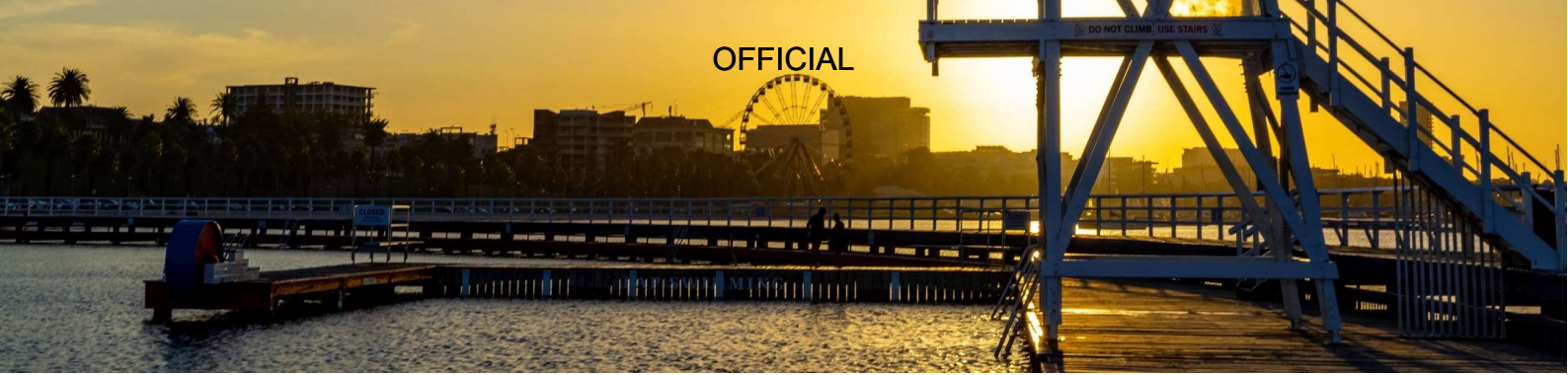


The background features a large graphic composed of overlapping triangles. A dark red triangle is on the left, a lighter red triangle is at the top, and a magenta triangle is at the bottom. The right side of the page is white.

Barwon Regional Partnership

2023 Priority Submission



Investing in Good Growth

The Barwon Region is growing rapidly with a projected growth of 27% by 2036. People are moving here to enjoy the lifestyle, environment, diverse employment sector, beaches, rural areas and to be part of Victoria's second largest city – Geelong.

The Barwon Regional Partnership is focused on ensuring that what attracts people to our region is not diminished or damaged by this rapid growth but leverages our strengths to enhance these benefits sustainably. Investing in good growth so that the benefits are experienced by all.

The Partnership has identified priority initiatives that will address some of the challenges and opportunities faced by the Barwon region as we strive for good growth.

The Barwon Regional Partnership is advocating for the following **top five priorities** for Victorian Government investment:

1. **Geelong Regional Priority Precincts**

Policy response: A new mechanism for the integrated planning and delivering of 10 'priority precincts' along the Geelong Regional Rail Network that address critical housing and transport needs.

2. **Housing (key worker housing, social housing, and affordable housing)**

Project and investment response: Fast track opportunities for workforce, social and affordable housing via a Barwon region wide commercial capability project response with the private sector to unlock government land identified and available, combined with local planning and engagement, to expedite the availability of this housing in key locations.

3. **Social Procurement**

Policy response: Embed the GROW/Geelong City Deal Social Procurement Model in the social procurement framework for all Victorian Government funded infrastructure projects.

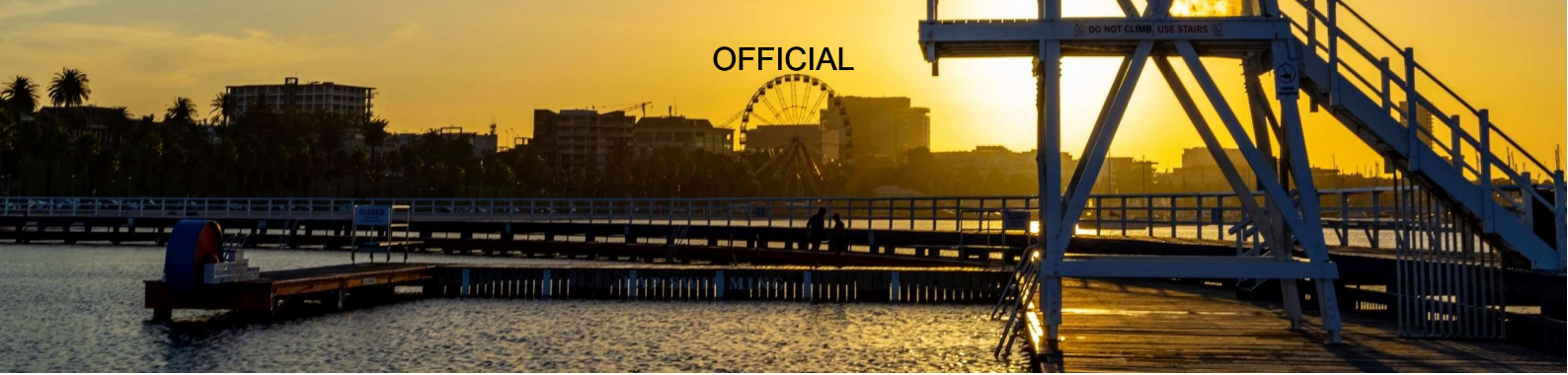
4. **Caring for Country: a space for Wadawurrung; and caring for Wadawurrung Country**

Project and investment response: A permanent physical presence for Wadawurrung in Geelong, serving as a centre for supporting growth and self-determination, celebrating and sharing culture, operating businesses, and representing generations to come.

Project and investment response: Caring for Wadawurrung Country by investing in projects within water catchment corridors on Wadawurrung Country, including the Kitjarra-dja-bul bullarto langi-ut Master Plan, a Healthy Country Plan for Porronggitj Karrong, and Murrk Njubitj Yarram Yaluk.

5. **Regional Recycled Water Grid enabling sustainable water management, agribusiness, national scale Hydrogen, clean tech industry and jobs growth**

Project and investment response: Investment to deliver a suite of on-ground Integrated Water Management (IWM) projects including a large-scale, staged recycled water and stormwater grid across the Moorabool Valley, Surf Coast Hinterland and the Bellarine.



Our current priorities fall under five outcomes:

Integrated, Connected Growth

- ✓ **Geelong Regional Priority Precincts (Priority #1)**
- ✓ Urban design and planning centred on rail and transport precincts, promotes efficient land use and development.
- ✓ Seamless connectivity across the region, facilitated by optimized transport infrastructure.

Growing Our Strengths

- ✓ **Housing: key worker housing (Priority #2)**
- ✓ Regional strengths fuel a robust local economy, attracting investments and enhances prosperity.
- ✓ A skilled workforce drives growth in vital sector

Cohesive and Inclusive Growth

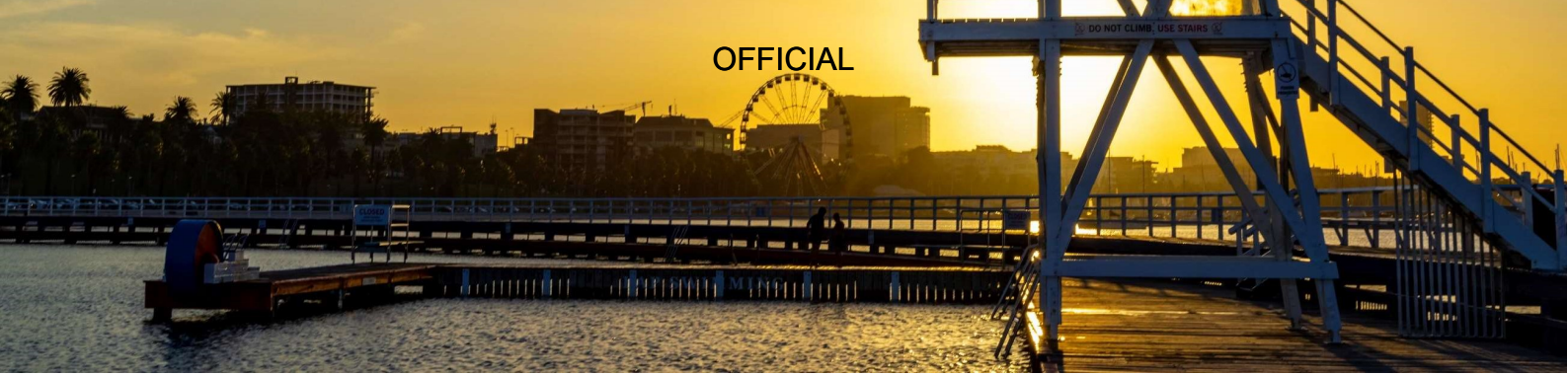
- ✓ **Housing: social and affordable housing (Priority #2)**
- ✓ **Social Procurement (Priority #3)**
- ✓ Bringing people together, empowering marginalised communities.
- ✓ Equitable access to services, spaces and facilities improves quality of life for communities.

Guiding Growth through Caring for Country

- ✓ **Caring for Country: a space for Wadawurrung; and caring for Wadawurrung Country (Priority #4)**
- ✓ Cultural wisdom shapes development, respecting Traditional Owners, supporting growth and self-determination, preserving ecosystems, and heritage.

Clean, Sustainable Growth

- ✓ **Regional Recycled Water Grid enabling sustainable water management, agribusiness, national scale Hydrogen, clean tech industry and jobs growth (Priority #5)**
- ✓ A thriving economy supported by diverse renewable energy and resource efficiency.
- ✓ Striving for a lowered carbon footprint.



The outlook for Barwon

The Barwon region is the fastest growing region across Victoria – growth that is projected to continue for the coming years.

We are seeing a shift in the migration demographic, with the 25-40 age bracket being the most populous in calling Barwon their new home.

We are seeing a surge in innovative businesses, our economy diversifying into emerging sectors, like the creative industries, and a demand for climate action and traditional owner recognition.

We need to ensure that our local services (health, education, social support, aged care) continue to grow and change in response to local demand, to protect the benefits of living in the Barwon Region. These services are also growing industries that will provide many of the jobs in the future

Barwon Fast Facts

Population: the Barwon region is the fastest growing region in the state

- Our population has grown by 64,500 people, over the 10 years to 2022, up 23.4%
- And is projected to grow by a further 91,100 people by 2036, up 26.8%

Housing: properties to buy or rent are in short supply, driving up prices and preventing people moving to the region for employment

- Rental vacancy rates are currently 1.2% (August 2023), a slight improvement from the all-time low of 0.8% (November 2021).
- Around 2,400 properties were offered for sale in January 2022, lower than any other time in the last decade. This has recovered slightly to over 4,600 properties on the market as of August 2023.

Transport:

- Colac-Otway and the Surf Coast LGAs in Barwon have poorer access to roads and public transport than the state average (2021 Regional Wellbeing Survey).

Employment:

- The unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Barwon was more than double the Barwon average, 8.8% compared to 4.1% (Census, 2021).
- More than 10,530 additional new workers are needed by 2025. A further 7,590 workers (at least) will be needed to replace retirements (Victorian Skills Authority, 3-year employment projections from 2022 to 2025).

Local Government Area	Population (2022)	Projected Growth (2022-2036)
Geelong	276,100	30.5%
Surf Coast	38,600	17.7%
Colac Otway	22,200	0.7%
Queenscliff	3,200	-1.2%

Industry	Estimate of total new workers for 2022-25
Visitor economy	4,250
Health and community services	3,870
Business, professional, and public administration services	3,490
Education and training	2,170
Construction	1,520
Manufacturing	660



Integrated, Connected Growth

To tackle the challenge posed by our region's rapid growth we're focusing on creating specialised zones or precincts that blend housing, transportation, and job opportunities. These precincts offer the ability to manage growth whilst enhancing liveability through integrated land use and built environment.

The precincts will offer diverse housing choices, streamlined transit, thriving work centres and community amenity. The precincts aim to curtail urban sprawl and champion sustainable growth.

Young people (aged 25-34) are at the forefront of our urban area's population increase, representing an impressive 50% of this growth. With this in mind, we aim to develop communities, buzzing with cultural diversity, powered by the energy of our young workforce.

The Geelong Regional Priority Precincts is at the heart of this transformation. We need our precincts to align with efficient transit and be underpinned by connectivity that's more than physical — it's about bridging where we live and where we work.

The G21 Integrated Transport Strategy (2023) found that:

Only 11% of respondents are satisfied with the bus network/service; and

81% favoured new housing at increased densities in existing centres and around public transport hubs

The precincts will be enhanced by efficient public transit corridors and an improved public transport network with increased frequency facilitating seamless commutes, integrating affordable living spaces with adjacent job opportunities.

By weaving together efficient transit, varied housing, and vibrant communities, we're not just embracing growth — we're shaping a smarter, sustainable future for our region.

Priority 1

- **Geelong Regional Priority Precincts** - A new mechanism for the integrated planning and delivering of 10 'priority precincts' along the Geelong Regional Rail Network that address critical housing and transport needs.

Other Related Projects

- **Avalon Rail Station** - The construction of a new Avalon rail station to service the Avalon International Airport and the growing Avalon employment precinct
- **Public Transport for Local Needs** - A comprehensive review of the Greater Geelong public transport network with subsequent phased uplifts to the network across the region over the next 4 years.
- **Northshore road upgrades** - address increased traffic and traffic hazards in and around the Port precinct



Growing Our Strengths

Place-based development strongly emphasizes using local resources to build on strengths, ensuring long-term sustainable growth for future generations.

At the heart, lies the essential availability of a skilled workforce. Equally important is the provision of affordable housing and accommodation solutions tailored to the meet the needs of our region's growth industries.

The Barwon region generated **\$2.6 billion in domestic visitor expenditure** in the year ending September 2022 — **52% more** than 2019.

and ensure a sustainable future for township economies. Housing diversity is maximised to improve access and add vibrancy to neighbourhoods.

The allure of our region's stunning landscapes attracts visitors throughout the year. Our creative industry and innovation precincts, combined with Geelong's distinction as a UNESCO City of Design, contribute to our dynamic identity. This relationship between the visitor economy and the creative sector offers a pathway for continuous year-round engagement.

Barwon REDS – Strategic Directions

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

By nurturing these strengths, we lay the groundwork for not just immediate success, but also a legacy of economic vitality that future generations can inherit.

Priority 2

- **Fast track opportunities for workforce, social and affordable housing** via a Barwon region wide commercial capability project response with the private sector to unlock government land identified and available, combined with local planning and engagement, to expedite the availability of this housing in key locations.

Other Related Project

- Capital funding for the revitalisation and **expansion of the Geelong Gallery**



Cohesive and Inclusive Growth

Our path to equitable growth, means building community wealth and ensuring no one is left behind. This involves addressing the unequal growth in the Barwon region, which faces higher-than-average marginalised communities and entrenched disadvantage. We aim to create an inclusive society by providing equal opportunities, affordable and social housing solutions and improved access to essential and community services and infrastructure.

The 3214 postcode (Corio, Norlane, North Shore) is the **fourth most disadvantaged in Victoria**. (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas, SEFIA, 2021)

There are 883 homeless people in the region and more than 5000 people experiencing severe rental stress. The current housing shortage is likely to see these numbers increase¹. Housing is a basic human need and a cornerstone of stability and opportunity. By expanding social housing initiatives, we're not just addressing shelter, but also opening avenues for economic and social growth.

Our commitment to inclusivity extends to community services, particularly healthcare and well-being, including delivering the Barwon Women's and Children's facilities.

A substantial portion of our residents have long-term health conditions, with mental health concerns rising.

At the heart of cultivating an inclusive and cohesive community lies meaningful employment. It's not just about financial stability; a job nurtures a person's sense of purpose, self-worth, and contributes to the overall well-being and growth of society. The GROW initiative is changing the way we buy and employ locally. Working with community organisations, businesses and government to ensure inclusive employment and social procurement are embedded into public infrastructure projects which helps to address entrenched disadvantage in our region.

Basic privileges such as having a home, a job, and access to essential services need to be available to everyone across our region.

Over 2,200 households, currently within in our region, are living on very low income and spending more than 30% of that income on private rental. These households routinely make difficult choices regarding the remaining available cash to pay for necessities such as food, utility bills, schooling and so forth. The longer term consequences of these difficult decisions include ill-health, diminished access to education, training and employment, social isolation and long term insecurity. (Regional Statement G21 Region Social Housing Project 2021)

Priority 2

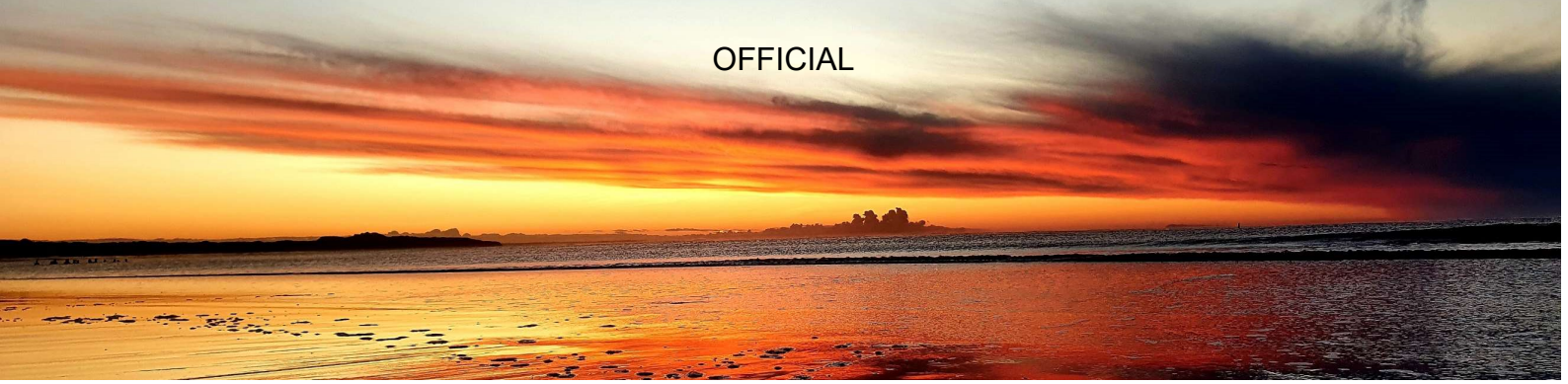
- **Fast track opportunities for workforce, social and affordable housing** via a Barwon region wide commercial capability project response with the private sector to unlock government land identified and available, combined with local planning and engagement, to expedite the availability of this housing in key locations.

Priority 3

- **Embed the GROW/Geelong City Deal Social Procurement Model** in the social procurement framework for all Victorian Government funded infrastructure projects.

Other Related Project

- Capital investment for **Barwon Health Community Mental Health Hubs** in Corio, Torquay and Colac



Guiding Growth through Caring for Country

The attendance of over 2,500 people at Pilk Purriyn – the Wadawurrung’s inaugural truth-telling event on 26 January 2023 shows that the Barwon region is ready to listen, reflect and acknowledge its past.

We seek to build on this recognition of change and support self-determination activities of the Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar people of the Barwon region.

This involves making our region one where the Traditional Owner community can self-determine, build their visibility and connection to the broader community. To support their organisation growth and self determination to meet the demand of engagement and services. A place where culture and stories can be passed to the next generation.

Central to this vision is the establishment of a physical presence in Geelong, a place that is grounded on Country, serving as a beacon for culture, heritage, and legacy.

This centre will provide a physical space for Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to work and also supports their engagement in the region. A space where generations can also gather to celebrate, share stories, and preserve the essence of their heritage.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander **population increased** in the Barwon region **by 45%** during the last Census period.

2,844 in 2016

4,126 in 2021

The Wadawurrung have set out aspirations in their Wadawurrung Country Plan, ***Paleert Tjaara Dja (Lets make country good together 2020 - 2030)***. Their goals include that by:

2029 – Wadawurrung people have a keeping place that is a safe space for practicing and passing on culture where our cultural artefacts and resources are housed and protected.

2028 – Wadawurrung people have a cultural learning centre for visitors and local people.

2028 – Wadawurrung have established two additional partnerships for incorporating cultural experiences into existing education or information centres.

2027 – 50% of Wadawurrung language names for places are back on Country.

Cultural placemaking also recognises the significance of the natural waterways that flow through the region. Efforts are required to turn them in to spaces where everyone can engage and learn about Country and Wadawurrung traditions. Guided by Traditional Owner wisdom, we aim to rejuvenate the land and waterways while honouring a deep respect for place and culture.

Priority 4

- **A permanent physical presence for Wadawurrung in Geelong**, serving as a centre for supporting growth and self-determination, celebrating and sharing culture, operating businesses, and representing generations to come.
- **Caring for Wadawurrung Country by investing in projects within water catchment corridors** on Wadawurrung Country, including the Kitjarra-dja-bul bullarto langi-ut Master Plan, a Healthy Country Plan for Porronggitj Karrong, and Murrk Njubitj Yarram Yaluk



Clean, Sustainable Growth

The Barwon region is well placed to accelerate the transition to a clean and sustainable economy that not only supports growth but also safeguards our natural assets and enhances our quality of life.

Linked by a network of 220kV transmission lines, we connect with major energy sources, notably the recent 300MW Victorian Big Battery near Geelong, showcasing our dedication to grid stability and renewable energy integration.

Climate change yields adverse weather, increased temperatures, and reduced annual rainfall, combined with a cycle of fire and flood events for our region — urging us towards carbon reduction and water security.

Adapting, we steer toward renewable energy, low-emission practices, climate resilient infrastructure and diversified water sources. A pro-active approach that addresses climate mitigation and resilience equips the Barwon region to adapt to the new climate with optimism.

Our commitment to water security drives us to explore innovative solutions such as recycled water for industry, primary production, and even the emerging hydrogen industry. A recycled water network serves as the catalyst for large scale food production in areas such as the Thompson Valley and the Bellarine ensuring local food security and preserving green breaks between settlement areas.

The Barwon Region consumes **2,550,000 kWh of electricity** and emits an estimated **4,300,000 tCO₂ of carbon emission** each year (~65% is from gas and electricity use and ~20% is from transport).

The region also produces **800,000 tonnes of waste per year** and this volume will grow to 1.1 million over next 25 years.

Our actions today will resonate beyond our immediate needs, shaping a legacy of responsible stewardship for generations to come.

In the Barwon region the circular economy is more than a concept; it's a living principle that transforms waste into valuable resources. Through innovative processes and closed-loop systems, we're utilising our strengths in advanced manufacturing to redefine how industries operate, minimising waste generation, and maximising the utilisation of materials, fostering sustainability at its core.

We recognise that the shift towards sustainability can't happen in isolation. It hinges on our ability to leverage our strengths and engage with Traditional Owners and our community. We understand that the transition must be inclusive and uplift all corners of our region.

Priority 5

- Investment to deliver a suite of on-ground **Integrated Water Management (IWM)** projects including a large-scale, staged recycled water and stormwater grid across the Moorabool Valley, Surf Coast Hinterland and the Bellarine.

Other Related Projects

- Delivery of the **Circular Economy Commercialisation Hub (CECH)**
- Development and implementation of a **Regional Clean Economy Transition Acceleration Plan (CETAP)**

For further information on the Barwon Partnership, please visit:

<https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/barwon>

Email: Barwon.Partnership@rdv.vic.gov.au