population
(2022)

2.9%
Population growth
(2013-22)

\$5.9B
Gross regional
product
(2021)



Great South Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

Strategic directions

- Add value to and diversify within the **agri-food supply chain**
- Maximise the potential of the region's **energy resources**
- Grow and equip the **workforce** needed to enable future economic opportunities
- Expand existing strengths in **cultural and nature-based visitation**
- Capture the greater potential of the 'Green Triangle' cross-border economic zone

Employment			
	GSC % (Dec 2022)	Regional Victoria % (Mar 2023)	Metro Melbourne % (Mar 2023)
Unemployment rate*	1.7	3.7	4.3
Average annual employment growth (2021-21)	-0.2	0.9	2.1

Please note: Regional Partnership unemployment data lags the state release.

Top employing sectors (2021)	
Health care and social assistance	5,900
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5,800
Retail trade	4,400
Education and training	3,400
Construction	3,300
Manufacturing	2,700

Top sectors by gross value add (2021)	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	\$1.2B
Health care and social assistance	\$442.2M
Construction	\$283.8M
Manufacturing	\$260.0M
Retail Trade	\$256.7M
Education and training	\$2251.9M



Grant Sutherland
A/Chair



Keith Baillie



Mary-Ann Brown



Peter Dorling



Anne Howard



Alison McLeod



Darryl Mohr



Liz Price
Deputy Chair



Clive Pugh



David Spear



EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

Brett Ince
*Director
Regional Development*



Meg Bullen
*Manager, Strategy Development
and Regional Planning*



Nada Malinac
*Regional Development
Project Officer, RDA*



RDA BSW Committee

The RDA Barwon South West Committee consists of local business experts who are dedicated to developing and implementing local solutions for regional issues. They collaborate with government, businesses, and community groups to support the region's growth and development.

Acting as facilitators, they focus on building strong and confident regional economies by leveraging competitive advantages, seizing economic opportunities, and attracting investments.

The committee comprises experienced individuals with global, national, and local expertise in advanced manufacturing, digital capability, agriculture, education, tourism, and energy. Led by A/Chair Grant Sutherland, CEO of South West Victoria at Deakin University, the team brings valuable political and industry experience to their endeavours.

Executive support

The Director of Regional Development provides strategic and operational leadership to our Committee and the executive support team.

The team promotes the region's activities to all levels of government, industry, business and community, highlighting competitive advantages and encouraging opportunities for decentralisation and relocation. They oversee RDA projects, report on activities, and manage and monitor the Commonwealth and State grants programs.

RDV Barwon South West has executive support offices in Geelong, Warrnambool and Portland.

Read more about our Committee members at [RDA BSW Committee Members](#)



Communications (channels & schedule)

Communication activities are included in the RDA BSW 2023-2024
Annual Work and Engagement Plan
(refer pages 21-22)

RDA BSW uses several communication channels and existing regional stakeholders' group assets including:

- Direct email
- Social media
- Websites
- Newsletters
- Reports
- Submissions
- Promotional videos
- Workshops
- Meetings
- Regional forums
- Regional delegations
- Brown Bag Briefings



Communications

The overarching aim of RDA communication products and activities is to encourage community support for and regional stakeholder engagement with RDA BSW.

The objectives of communications activities are to:

- Increase understanding and awareness of the benefits RDA BSW offers to regional communities.
- Promote the achievements of RDA BSW.
- Encourage Australian Government agencies to consider utilising the regional intelligence.
- Provide advice on Australian Government program design.
- Support the Australian Government to deliver programs in our region.
- Encourage and promote joint government, business and stakeholder collaborations.

RDA BARWON SOUTH WEST - 2023-2024 ANNUAL WORK AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023
Committee Meetings		Online		Surf Coast Shire		Queenscliff
Chair/Deputy Chair Engagement	RDA BSW Executive SEGRA Conference RDA National Forum	RDA Chairs' Network	Regions Rising National Summit - Canberra	RDA BSW Executive CEDA event - Tackling Australia's housing crisis	RDA Chairs' Network RDA BSW Executive RDA, GSC, BRP Chairs and Deputies - Online	RDA, GSC, BRP Chairs and Deputies - Queenscliff
Committee Member Engagement	Regions Rising Summit Unlocking Value in the GSC Final PSG GSC Social Futures PSG GSC Sustainable Energy Forum	GSC Economic Futures PSG GORRT 2023 Regional Tourism Conference	Australian Ports Conference GSC Economic Futures PSG GSC Social Futures Forum	GSC Economic Futures PSG RDA BSW & Tasmania network	DAMA Roundtable GSC Social Futures PSG	
Partnership Meetings	Barwon Regional Partnership	Great South Coast Regional Partnership	Barwon Regional Partnership	Great South Coast Regional Partnership	Barwon Regional Partnership	Great South Coast Regional Partnership
Brown Bag Briefing Sessions			RDA and BRP/GSC RP priorities	Hydrogen Energy		
Ministerial Online Briefings & Roundtables	Virtual Roundtables - Housing affordability - Workforce availability - Thriving Suburbs	Quarterly Online Briefing with Minister McBain			Quarterly Online Briefing with Minister McBain	
Projects / Reports Due	Annual Business Plan Unlocking Value in the GSC (project completion)	Crown Land Utilisation for Local Economy Stimulation Strategy (project completion)	Annual Outcomes Report	GSC Social Futures – Next Steps (project completion)		

RDA BARWON SOUTH WEST - 2023-2024 ANNUAL WORK AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024
Committee Meetings		Corangamite			Warrnambool	
Chair/Deputy Chair Engagement	RDA BSW Executive		RDA Chairs' Network CEDA Infrastructure Conference	RDA BSW Executive	RDA Chairs' Network	
Committee Member Engagement		GSC Economic Futures PSG GSC Social Futures PSG		GSC Economic Futures PSG GSC Social Futures PSG RDA BSW & Tasmania network		Regions Rising Summit GSC Economic Futures PSG GSC Social Futures PSG
Partnership Meetings		Barwon Regional Partnership	Great South Coast Regional Partnership		Barwon Regional Partnership	Great South Coast Regional Partnership
Brown Bag Briefing Sessions		TBC		TBC		
Ministerial Online Briefings & Roundtables		Quarterly Online Briefing with Minister McBain			Quarterly Online Briefing with Minister McBain	
Projects / Reports Due		BSW Clean Energy Investment Footprint Project (project completion)			GSC Economic Futures Project Development (project completion)	

OBJECTIVE ONE

Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, investment, local procurement and jobs

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Provide details and/or a copy of a suitable existing strategic Regional Plan that your RDA is contributing to or that your RDA is developing in accordance with the Charter and the RDA Better Practice Guide.
- Provide details of the investment (dollar terms), jobs (number), local procurement opportunities (dollar terms) and other regional development outcomes that your RDA will facilitate (for planning purposes) or has facilitated (for reporting purposes) for your region during this financial year.

What we will do

- 1. Identify economic development initiatives that will enable high-value growth and diversification opportunities that align with the Regional Economic Development Strategies**
 - Engage with organisations or potential investors to identify and create investment opportunities to help activate economic and industry growth (L&C).
 - Facilitate new investment in the region, supporting the conditions needed for regional industries to diversity and grow assisting local businesses and industry to invest, create and retain jobs (C).
 - Work with the Victorian RDA and RP networks to deliver the state-wide Regional Investment Attraction - Food and Fibre Value-Add project (C).
 - Work with the Victorian Government to drive the objectives of the Regional Economic Development Strategies - Barwon and Great South Coast to contribute evidence-based decision making and delivery of regular State and Regions reports (L).
- 2. Advocate for and drive interventions to address immediate economic barriers and opportunities (L)**
- 3. Focus activities and strategy on delivery of the RIF in our region, including investment in people, places, services, and industries and local economies (L&C)**
 - Collaborate with our networks to support local and social procurement opportunities, including skills development, employment outcomes for priority cohorts, and local supply opportunities (L&C).
 - Work with First Nations People to provide advice to government on initiatives that build and celebrate Aboriginal cultural values and care for Country (C).

Anticipated Outcomes

- Increased economic opportunities and investment in the Barwon South West region.
- Emerging opportunities for economic growth progressed.
- Barriers to economic recovery reduced.
- Regional stakeholder group initiatives aligning with RDA BSW strategic focus areas are supported.

Refer to the activities under "What we will do"

(L) = RDA BSW Committee **lead or champion** this initiative

(C) = RDA BSW Committee **contribute** to this activity

(O) = RDA BSW Committee **otherwise assist** this activity

OBJECTIVE TWO

Promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with Australian Government policies, grant programs and research

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- a. Provide details of where you have supported awareness raising and/or engagement.
- b. Number of submissions supported.

What we will do

- 1. Engage with key stakeholders to raise awareness of Australian Government grant programs**
 - Facilitate stakeholder meetings or briefings to promote and/or assist in the delivery of Australian Government programs (L).
 - Represent the Australian Government on the Barwon Regional Partnership and the Great South Coast Regional Partnership to connect and promote Australian Government's regional policies and programs (L).
- 2. Support stakeholders to develop project proposals to access Australian Government grant programs**
 - Support regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit-sector, to seek grant opportunities that align with the RIF and/or advance regional priorities (C).
 - Provide letters of support for applicants for grant applications where the project aligns with the RIF and/or contributes to long-term economic growth in our region (L).
- 3. Use targeted communication channels to raise awareness of Australian Government grant programs, policies and research**
 - Promote and provide advice on Australian Government programs, including the Growing Regions Program, Strong Communities Program, Priority Community Infrastructure Program and the National Reconstruction Fund (L).
 - Disseminate information on Australian Government policies and grant programs via existing communication channels including newsletters, stakeholder campaigns, social media and websites (L).

Anticipated Outcomes

- Improved understanding of the roles of RDA BSW Committee and other regional stakeholder groups.
- Improved understanding from regional stakeholders on Australian Government grant programs and relevant regional policy.
- Strengthened applications from the region to Australian Government grant programs.
- Position the region as innovative, inclusive, connected and environmentally sustainable.

Refer to the activities under "What we will do"
(L) = RDA BSW Committee **lead or champion** this initiative
(C) = RDA BSW Committee **contribute** to this activity
(O) = RDA BSW Committee **otherwise assist** this activity

OBJECTIVE THREE

Contribute to Commonwealth regional policy-making by providing intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on regional development issues

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- a. Outline instances where you have provided intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government.
- b. Number of instances information / feedback was provided.
- c. Outline instances where you have contributed to the achievement of common outcomes for State and Commonwealth Government.

What we will do

1. Engage with key stakeholders to share evidence and coordinate advocacy effort and advice to government

- Deliver the RDA BSW Brown Bag Briefings - coordinated regional briefings to provide shared communication on regional issues (L).
- Engage with local government and key regional stakeholder groups to contribute relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses (L).
- Work with the RDA Victorian Network and the extended RDA Network to align and strengthen advice into government (L).
- Work with the Victorian Government's Regional Partnerships and Regional Development Victoria to align regional development priorities across the three levels of government, industry and/or community (L).

2. Provide evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on critical regional development issues; and other levels of government where relevant

- Use our project budget to research and develop advice and recommendations to progress outcomes against our long-term and short to medium-term focus areas (L).
- Utilise our Regional Economic Development Strategies and their data dashboards to help provide a strong evidence base for all advice (L).
- Deliver advice to the Australian Government on critical regional development issues and priorities for our region in the form of reports, briefings or submissions, and surveys (L).
- Meet with members of parliament to discuss regional matters and participate in Ministerial Engagements and Roundtables led by the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and/or colleagues (L&C).

Anticipated Outcomes

- Shared understanding of regional issues and opportunities.
- Shared evidence and consistency of advice provided to all levels of government.
- Better identification of evidence gaps.
- Improved regional insight for all stakeholder groups.
- Increased regional development outcomes that deliver on both Victorian and Commonwealth objectives.
- Increased outcomes for the Victorian Regional Partnerships by providing advice to the government on Regional Partnership priorities that align with the RDA Charter and our Business Plan.
- Increased opportunities for joint funding across the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments.

Refer to the activities under "What we will do"

(L) = RDA BSW Committee **lead or champion** this initiative

(C) = RDA BSW Committee **contribute** to this activity

(O) = RDA BSW Committee **otherwise assist** this activity



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