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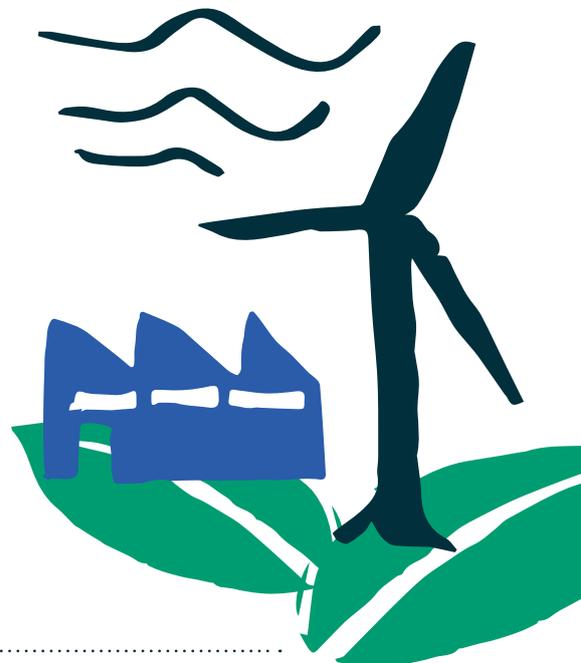
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the First Peoples – inclusive of formally recognised Traditional Owner groups, Gunaikurnai and Bunurong, and the Traditional Owner groups of the Far East Gippsland region – as the traditional custodians of the lands we now call Gippsland. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of their communities.

Commitment to improved outcomes for First Peoples

Victoria's Treaty process will have wide-ranging impacts for the way government and First Peoples work together. State-wide and Traditional Owner Treaties will provide a framework for the transfer of decision-making power and resources to support self-determining First Peoples communities to take control of matters that affect their lives.

The Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan reflects this commitment to Victoria's Treaty and Truth-telling processes by advocating for a regional transformation. This will be undertaken in partnership with Gippsland's First Peoples communities and respects and observes Aboriginal cultural heritage and the enduring connection Traditional Owners have to Country. We are committed to ensuring that the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan is responsive to Victoria's Treaty outcomes.

The Plan recognises the need to be mindful of the sizeable task Gippsland's First Peoples communities have in overseeing the protection and healing of

Country throughout the transition process; while ensuring the education, employment, economic and lifestyle opportunities are reachable by the region's First Peoples.

Aboriginal organisations and Traditional Owners will be actively engaged in the transition process to realise the Plan's outcomes which strive for:

- More training and long-term employment outcomes for First Peoples.
- More opportunities and avenues for First Peoples communities to participate in the regional economy.
- Accessible pathways for young Aboriginal people to understand and realise their future economic security.
- Greater and meaningful involvement of First Peoples communities in discussions and decision-making processes.
- Better digital inclusion and literacy for the region's First Peoples communities.



FOREWORD

This Transition Plan builds on many years of work to set out a clear and measurable long-term vision for economic growth, job creation and the development of sustainable industries across the region.

It reflects hundreds of hours of discussion and consultation, with businesses, communities, local organisations, workers and their families.

And it creates a path. The Victorian Government will continue to work with partners across Gippsland and in government to support businesses, help people find jobs, protect the things that make our region special and create the conditions where every Gippslander has the opportunity to thrive, now and into the future.

Developed by the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA), in collaboration with industry, community, education providers, and all levels of government, this plan has put the people of Gippsland, those most directly affected by the transition, at the forefront of government decision making.

This plan draws on the knowledge, expertise and voices of locals. The LVA engaged directly with more than 1000 individuals, communities and industry representatives from across the region.

This is a plan written for Gippsland, by Gippslanders in Gippsland. It includes a vision for the region in 2035 and establishes the principles locals want to see guide their future. It makes 52 recommendations and identifies opportunities for a diversified economy and a strong community.

A five-year Implementation Plan has also been developed to give the community a clear roadmap of current and planned activity by government. It will provide the basis for further investment and engagement from industry, the community and all three levels of government.

I acknowledge and appreciate every person, who made the time and effort to support the development of this plan. The depth of thought invested in this plan is a testament to the power of collaboration and the resilience of our community.

It is now up to us to collectively bring this plan to life as we navigate the transition together.

The Hon. Harriet Shing MP
Minister for Regional Development

PLAN AT A GLANCE

Our shared vision for Gippsland

We want an optimistic and realistic perspective on the future of our region. Our hopes and aspirations will be shared and understood. Our future includes:

- Education and training pathway options that link to future employment
- Appealing, meaningful local jobs and employment pathways
- A thriving economy
- A healthy, attractive and sustainable natural environment
- Safe, welcoming and vibrant communities
- A lifestyle that attracts new residents to the region and encourages existing residents to stay
- Coordinated action across industry, education, community and governments that demonstrates clear roles and responsibilities
- Acknowledgment of our proud history and bright future in vital industries

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSITION

Our people are at the heart of the transition process

Equity and inclusion

A sustainably developed future

Build on identified strengths and advantages

Adopting an evidence informed approach

A coordinated approach across industry, education, communities and government

Community pride

Shared leadership

ENABLERS

Institutional capability

Understanding strengths of the region

FOCUS AREAS

Education and training

Employment

The Economy

Liveability

Coordination, collaboration and shared leadership

GOALS

Increased access to relevant study and training opportunities

Grow, develop and retain a skilled workforce to meet the future needs of the region

Increased workforce participation through accessible employment pathways and inclusive employment practices

Support for transitioning workers in traditional industries

Increased opportunities for local supply chains and local procurement

Drive collaborative innovation to position Gippsland as a Victorian industry leader

OUTCOMES

Young people aspire to study and work in the region

High quality, valued jobs and career pathways in industries with a long-term future

A thriving economy focused on identified areas of strength

Sufficient housing to improve social outcomes and accommodate a growing workforce

A healthy and attractive natural environment

An inclusive and safe built environment that is appreciated by and caters to the needs of the community

Empowered and thriving communities that are diverse and socially cohesive

Accessible and inclusive services for health and wellbeing

Integrated transport for access to jobs, education and services

Reliable digital connectivity to enable businesses and the community to access the full benefits of digital innovation and inclusion

SUMMARY



Transition is a process of change. In Gippsland this will involve shifting from traditional industries to new, emerging industries; adopting sustainable practices; and adapting to new technologies and global trends. It is vital that this change occurs in a fair and equitable way that prioritises the wellbeing of all members of the community. Regional transition requires collaboration between government, industry and community groups. We need to work together to identify opportunities and develop strategies to achieve a prosperous future. We want to create an economy that supports long-term benefits for everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Transition is already underway across the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland

This Plan was developed as a partnership between government, business, industry and community across Gippsland. Its purpose is to provide a bold and optimistic guide for the region as it transitions towards a net zero economy.

Gippsland's transition has implications beyond the energy sector. The regions' forestry, manufacturing and agriculture industries are at the centre of global climate action driving transformation. The Plan builds on Victoria's Climate Change Strategy – for all sectors to contribute to climate action and help Victoria achieve its emissions reduction target of 75 to 80% below 2005 levels by 2035 and net zero emissions by 2045.

The change will affect different parts of the region in different ways. Communities throughout the region have long and proud histories in industries including power generation, mining, forestry, oil and gas extraction and agriculture.

The move to a low emissions future is having wide-ranging economic, employment, environmental and social impacts across Gippsland as traditional sectors evolve in response to climate change and the demands of the global economy. These concurrent transformations will create

opportunities and challenges, requiring an overarching plan to deliver the right outcomes for Gippsland and Victoria.

Industries such as mining, power generation and forestry are major economic contributors. However, they are not large employers compared to other sectors. In this sense, the region's economy is already diverse – with several existing strengths that can be further developed.

We need to address the unique challenges faced by industry and the community in the Latrobe Valley, while ensuring that the whole region is supported through change and benefits from future opportunities. The Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan acknowledges this tension and responds to clear feedback from across the region that a whole-of-Gippsland plan is needed to ensure success for the entire region.

The Plan is the result of extensive engagement. Gippslanders have stated they want a unified and cohesive response from leaders in business, community and all three levels of government. There is widespread recognition that the only way Latrobe Valley and Gippsland will navigate the transition successfully is if we work together.

There are opportunities in Gippsland for a prosperous future

We are well placed to prosper – Gippsland’s unique combination of natural beauty, rich resources and vibrant communities make it a great place to live, work and visit. The energy, tourism and food and fibre sectors can prosper and thrive, if we embrace change. Our health and community services are now the biggest employers in the region and will continue to grow as government and the private sector continue to invest in the well-being of Gippslanders.

Gippsland has been designated as a Renewable Energy Zone and the first declared Offshore Wind Zone in Australia, and the Victorian Government is re-establishing the State Electricity Commission (SEC). There is already a \$54 billion pipeline of more than 25 large renewable energy projects proposed for Gippsland. While this represents significant opportunity, it also signals the decentralisation of power generation in the region and further evidence that our traditional roles and identity will continue to evolve.

Despite the uncertainty, there are reasons for optimism. The transition to a clean economy will require a skilled workforce. The Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) projects that 12,925 new workers will be required across Gippsland by 2025, with even greater skills demand beyond that to service the pipeline of renewable energy projects. This will create opportunities for transitioning workers and build a pathway for future employment for young people and those who are underemployed, unemployed or not participating in the labour market.

Gippsland’s First Peoples have skills and knowledge that will help shape the way industries are changing to embrace more sustainable and climate friendly practices. Partnering with First Peoples communities to support their self-determination and share in their skills and knowledge will be key to a successful transition.

We must attract, train and retain a workforce that has the right skills for these future-focused jobs when they are needed. Education and training systems must be aligned with these needs.

Our growing population will increase demand for health and social services, agricultural food production, construction, education, childcare and a range of retail, service-based and hospitality jobs in the region.

This Plan maps out how we can make sure all Gippslanders have a fair opportunity to participate and benefit.

The region has identified a vision and the key areas we should collectively focus on to get there

Our community’s aspirations and priorities are at the heart of the Plan. The vision for Gippsland in 2035 includes:

- education and training pathway options that link to employment in appealing, meaningful local jobs
- a thriving economy
- a healthy, attractive and sustainable natural environment
- safe, welcoming and vibrant communities.

To achieve this vision, the Plan identifies five key areas of focus:

Education and training – identify skills shortages and future needs, build aspiration and opportunity for young people to study in the region, connect diverse groups across Gippsland with training and work pathways and ensure access to relevant study and training opportunities for existing workers as they reskill or upskill.

Employment – provide access to high quality, valued jobs and employment pathways in industries with a long-term future, with a particular focus on those workers transitioning from the traditional energy and forestry sectors and/or who may have been disenfranchised in the past.

The Economy – strengthen the region by building on our capabilities, focusing on local procurement and supply chain businesses and driving collaborative innovation across multiple sectors.

Liveability – increase affordable, safe and stable housing, protect our natural environment, celebrate diversity and creativity, improve digital and transport connections and ensure that our communities are inclusive, safe and accessible.

Coordination, collaboration and shared leadership – create meaningful partnerships between government, industry, private sector, unions, civil society groups and communities that have the knowledge, capability, capacity and resources to bring to the table.

Principles to guide this process

There are several principles that have guided the development of this Plan. They will also underpin our collective approach. They support the idea that a healthy economy, a clean environment and a fair society can and should co-exist.

Acknowledging existing work

This Plan does not displace or replace existing thinking or work already being undertaken across Gippsland. The pride and passion for our region across business, community and government is deep and heartfelt. We gathered countless examples of local communities and leaders making meaningful contributions to our region's growth and development.

The evidence underpinning this Plan is well established. It should be read in conjunction with existing plans, strategies and reports including the *Gippsland Regional Plan*, *Regional Economic Development Strategy for Gippsland*, *Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy*, local government plans and the *Forestry Transition Program*.

The Gippsland Regional Plan 2020 – 2025 has the support of One Gippsland, RDA Gippsland, Committee for Gippsland and the Gippsland Regional Partnership. It remains the primary strategic advocacy plan for the region. The LVA has aligned the transition priorities for the region with the Gippsland Regional Plan.

INTRODUCTION



Gippsland stretches from the outer east of Melbourne to the far east of Victoria – an area of more than 41,600 square kilometres. It's home to more than 291,000 people including formally recognised Traditional Owner groups, Gunaikurnai and Bunurong, and Traditional Owner groups in the Far East Gippsland region who have lived, worked and cared for this country and its resources for thousands of years.

The variety, beauty and abundance of the natural environment and its resources have made Gippsland a popular place to live and visit. It's recognised nationally as a key provider of agricultural, forestry and energy generation products and services.

For more than a century the Latrobe Valley has been the powerhouse of Victoria – generating the electricity required to keep the lights on and industry functioning by powering a thriving Victorian economy. The building, operation and maintenance of the power stations and the associated coal mines provided a source of pride, community identity, employment and economic activity. The workforce that has grown around this industry is highly skilled and has been instrumental in delivering the benefits accrued by all of Victoria.

Mining, including minerals and oil and gas extraction, is the region's largest economic contributor – and is almost 63% larger as a share of regional output than the Victorian average. Whilst mining ranks 15th in number of employees (around 3,000 compared to more than 16,000 in healthcare and over 15,000 in construction), associated supply chain businesses reliant on the coal mining and power generation industries are also significant employers. Energy Australia estimates that each Yallourn Power Station worker generates an additional 4 to 5 jobs in the region.¹

Gippsland farms produce 28.6% of Victoria's dairy, 23.4% of Victoria's beef and 19% of Victoria's vegetables. There are opportunities to continue to grow and add value to the region's food and fibre strengths as a very high proportion of what we produce leaves the region in a relatively unprocessed state.

Gippsland is an attractive visitor destination. Experiences are underpinned by our diverse natural attractions, engaging towns and villages, established tourism brands, a growing food and wine scene, Aboriginal culture, sporting events, arts and cultural venues, festivals and events.

Creativity and innovation among businesses and communities develops unique experiences that express local identity and pride and engagement with visitors and locals.

A series of recent economic and natural events has created challenges – ranging from privatisation of the State Electricity Commission in the 1990's and the 2014 Hazelwood Mine fire and Power Station closure in 2017 to a series of major bushfires, floods, drought across Gippsland and most recently COVID-19. None of these events were planned for – resulting in communities, businesses and governments reacting after the fact, or with very little lead time.

The transition away from native forest harvesting provides support, training and assistance through the *Forestry Transition Program* to build opportunities for new industries and jobs. This includes support for affected workers, businesses, communities and the supply chain.

¹ Energy Australia (2021) [Yallourn Fact Sheet](#), accessed 25 October 2022.



The Gippsland Plantations Investment Program will add 16 million trees to Victoria's plantation estate. These new plantations have the potential to underpin new state-of-the-art wood processing and manufacturing in the region, however they will take time to mature. VicForests is also leading a farm forestry program focused on maximising the contribution that farm forestry can make to increasing the supply of plantation timber while delivering benefits to private land holders and the community.

Climate change and the effects of carbon emissions are driving a global move away from fossil fuel power generation. The owners of remaining power stations and mines are managing ageing infrastructure, looking to a future in lower cost, clean energy alternatives, working to rehabilitate assets and responding to shifting investor preferences. The change that is underway is inevitable, and it's accelerating. Our region can choose how it responds. But the time to act is now.

The region's water resources underpin the local economy and our existing and future industries. Climate change and population growth are putting pressure on water resources necessary to enable Gippsland's transition. We need to consider all parts of the water cycle as an integrated system, to secure and optimise our water supply, as well as our jobs, rivers, communities and industries for the decades to come.

The opportunities and challenges are not defined by local government boundaries. Gippsland is a region of interdependent communities with no clear 'capital city'. There is strong appetite for a united and cohesive response to transition that will benefit the region as a whole. We are only limited by our ambition and our willingness to work together.

The Gippsland coast is a nationally significant location for offshore wind and future power generation. The region has a skilled workforce that can support the construction, operation, manufacturing, engineering and research that are required to build this future industry.

The Latrobe Valley is a Victorian Government declared Health Innovation Zone - the first of its kind in Australia. It is a place for innovation, collaboration and new ways of working. It gives communities a voice and empowers them so they can have a say in the decision-making, design, planning and delivery of services and programs that improve their health and well-being. There are lessons from the Health Innovation Zone that can be shared with the whole of Gippsland.



What is this Plan?

The Plan sets out a vision for a prosperous region that has been developed in the region, by the region, for the region. It outlines factors that are impacting people socially and demographically, and considers the economy, employment, education and environment.

It sets out goals and guiding principles that will underpin the approach to achieving a successful transition – one that is inclusive and equitable, sustainably developed and enhances the environment, health, wellbeing and human rights of the community.

This Plan provides a roadmap to maximise opportunities for economic participation across the region, with the creation of quality, long-term local jobs in the strategic growth sectors of advanced manufacturing, food and fibre, new energy, tourism and health. It is a guide for action by government, industry and the community, encouraging partnerships, collaboration, projects, programs and initiatives that will contribute to achieving its goals and outcomes.

The Gippsland community is as diverse as its geography. Consequently, there is no single, shared vision that encompasses every individual's views. The experience of the transition process and its effects will be felt differently across each community. The Plan outlines a positive strengths-based future for the region that can be widely understood and embraced by the community.

The Plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect the region's changing needs.

Why do we need the Plan?

A global transformation is occurring in the energy sector – a change from emissions-intensive power generation to low and eventually zero emissions. This industry transition will affect everyone in Victoria and Australia and there are concerns about reliability of supply and rising costs. It will also directly impact the workers, businesses and communities where the traditional power industry is based, primarily the Latrobe Valley.

However, this energy transformation has implications beyond the people who work in the energy sector. The move to a low emissions future will have wide-ranging economic, environmental and social impacts across Gippsland as traditional

sectors change in response to climate change, the demands of the global economy, and a community desire for environmental sustainability and regeneration.

Transition is a process of change from one point to another. It does not have to be a negative move away from something; it can be a positive move *towards* something else. Local and international research suggests that positive, long-term economic, social and environmental outcomes are more likely when transitions are well planned. The aim of this Plan is to ensure that the changes we face together benefit the entire community through a proactive and positive approach to future opportunities.

This is an opportunity for our region to:

- capture and develop new growth opportunities
- embrace entrepreneurship
- improve resilience to future change
- address entrenched socio-economic inequities
- enhance economic performance.

Ensuring the transition is sustainable and does not strain existing precious natural resources will require working collaboratively across industry, all levels of government, and with Traditional Owners and the community.

Transition to a clean energy economy will lead to increased prospects for agriculture, construction and manufacturing, requiring a skilled workforce. This will create opportunities for transitioning current power industry workers and build a pathway for future employment for young people and those who are underemployed, unemployed or not participating in the labour market.

Across Gippsland there are multiple transitions occurring at once, including power generation, oil and gas, manufacturing, agriculture, fishing, forestry and tourism. The result is a much larger regional transformation that will fundamentally reshape our local economy, social dynamics and institutions.

The end of Victoria's native timber harvesting has been brought forward to 1 January 2024, after repeated bushfires and court actions.

The planned closure date of the Yallourn Power Station in 2028 and Loy Yang A in 2035 together with the imminent decline of offshore gas and oil, escalating investment in renewable energy, impacts of bushfires and COVID-19 on tourism and the significant disruption to the native forestry industry mean that the time is right for the region to come together and embrace a positive vision and plan for transition.

How was the Plan developed?

Our community's aspirations and priorities are at the heart of this Plan.

The Plan is the result of extensive engagement with individuals, community groups, peak organisations, employers, industry groups, unions, Traditional Owners, professional bodies, education and training providers and local governments. Their stories, knowledge and expertise have resulted in the vision, priorities and guiding principles set out in the Plan.

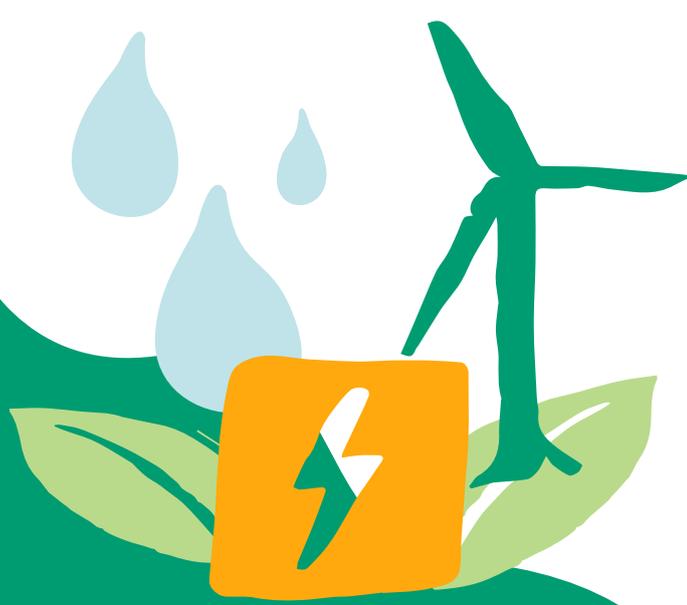
Engagement included face-to-face meetings, interviews, surveys and focus groups. Listening to people across the region revealed that the community wants a unified and cohesive response to change. This Plan takes a whole of Gippsland view that acknowledges the different ways transition will be felt across the region and supports a fair and proportionate response.

The Plan draws on evidence from a review of existing published literature and reports, including a large selection of plans and strategies developed in the region over recent years. Many of these reports set out opportunities to create jobs or priorities to support economic diversification, attract investment, grow the visitor economy, address climate change and unlock investment.

This Plan does not replicate these existing works. It provides an updated community vision for Gippsland and the opportunities this presents, outlining the required conditions and areas of focus that will contribute to achieving this vision.

The review also included research and case study material from transitions in other regions of Australia including Collie and the Hunter Valley, along with international examples including New Zealand, the United States of America, Canada, Germany and Scotland.

A discussion paper was released for public feedback on 4 January 2023. It provided a summary of the process to date and summarised the key messages heard during engagement. It requested feedback and further input from the community on the vision, principles and goals proposed for inclusion in the Plan.



**The Gippsland Energy sector
(Electricity, Gas, Water and
Waste Services) accounts for
\$1.2 billion
in annual GVA and employs
4,100 people**

(Source: NIEIR 2022)

A draft of the Plan was released for public feedback on 25 January 2023. The draft incorporated feedback and engagement following the release of the discussion paper. It provided further opportunity to maximise visibility of the Plan during development and for community to provide feedback.

Throughout this time the Latrobe Valley Authority continued to meet with interested community members and groups and hear their priorities for the Plan.

People want a coordinated approach between all levels of government in partnership with industry, education, workers and communities. Key themes that emerged from the engagement process included the importance of:

- maximising opportunities for well-paid, good quality jobs across the region that create a lifestyle that people value and encourages existing and new residents to live, learn and work in Gippsland
- creating opportunities to participate in the labour force for those who experience barriers to employment
- the need for young people to aspire to study and work locally by creating attractive and relevant opportunities and pathways that support them to participate fully in local education, the workforce and community life
- building on identified regional strengths to support opportunities for economic diversification and local supply chains while positioning Gippsland as a leader in new and emerging industries such as offshore wind, renewable hydrogen, circular economy and aquaculture; and building community understanding of the benefits for all
- maintaining and enhancing the liveability of the region including increased investment in health, aged care, childcare, and artistic, cultural, recreation and leisure opportunities
- creating welcoming communities across the region that celebrate diversity and inclusion
- improving outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability, including health and wellbeing, and community and economic participation.



Governance

A Project Control Group comprised of Latrobe City Council, One Gippsland, Gippsland Regional Partnership, Regional Development Victoria and the Latrobe Valley Authority has provided governance and guidance for the Plan's development.

An Implementation Working Group (IWG) made up of leaders from across Gippsland has been integral to the development of the Plan. IWG members volunteered their expertise and time to help develop the Plan and support its ongoing communication, advocacy, collaboration and engagement.

A Victorian Government Reference Group composed of senior public servants has also supported the development of this Plan. Its members helped bring a whole of government lens to the project and ensure that the region's perspectives are being heard within government.

The Plan is supported by an Outcomes Framework and an ongoing engagement strategy. The Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) will progressively monitor initiatives against the Outcomes Framework and continue to engage with the community to ensure that actions are adjusted with feedback based on changing local conditions. Data will be collected and shared so lessons can be adopted to enable continuous improvement.



How can the Plan be used?

We all have a role to play in Gippsland's regional transformation. Potential uses for the Plan include:

Local governments

- Contribute to strategic council planning
- Guide future investment
- Promote collaboration between industry and all levels of government
- Reference for future transition community consultation programs.

Industry and investor groups

- Identify potential investment opportunities
- Measure region-specific information and potential levels of service strategies
- Support applications for funding and proposals for supporting growth and new job creation.

Businesses and business associations

- Identify potential end use markets
- Support business case development
- Support applications for funding and proposals for the provision of goods and services.

Social enterprises, non-government organisations (NGOs) and incorporated committees

- Understand the role/s that social enterprises and NGOs can have in Gippsland's transition and inform strategic planning
- Identify opportunities to provide social support and linkages to community and government services
- Inform education programs
- Support applications for funding and proposals for the provision of goods and services.

Researchers and educators

- Inform future areas of research
- Inform education programs
- Support applications for funding and proposals for the provision of goods and services.

Community

- Embrace the narrative that Gippsland is a region with boundless opportunities and potential, and a region which is transitioning to a stronger future
- Appreciate the opportunities to study and work in the region
- Understand the role/s that individuals can have in Gippsland's transition.

The Victorian Government

- Contribute to policy planning and inform the development of programs, projects or initiatives that will support transition in the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland
- Prioritise opportunities related to transition activity in Gippsland wherever possible (e.g. offshore wind manufacturing, mine rehabilitation capabilities).

The Australian Government

- Contribute to policy planning and/or to inform the development of programs, projects or initiatives that will support transition in the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland
- Prioritise opportunities related to transition activity in Gippsland wherever possible (e.g. offshore wind manufacturing, mine rehabilitation capabilities).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



To achieve the long-term vision and goals outlined in this Plan, there are several principles that have guided its development and will continue to guide the transition process. These principles align with the United Nations' *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

Adopted in 2015 by 193 member states, including Australia, the 2030 Agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that address social, economic and environmental development, as well as important aspects related to peace, justice and effective institutions.

Key among these goals are the calls for an integrated approach to development; objectives which recognise the need to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions; combat inequality within and among countries; preserve the planet; create inclusive and sustainable economic growth; achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men; and ensure full gender equality and social inclusion.

Indicators developed to track progress towards the SDGs will be used as part of an Outcomes Framework for this Plan to measure outcomes related to the five focus areas of education and training; employment; economy; liveability; and coordination, collaboration and shared leadership.

-  **People are at the heart of the transition process**
-  **Equity and inclusion**
-  **A sustainably developed future**
-  **Build on identified strengths and advantages**
-  **Adopting an evidence-informed approach**
-  **A coordinated approach across government, industry, education and communities**



People are at the heart of the transition process



Our people must be empowered to shape their future.

We recognise the need to listen and respect local knowledge and expertise. Transition is not an abstract process, but a real experience that affects real people.

The future vision outlined in this Plan has been developed through an inclusive, place-based approach.

Ongoing community engagement will underpin the delivery of the Plan and ensure our community is prioritised throughout the transition process.

Equity and inclusion



Transition should improve the region's economy, environment and liveability without negatively impacting those most vulnerable to change or at risk of exclusion. All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities, and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. There needs to be support in place to assist individuals, families and marginalised communities. Policies must be inclusive of those in our community who have historically had limited access or support to equitably participate in education and training, employment and the economy.

We can improve outcomes for those already experiencing barriers to employment, education or social participation by working with them in ways that reflect and respect their choices.

A sustainably developed future



It is widely acknowledged that prosperity is about more than economic growth, and that happiness and physical and mental wellbeing are equally important.

An integrated approach that balances environmental, climate change, economic and social priorities without prioritising one at the expense of another can help reduce inequalities and produce positive outcomes for the entire community.

This includes gender equity through empowering women, especially those from working class, diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds; removing barriers and prioritising women's business opportunities; and recognising the talent, strength and skills of women as entrepreneurs, business and community leaders.

We should seek to maximise opportunities for industries to reduce their carbon footprint and advocate for sustainable public policy. This includes ensuring the rehabilitation of the Latrobe Valley mines provides, safe, stable and sustainable landforms for the region.

The approach needs to include a strong focus on Traditional Owners – acknowledging that future industrial, renewable energy, agricultural land and water use is taking place on the unceded lands of the region's First Peoples.

Build on identified strengths and advantages



Understanding and leveraging the region's competitive advantages (social, economic and environmental) through innovation and collaboration is critical to achieving Gippsland's future prosperity.

A Gippsland first approach to facilitating support for business, industry, not-for-profits, community organisations and social enterprises that helps communities and our environment become stronger and more resilient ensures regional economic growth is maintained and local employment opportunities are increased.

A collaborative environment maximises these opportunities and encourages new entrants and investors, whilst existing businesses continuously innovate and seek new and more productive ways of doing business.

Adopting an evidence-informed approach



There are important factors that will influence the transition process – many of which are outside the control of the region. These include state, national and international government policy decisions, and private and commercial investment decisions.

Understanding current workforce requirements, future projections, skills gaps, workforce shortfalls and training needs can inform decision-making and drive innovation.

The Plan will be subject to monitoring, evaluation and iterative refinement. It will be updated as circumstances change.

A coordinated approach across industry, education, communities and government



To achieve the vision for our region set out in the Plan, genuine partnerships and shared leadership between government, industry, private sector, unions, civil society groups, communities and governments is essential.

All these groups have equally important knowledge, capability, capacity and resources to contribute.

Government's role is to work as a partner with the region to achieve the locally-identified priorities.



FOCUS AREAS: THE TRANSITION PATH



A strong future requires a diverse economy, a skilled workforce to meet the demand of future projects, and investment in housing and services. Combining the guiding principles for a transition process based on evidence and regional strength is the best way to achieve this.

Our community identified five priority areas where the guiding principles will be applied to achieve the future vision for Gippsland.

Education and training

Education, training and life-long learning is a cornerstone of a thriving and inclusive Gippsland. Providing access to high quality education reduces disadvantage and expands opportunities for those experiencing intergenerational unemployment. A commitment from employers to support lifelong learning throughout employment will ensure the region's workforce can adapt to industry shifts and economic changes.

Priorities include raising awareness of employment opportunities, developing clear pathways between secondary, vocational and higher education and partnering with industry to ensure that education and training meet industry needs.

Access to relevant study and training opportunities

Our people want increased opportunities for quality training and education in future growth industries that are close to home. Providing these opportunities and pathways to 'work where you study' is a recurring theme, particularly for young

people and existing workers reskilling or upskilling. Options for onsite delivery and accessible local courses delivered by quality educators is essential. Flexible arrangements to allow workers to participate in transition reskilling while still employed in their existing occupation will help, especially where new roles with the same employer are not possible.

Matching educational offerings with industry and workforce needs will be required during transition.

Industry training sector partnership

With the support of funding from the Victorian Government, TAFE Gippsland, Federation University, Star of the South and Energy Australia are working together to map existing skills in coal power generation roles with those needed in offshore wind. The project will identify transition opportunities and what new skills, qualifications and training are needed and should be designed and offered locally to build a renewable energy workforce in Gippsland.

This aligns with the Victorian Skills Authority's *Victorian Skills Plan for 2022 into 2023*, which highlights the need for:

- increased engagement in education and employment
- promotion and support for local pathways

- addressing barriers to education and training including the availability of trainers
- delivering education and training locally
- the strengthening of connections between individuals, education providers and industry to meet demand.

Affordable and accessible education is also a priority. Key areas of focus that can improve access to education include entry requirements for tertiary education, the cost of degrees, online provision, affordable student accommodation, and financial support during studies.

The Gippsland Regional Council of Adult, Community and Further Education is one of eight across Victoria. It draws together expertise and local knowledge to boost numbers of adults accessing education and grow their confidence, knowledge and skills. This includes a focus on increasing support for learners who may find it difficult to participate for a range of reasons.

Victoria's Adult, Community and Further Education Board provides funding to Learn Local providers

to deliver pre-accredited training and other programs that support learners to return to study; improve their core skills (literacy, numeracy, English language, employability, digital skills); gain a qualification; broaden their employment options; and learn new skills. This assists learners to successfully go on to further training, gain a qualification or get a job.

The provision of affordable short courses through Learn Local courses, TAFE and university and more support for students from low socio-economic, multicultural and LGBTIQ+ groups, and people living with disabilities can help address systemic disadvantage and intergenerational unemployment in the region. Delivering relevant local training and study opportunities will require more quality teachers and educators, often with specific skills and experience gained in industry. Developing collaborative options with the private sector such as seconding industry experts to deliver training whilst still employed in industry should be explored.



Allied Health Partnership

Employment growth in health and community services is growing at a greater rate than any other sector in Gippsland.

In 2017, the Latrobe Valley Authority, the Department of Education, and Regional Development Victoria (RDV) came together to discuss training and workforce issues in the field of health and community services in Gippsland.

A significant research study, *Modelling Gippsland's Future Health and Community Service Workforce* undertaken by Swinburne University and commissioned by the LVA, indicated that the allied health workforce needed to expand. Ageing of the current workforce could lead to even greater shortages.

The Gippsland Regional Partnership identified that the health workforce was a key priority for the region. Coordinated local advocacy led by the LVA, RDV and other Victorian Government departments resulted in the delivery of allied health courses at Federation University's Gippsland campus. Occupational Therapy commenced in 2020 and Physiotherapy in 2021, supported by funding through the Victorian Government's Regional Skills Fund.

Federation University estimates the courses will produce 30 - 60 fully qualified practitioners ready to enter the workforce within four to five years and these numbers will continue to grow on an annual basis.

Federation University has worked with Latrobe Regional Hospital, Latrobe Community Health Service, Bass Coast Health Service and Latrobe City Council to support allied health students' clinical learning. The Gippsland Regional Aquatic Centre is also the site of a Wellness Centre funded by a \$750,000 grant from the Victorian Government and used by Federation University to deliver training programs including physiotherapy, exercise physiology, occupational therapy and speech pathology. The Wellness Centre allows locals to train and upskill within their own community before finding a rewarding job in the local healthcare sector. The facility is open to the general public with services provided by qualified allied health professionals, improving access to healthcare for Gippsland locals.

Young people aspire to study and work in the region

The Plan focuses on increasing participation of young people in employment and education by demonstrating clear pathways to move from school to employment and creating attractive opportunities. This begins with improving early years outcomes, increasing attendance at school from a young age, and providing an attractive, accessible learning and social environment for young people.

The *Gippsland Energy Skills Mapping Report* points to a lack of understanding or interest among students in Years 10-12 about a career in new energy. The report recommends raising awareness of new energy careers through partnerships with primary and secondary schools, Local Learning and Employment Networks, career practitioners, educators, industry and government. This should include highlighting the different stages of job creation as the region transitions to low emissions energy generation.

Better marketing of new employment opportunities to secondary students, parents and career educators will help them understand the options and pathways available to students after secondary education. This could include professional development for careers educators about new employment opportunities in the region.

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation's (GLaWAC) Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy highlights the need

for young Aboriginal people to have access to pathways that support school leavers to understand and realise their future economic security. The GLaWAC strategy recognises the need for a collaborative approach between First Peoples communities and mainstream services that are willing to commit to employment targets, succession planning and inclusive policies and strategies.

Life changing careers in health and community services

Building on recommendations to promote career pathways made in the *Modelling Gippsland's Future Health and Community Service Workforce* report, Federation University's Collaborative Evaluation and Research Group (CERG) in partnership with the LVA, produced a Career Pathways booklet, a Gippsland Careers Guide and an inspiring series of videos profiling current students and graduates' health and community service career journeys. The videos feature both mature age and recent school leavers and cover a range of disciplines within the health and community services sector.

The videos are available [online](#).

Ladder Step Up Latrobe Valley

The Ladder Step Up Latrobe Valley program builds independence and self-agency in young people (aged 16 – 25 years) at risk of long-term unemployment.

Through a social inclusion model, the program supports young people to build confidence and community connections and test a range of education, training and employment options.

The Ladder program commenced in 2018. By 2020, 84% of participants had become engaged in education, employment and training after completing the Ladder program.

As part of the Victorian Government's Navigator program, Ladder established a pilot program in partnership with Berry Street to expand beyond the Latrobe Valley. The second Navigator program was completed by young people in Bass Coast and South Gippsland in 2022.

The six week program supported young people in Bass Coast and South Gippsland to consider their education opportunities; and increase health and wellbeing, independent living skills and community connections.



KIMBERLY WADYEHWATA



Years in the Latrobe Valley: 8

Role: Pharmacist

Employer: Latrobe Regional Hospital

Based in: Traralgon

Age: 22

Key Latrobe Valley benefits: Stability, growth, community connections, proximity, family

Emigrating from the suburban environment of Leicester, England to regional Traralgon was a culture shock for Kimberly Wadyehwata. She was just 14 years old and arriving during a cold winter and the middle of a school year didn't help. But eight years on, she couldn't imagine living anywhere else.

Born in Zimbabwe, Kimberly initially moved to England with her family when she was quite young. In 2014, her parents – both registered nurses – were looking to relocate to Victoria where there was greater economic growth than the UK and access to career and education opportunities. Despite initially looking at Melbourne as a potential destination, they chose the Latrobe Valley following the advice of family members who had already made the move there a few years earlier.

Kimberly attended St Paul's Anglican Grammar School in Warragul for four years and credits the bus service provided with making the daily commute easy. When she graduated, options for local university courses were limited. Kimberly was interested in medicine and pharmacology – neither of which could be studied at an undergraduate level nearby. She made the decision to move to Melbourne to study a Bachelor of Pharmacy at RMIT.

After two years away, Kimberly wanted nothing more than to return to the relaxed lifestyle of the Latrobe Valley, to her family and the social networks she had established. The city life of Melbourne didn't appeal to her long term, and she believed that the Valley offered greater opportunities for career advancement and immediate employment. In 2020, COVID-19 brought her back home to Traralgon and straight into an internship as a pharmacy technician at Latrobe Regional Hospital, where her father also works.

While many of her friends suffered economically during the COVID-19 period, Kimberly flourished in her new role. She continued to study remotely and recently graduated with honours. She aspires to be a clinical pharmacist, specialising in psychiatry and mental health and is already on her way – being mentored and trained in-house by a specialist at Latrobe Regional Hospital.

Kimberly is grateful for the opportunities that she has received and the ability to work within her chosen career. In 2023 she hopes to launch a talk show focusing on regional Victoria and the inspiring people – especially in the healthcare field – who are making a difference. She wants to draw attention to what's happening in regional Victoria and help communities improve their access to health services.

After guest speaking at a local Inspiring Young Women night, she was approached to participate in programs with the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) – which provides channels of influence that enable multicultural youth to practice leadership and promote understanding of their knowledge and lived experience – based at the Centre of Multicultural Youth in Morwell.

'Remote learning certainly opened up more opportunities for me, making further education accessible, but returning to the Latrobe Valley and all it has to offer was a priority for me,' said Kimberly.

'Through my work with YAG, I have spoken with a lot of girls whose whole life is here and the Valley is all that they have ever known. My advice to them is to be fearless, to not accept 'no' as an answer and to pursue their dreams because there are people out there willing to help and guide them,' she added.

'The Latrobe Valley is home for me. Unlike the chaos of the city, I can get to work in six minutes, my gym is 10 minutes away and everything else I need is close by. I see my future right here.'

Employment

Having the right jobs available in the right industries, and the right workers for these jobs, is essential for a thriving and prosperous Gippsland.

The Victorian Government's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2045 presents significant workforce opportunities and challenges for the clean economy. Victoria is already the leading state for renewable energy employment with 30% of Australia's renewable energy jobs. While the estimated number of jobs likely to be created in renewable energy varies, the *Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy 2023-2033* projects that there will be significant demand and new jobs in existing occupations including architectural, building and surveying technicians; urban planners; building and plumbing labourers; civil engineering draftspersons and technicians; project and stakeholder managers; electricians; electrical, water resource and environmental engineers; and mechanics. New specialist occupations will also be created in areas such as battery storage; circular design; energy auditing; home and business electrification; and energy efficiency, resource recovery, water management and sustainability. The opportunities and the challenges of providing a workforce for the pipeline of renewable energy projects planned for Gippsland is set out in the *Gippsland Energy Skills Mapping Report*.

A coordinated workforce development approach involving employers, unions, the education/training sector, Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and government is required to:

- understand the current workforce's skills and demographics
- determine future workforce needs and the skills required
- identify gaps
- develop targeted programs to reskill and upskill the existing workforce
- help young people transition to employment
- implement training and education for new job entrants to ensure the new energy sector has a workforce with the right skills and qualifications available at the right times.

Skills shortages and training requirements need to be identified early. The rate of change already underway is increasing the imperative to act.

Investing in training for clean energy jobs

Building on the *Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy 2023-2033*, the *Victorian Energy Jobs Plan* will enable implementation of key initiatives supporting the renewable energy sector. Alongside the *Victorian Skills Plan*, the recently announced SEC Centre of Training Excellence, Wind Worker Training Centre, Hydrogen Worker Training Centre, and wind worker workforce development plans, the *Victorian Energy Jobs Plan* will ensure Victoria has the workforce capabilities and capacity needed to reach our net zero emissions targets.

The 2022 *Gippsland Regional Labour Force Participation Report* indicates that more than 100,000 people in Gippsland are classified as not in the labour force, meaning they are not looking for work or receiving unemployment benefits. Growing the region's workforce will require a concerted effort to raise the participation rate. Gippsland's LLENs have a key role in supporting this through their work facilitating partnerships and brokering initiatives between education and training providers, other local service providers, local communities and industry.

New energy projects and the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang coal mines will also offer opportunities for economic and social participation and support local employment in the coming years. The *Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy (LVRRS)* provides a blueprint to progress mine rehabilitation planning and activities, monitored by the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority.

Between 2017 and 2021, Hazelwood's rehabilitation has provided work for on average 400 people, peaking at more than 500 people during busy periods.² The ongoing rehabilitation works at

² ENGIE, Hazelwood Rehabilitation Project - October 2021, *Submission to the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee Inquiry into the closure of Hazelwood and Yallourn Power Stations*.

Hazelwood and the announced closure of Yallourn in 2028 and Loy Yang A power station in 2035 will create more local jobs and provide more opportunities for localised training and education programs.

There will be a continued requirement for skilled workers in the region well into the future, with skills being developed at Hazelwood around

decommissioning, demolition, remediation and rehabilitation. The skillset, knowledge and expertise of workers, local industry, education and research will be essential to the long-term rehabilitation of three mine sites and provide broader opportunities to support similar projects in other localities.



Hazelwood Rehabilitation Project

An Environment Effects Statements (EES) process will determine the rehabilitation outcome for the Hazelwood site. A Concept Master Plan has been developed by the operator (ENGIE) with a vision to deliver a safe, stable and sustainable landform suitable for future development. The masterplan provides possibilities for a rehabilitated site, including developments related to agriculture, tourism and light industrial operations. Rehabilitation and demolition activities to transition the 4,000-hectare site have been underway since 2017. Demolition activities are scheduled to be completed in 2023, while rehabilitation activities and after care are likely to continue for many years. The process involves multiple sub-projects broadly covering decommissioning, demolition, mine rehabilitation and site remediation.

A commitment to employ local workers and contractors wherever possible has achieved significant local employment and procurement outcomes. Associated goods and services have also been purchased locally through procurement policies and associated supply chain commitments.

The project has averaged around 75% local employment each year since 2017. This includes a high rate of local employment through contractors (more than 90%), while the demolition contract has ensured that at least 50% local employment has been achieved.

With the announced closure of Yallourn in 2028 and Loy Yang A power station in 2035 there will be additional employment and procurement opportunities for rehabilitation works over the next decade. There will also be opportunities associated with the pipeline of new energy projects that has been flagged for Gippsland.

High quality, valued jobs and employment pathways in industries with a long-term future

The nature of work is evolving. Where we work, how we work and the industries that employ us have changed and will continue to do so. Increasingly, the idea of a single job for life is not only unrealistic, but for many people entering the job market, it's also an unattractive proposition.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated our ability to work remotely, which has seen an influx of people from Melbourne seeking a new life in the country, while maintaining their current employment in the city.

Automation, mechanisation and the shift to a low and zero emissions economy, combined with changes to the availability and use of natural resources mean that some industries and jobs are in decline whilst others are growing and present enormous future opportunities. These changes are creating some tension in the Gippsland workforce, particularly as well-paid jobs in the extractive industries disappear.

It is essential to balance the decline in transitioning industries with the rate of growth in new and emerging sectors to ensure that workers are upskilled or reskilled at the appropriate time. As well as meeting the needs of workers, the existing power stations need to maintain a workforce to remain operational until designated closures.

Careful planning and partnerships with new energy projects, training providers and employers can assist this process and bring about positive outcomes for workers and employers alike whilst providing continued power supply certainty. The power stations will continue to provide employment and opportunities for workers to build their skills on the job. At Loy Yang B, apprentices are supported to complete the Global Wind Organisation Standard through Federation University, which is a globally-recognised accreditation for working as a wind turbine technician.

A wide range of occupations or roles will require support to transition. Equally, growing industries will need to compete for some workers who are already in high and increasing demand.

Supporting constructive dialogue between local employers and unions, along with strong demand and competition for a skilled workforce, will increase the likelihood of well-paid, sustainable employment opportunities in these new industries and create greater certainty and security for employers.

Digital advancement across many industries has created a demand for a digitally-enabled workforce. Digitisation will provide new employment opportunities for transitioning workers, but they will need to learn new skills. The Victorian Skills Authority's *Victorian Skills Plan for 2022 into 2023* highlights three domains of digital skills:

- **Digital foundations** – the basic understanding of digital tools and how to use them
- **Digital application** – the ability to apply and adapt digital tools and software in work practices
- **Tech jobs** – advanced understanding and use of digital approaches and tools.

The Skills Plan predicts digital applications will soon become the new benchmark for effective workers. Likewise, occupations that were previously regarded as craft or operator roles will require workers with increased digital skills. A coordinated approach to building digital capability will help ensure industry and workers in the region are not left behind.

Building digital capability starts in school and there is an opportunity for the education sector to partner with industry and government to elevate digital skills training provided in schools to lay the foundations required for further training at tertiary level. Similarly, students need an understanding of the digital skills they need for the job they wish to pursue and options to obtain these skills in the region through vocational and higher education training.

With a current focus on the timber and energy industries, TAFE Gippsland is working closely with industry to determine training and support requirements to ensure workers have the skills and opportunities to transition to future employment. Working alongside local industry, Federation University and TAFE Gippsland have a strong focus on making sure local students can access pathways from schools to higher education and employment in Gippsland for the future prosperity of the region.

Grow, develop and retain a skilled workforce to meet the future needs of the region

The Victorian Skills Authority's *Gippsland Regional Skills Plan* indicates that 12,925 new workers will be required across Gippsland by 2025. This includes 6,884 for new jobs and 6,041 to replace retiring workers.

The projected growth in renewable energy projects in Gippsland will require a significant workforce beyond 2025. Filling these future jobs will necessitate inbound regional migration and population growth. This in turn will produce a flow-on increase in demand for health and social services, agricultural food production, construction, education, childcare and a range of retail, service-based and hospitality jobs in the region.

Not all transitioning workers will move to renewable energy jobs. Many will retire or work in other industries. To meet the growing skills demand, a key requirement for success will be to attract, train and retain a workforce that has the right skills for these future-focused job requirements.

The healthcare and social assistance sector is Gippsland's largest employer, which is consistent with the region's growing demand for services related to population growth and ageing. This highlights the need to grow the region's health workforce, with a particular focus on aged and disability care.

Gippsland's not-for-profit and community sector plays an increasingly important role in delivering programs, services and initiatives that support social wellbeing and development. Long term planning is needed to support continued and sustainable delivery with a focus on secure employment and the needs of a largely female workforce.

The *Gippsland Destination Management Plan* identifies an opportunity for the tourism sector to work with the Victorian Government, TAFE Gippsland and Federation University to improve the availability, retention and skills of its workforce.

Victoria's \$8.4 billion defence, aerospace and space sector is a key contributor to the state economy. For Gippsland, this presents opportunities to support future employment in advanced manufacturing in the defence and aerospace sectors.

The region has a large, skilled workforce developed through significant local industries of electricity generation, mining operations, oil and gas exploration and extraction, pulp and paper manufacturing and agribusiness. This workforce has the right skills and knowledge to transition its long history of advanced manufacturing into supporting the defence supply chain.

Education and training systems must support the skills development needed for inclusive and sustainable growth in the context of twin transitions to digital and green economies.³ Along with university and VET courses, industry training and skill development programs and short courses are likely to be required for upskilling the existing workforce to rapidly address skill gaps and job vacancies. Adopting a local-first employment approach

incorporating training and education can ensure new jobs provide long term local benefits.

Construction is one of the fastest growing employment industries in Gippsland. The *Inquiry into Economic Equity for Victorian Women* released in 2022 recommends improving gender equity in the construction industry. The Victorian Government is working closely with the construction industry and training providers to pilot strategies aimed at increasing the number of women in the sector across a range of occupations, which presents a workforce opportunity for Gippsland. This includes the Building Equity Policy, which requires construction firms working on publicly funded projects valued at \$20 million or more to engage women as apprentices and trainees. The government is also funding the development of strategies for the energy and manufacturing sectors to support, upskill and mentor women, while removing barriers in these historically male-dominated workforces.



The Gippsland Health and Social Assistance sector accounts for

\$1.6 billion
in annual GVA and employs
20,800 people

(Source: NIEIR 2022)

³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2022) *Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training for successful and just transitions: UNESCO Strategy 2022-2029*, UNESCO, France.

Star of the South offshore wind project

When Star of the South needed to monitor wind and wave conditions in Bass Strait in 2019, no local suppliers were able to provide this service.

International specialists Akrocean partnered with a South Gippsland company to upskill local operators with offshore oil and gas experience to install, monitor and service the equipment.

The monitoring program lasted two-and-a-half-years, resulting in the development of a local workforce with offshore wind experience who can now provide this service for other upcoming offshore wind projects.

A video is available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=pacC4Cxr2qs



Increased workforce participation through accessible employment pathways and inclusive employment practices

There is an opportunity to increase labour force participation by removing barriers to employment. This should include options for First Peoples employment, people living with disabilities, young people from all backgrounds particularly CALD communities and women returning to or entering the workforce. There must be a focus on addressing barriers such as access to affordable, local and high-quality childcare, recognition of overseas qualifications and issues of discrimination at work.

Changing attitudes and practices can assist inclusive employment by breaking down biases and barriers resulting from traditional recruitment approaches and inflexible work arrangements. Providing support through community networks, organisations and social groups can build confidence and self-esteem, and help overcome job hesitancy and disengagement from the workforce. Supporting people not currently in

the workforce to participate in employment will unlock a potential new source of employees for businesses.

Industry transition events, such as the Hazelwood closure, result in more people looking for work, creating increased competition for jobs and impacting those who are already experiencing barriers to employment. This makes Gippsland an ideal location for piloting innovative solutions focused on increasing workforce participation and activating large numbers of people who have withdrawn from the labour market. State and Australian Government agencies can play a central role in this by designing focused programs that encourage the participation of specific groups of workers and remove barriers to employment.

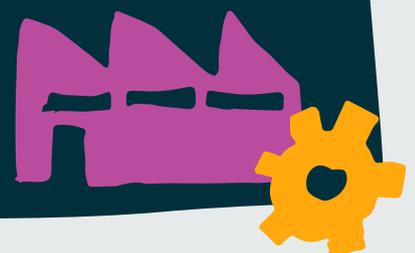
The GLaWAC *Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy* emphasises the need to increase opportunities and support for Aboriginal women to participate in the workforce and encourages young Aboriginal people to consider pathways to business and entrepreneurship.

New energy training sector

The LVA's Worker Transition Service came together with solar installation companies and the education sector in Gippsland to consider ways to address the shortage of suitably qualified electricians in the region.

At the time, there was no pathway to obtain the necessary qualifications for electricians to work in the solar industry in Gippsland.

This partnership between government, industry and education identified an opportunity for Holmesglen TAFE and TAFE Gippsland to deliver the necessary course locally and develop an ongoing course in renewable technologies.





Priority workforce project for new energy jobs

Jobs Victoria is investing \$2.65 million to create 130 new entry-level jobs in the renewable energy sector. The Latrobe Valley Authority will support 100 jobs and Solar Victoria will support 30 local battery manufacturing jobs through working with Jobs Victoria, service providers, employers and members of the community. The jobs will be prioritised for young people, women over 45, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, First Peoples, people with disability and those who are long-term unemployed.

Roles include solar hot water manufacturing, battery recycling and solar farm assembly. There will also be roles that build skills for future opportunities within the renewable energy sector such as mobile plant operations and manufacturing.

All jobs are full time or part time for 12 months and include paid on-the-job training and other support.

Support for transitioning workers in traditional industries

With a timeline of announced industry closures in the traditional power, oil and gas and forestry sectors, workers know change is coming. This transition is made easier with suitable support to find alternative work. The support required includes early planning, open conversations and information sharing, and a focus on ensuring fair working conditions that will support the health and wellbeing of workers, families and communities.

Many of our region's power station, coal mine and forestry employees are well paid for their highly skilled work. Research indicates that while industry transition creates new jobs and opportunities, up to two thirds of existing workers struggle to find comparable jobs with similar pay, working conditions and job security. This highlights the

need for targeted workforce planning to ensure these workers are appropriately supported and engaged. Workers who are approaching retirement may not want to retrain as they are nearing the end of their careers.

Where industries are in decline, workers affected by closures must be empowered and supported to move to a future that they value, whether that is a new job, different career, establishing a business or retirement. This includes career and financial planning, clear pathways to alternative employment, appropriate training and skilling and potentially, redundancy payments.

Research into industry closures shows that early intervention leads to better outcomes for workers and the community.⁴ However, affected workers often face challenges to find alternative roles which include:

- struggling to find the information they need to efficiently explore opportunities in the labour market and make decisions about their careers
- limited career adaptability resources, particularly a lack of career confidence, often prevents them from being more strategic in their career navigation
- costly, risky and demoralising career navigation experiences.

This research also identified four key design considerations for delivery of worker transition services:

1. Multidimensional data about jobs and occupations can help workers make career decisions more efficiently
2. Information, advice and guidance can be targeted by identifying a worker's approach to career navigation
3. Workers are more able to navigate an uncertain labour market if they are supported to develop the full range of career adaptability resources, building their confidence, curiosity, commitment and sense of control
4. Services for career navigation will be more successful if they simulate the support offered by family and friends.⁵

⁴ International Labour Office (2013) *Responding to worker displacement: a collection of case studies*, Geneva.

⁵ Orlik J, et al (2020) *Finding Opportunities in Uncertainty*, Nesta, London.

Governments and employers both have a role to play in supporting worker transition and affected supply chain businesses, in partnership with unions, healthcare providers, the education and training sector and community.

Pooled redundancy and employment registers and industry appropriate transfer schemes can be appropriate mechanisms to support workers.

The *Forestry Transition Program's* transition out of native timber harvesting by 1 January 2024 presents a new opportunity to reimagine Victoria's state forests as centres of community, economic, Traditional Owner, cultural, and environmental prosperity. Victoria's forestry workers have the capacity, skills, and equipment to be at the forefront of operationalising future forest management. Supporting the transition of these workers into future-focused jobs in active forest management, land and fire management, and community recreation and ecotourism is a priority.

The *Forestry Transition Program* has been developed specifically to assist the forestry industry to transition away from native timber harvesting. Government's total support for forestry transition is more than \$875 million to assist workers, businesses and communities to plan for their future, and to support the transition to plantation timber. A dedicated worker support program is in place with relocation payments, reemployment and training assistance and health and wellbeing support for all workers employed in the native timber industry.

Following the announcement that the Yallourn Power Station and Mine will close in 2028, Energy Australia announced a \$10 million Power Your Future worker support package, available to support regular Yallourn employees with retraining and upskilling, career and redeployment planning and financial counselling.

Also announced was the construction of the Wooreen Energy Storage System, a 350-megawatt utility scale battery at the site of the power station, which is scheduled to be operational by the end of 2026.

Energy Australia consulted with workers about the best way to deliver transition support services and found that:

- people wish to remain in the region, so it's important to assist industry to grow and provide local employment opportunities
- support is needed for people indirectly affected by the closure of Yallourn

- Yallourn workers should be prioritised for work in the rehabilitation of the Yallourn Mine and in the construction of the Wooreen battery.

The Victorian Government will continue to work with Energy Australia, industry and training providers to ensure that training and support are available for workers, businesses and impacted community.

This approach will be based on the following key elements:

- **Tailored and responsive case management and intake based on the needs of individuals and their families**
 - Holistic service to plan, connect, review and transition
- **Career navigation and employment support**
 - Assistance with resumes, applications, interviews, job searching, information on job markets and building the capability of individuals to job search independently
- **Peer support**
 - Support and guidance in a trusted environment and provision of social events
- **Training and skill recognition development**
 - Skill development, formal training, retraining and upskilling that can be delivered at work
 - Recognition of prior learning and skills on the job as evidence towards qualifications
- **Health and wellbeing support**
 - Support and counselling to adjust to changing circumstances and facilitate referrals to external agencies
- **Financial information and referral support**
 - Financial education and related assistance
- **Small business advice**
 - Tailored advice from specialists to help bring business ideas to life
- **Strong collaboration and coordination**
 - Collaboration at multiple levels through several governance arrangements for delivery and continual improvement with an emphasis on a place-based approach.

DAVE JOHNSON



Years in the Latrobe Valley: Born & raised, multi-generational

Role: Operations Manager, Skipper

Employer: Wilsons Promontory Cruises & Australian Volunteer Coast Guard

Based in: Yanakie

Age: 40+

Key Latrobe Valley benefits: Passion, family, the water, wildlife, community support

Dave Johnson can trace his family back at least four generations in the Latrobe Valley region. Having grown up in Moe, he spent his summers at Shallow Inlet and Yanakie caravan parks, which were like a second home to him. It's a tradition he's continued with his own family – his wife Jess and their two school aged daughters.

After more than two decades working as a boilermaker, rigger and maintenance technician both in the Latrobe Valley and around Australia, the closure of the Hazelwood Mine and Power Station forced Dave to change direction and pivot his career.

Both of Dave's grandfathers worked in the power industry – one was a conveyor belt attendant who was employed at the Yallourn mine in the 1960s and 70s, and the other, a lifelong janitor and cleaner at Yallourn Power Station. His father worked on the construction of Loy Yang A and B, so Dave grew up with power station blood in his veins and a strong connection with the Latrobe Valley community and its energy heritage.

Dave attended Yallourn Tech and completed his boilermaker apprenticeship with a local private company before starting on the construction of Loy Yang B. After a stint in Queensland in the oil and gas industry, he returned to Moe and subsequently worked in boiler and conveyor belt maintenance roles at Yallourn Mine before transferring to Hazelwood just prior to it shutting down in 2017.

It was his redundancy that led him to come into contact with the Latrobe Valley Authority who provided funding for a coxswain training course at Lakes Entrance and introduced him to a new career opportunity.

Having successfully completed with Coxswain accreditation, Dave attended an LVA meet and greet event with regional employers in 2017. After hearing about Dave's love of the water and his desire to pursue a new career that he was passionate about, the LVA suggested he contact Pennicott Wilderness Journeys which was planning to start operations of a new tourism business in Tidal River.

The tip certainly paid off. Despite originally reaching out to Rob Pennicott to apply for a deckhand role, Dave used his extensive knowledge of the waters of Wilsons Promontory and his years of fishing expertise to lure Rob into offering him the Operations Manager role for his new venture, Wilsons Promontory Cruises.

While waiting for that position to start, Dave joined the Coast Guard to get more experience and he continues to perform marine rescues and skipper boats for the service today.

Dave spent a year helping Rob set up the business, from building the infrastructure to navigating the local government red tape and liaising with First Peoples and environmental groups to ensure that the company would operate in the most sustainable and culturally sensitive way. Importantly, the LVA also helped with the family's relocation costs which made the transition to his new role accessible.

From redundant mine worker to television interviews and being the face of a national tourism award-winning business, it's been a hard slog but according to Dave "being out on the water is the best office in the world." Dave attributes his success to his transferable skills, passion, self-motivation and willingness to take advantage of every opportunity. "You can teach people skills, but you can't teach them passion – that's what we look for when employing people."

There were a few hurdles on the way, like convincing the LVA that the course he wanted to do was going to lead to employment and finding affordable accommodation in the Gippsland rental market after a wave of COVID-19 inspired sea changers has seen prices soar and supply dwindle.

Dave would like to see more options for reskilling and training in the region and greater streamlining of the permits process to encourage more start-up businesses to invest. Affordable accommodation is another sticking point that he believes could be alleviated by programs that would help people find homes – not necessarily financial assistance but building additional affordable housing and removing obstacles to fast-track development to support population growth, especially in Southern Gippsland.

'I'm a big believer that things happen for a reason – being made redundant with the power station and mine closures – was actually the best thing that ever happened to me,' Dave commented.

'The Prom is my happy place. I feel blessed and lucky to have had this opportunity. It's a balancing act and I've had to make some sacrifices, but I wouldn't change it,' he added.



The Gippsland Food and Fibre sector accounts for
\$1.8 billion
in annual GVA and employs
16,100 people

(Source: Agriculture Victoria,
Regional Industry Structure and
Employment model, 2020-21)

The economy

Gippsland has a skilled workforce, quality infrastructure and natural assets that underpin the potential for future growth.

A thriving economy focused on identified areas of strength

Existing regional plans and strategies including the *Gippsland Regional Economic Development Strategy* (REDS) have identified the food and fibre, renewable energy, health and community services, tourism and advanced manufacturing industries as regional strengths. The REDS provide a solid evidence base to identify economic development priorities and opportunities to maximise these strengths. This Plan expands on those priorities and opportunities to highlight the linkages between liveability and a strong economy.

Across Gippsland, approximately 1.8% of businesses (480 in total) employ more than 20 people. Almost 61% of businesses are sole proprietorships, partnerships or self-employees who do not employ additional workers.⁶ This highlights that the economy is already diverse and broad based. It does not rely on single large employers. However, there are towns and communities where a single business can be vital to employment and economic activity.

The large number of small and medium enterprises is essential to the future of the region, both to the identified growth sectors and the wider service-based industries that will support the region's liveability.

In agriculture the availability of industrial land and enabling site infrastructure, along with a relatively

complex regulatory environment and lengthy planning approvals, can result in uncertainty which limits the ability to scale up and deters investment. Strategic land-use planning towards dedicated value-adding precincts can support increased scale, intensification and investment security.

Gippsland plays a vital role in the food security of communities in the region and Victoria as a whole. Disruptions to supply chains seen during COVID-19 and following recent floods and fires have highlighted the importance of this industry to Victoria's future. The *Southern Victorian Irrigation Development Project* and *Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy* identify options to support the Gippsland irrigated agriculture sector and secure the region's long-term water supplies to protect jobs, farms, ecosystems, communities and the cultural values of Traditional Owners in the region.

To support growth in advanced manufacturing, the Latrobe Valley can build on existing defence, aviation and aerospace activities and infrastructure such as the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base at East Sale and the Latrobe Aerospace Technology Precinct.

Gippsland is well placed to be a major centre for renewable energy generation. This includes local generation, storage and use through microgrids as well as utility-scale projects supporting the energy grid. There are particular opportunities in emerging energy industries, such as wave

⁶ REMPLAN modelling of Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses



energy, geothermal and bioenergy. This growth in renewable energy generation will lead to further opportunities such as renewable hydrogen – where renewable energy is used to convert water into hydrogen gas for use as an alternative fuel source.

The *Gippsland Regional Plan 2020 – 2025* states that Gippsland’s tourism industry attracts more than 8.9 million visitors to the region each year.⁷ As the industry recovers from bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, creating experiences that enable year-round visitation, particularly in coastal, lakes and alpine areas is a growing priority. The *Gippsland Destination Management Plan* highlights that collaborative partnerships, along with infrastructure and product development investment to boost the supply side can maximise Gippsland’s regional comparative advantages and deliver on visitor expectations in nature-based tourism, active outdoor recreational activities, events, regional produce, and the creative industries.

Building First Peoples community’s capacity to grow opportunities in cultural tourism, creative industries, the native plants and bush food sector and business and entrepreneurship will ensure that it can make a significant contribution to the economic development of the region. By drawing on its vibrant cultural heritage and knowledge systems, these opportunities will encourage greater community connectedness, and establish productive partnerships and collaborative ventures.

Future economic growth across the region is heavily reliant on the availability of water. Gippsland has a competitive advantage as the region is wetter than many other parts of South East Australia, however water availability in the region is declining. To make full use of Gippsland’s water, an integrated water management (IWM) approach that considers all parts of the water cycle to maximise economic, cultural, social and environmental outcomes is needed. The Victorian Government’s *Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy* recognises the importance of IWM and commits to support the region’s transition through a new vision and plan for the future of the Latrobe water-supply system and a review of the Latrobe Reserve.



The Gippsland Visitor Economy sector accounts for \$752 million in annual GVA and employs 12,100 people

(Source: Regional Tourism Satellite Account 2021-22)

⁷ This figure is from Tourism Research Australia for year ending March 2020 – pre COVID-19.

Events Gippsland

Established in 2021, following the development of the *Gippsland Events Strategy*, Events Gippsland is a collaboration between Destination Gippsland, the six Gippsland LGAs and the Victorian Government to secure new events and lead best practice event management for Gippsland.

The LVA and RDV Gippsland jointly funded the establishment of Events Gippsland and an event acquisition fund has been created with Victorian Government funding matched by local governments.

Events Gippsland has secured 24 events that will contribute \$50 million to the Gippsland visitor economy.

Increased opportunities for local supply chains and local procurement

As part of the response to industry closures, and the opportunities presented in growing sectors such as offshore wind, there is a particular need to focus on local supply chain and procurement opportunities. The designation of Gippsland as a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) provides an opportunity to develop local supply chains focussed on local manufacturing and construction, along with ongoing maintenance. These local opportunities are essential to securing community support and social licence for major projects and the transition process.

International case studies have shown how renewable energy projects create jobs and new opportunities for manufacturing and specialised services along the supply chain.⁸ As well as large scale wind and solar projects, bioenergy projects create diversification opportunities for local businesses to supply, collect, treat and transport biomass from agricultural and forest resources.

The Gippsland REZ also provides an opportunity to target investment towards a coordinated upgrade of the electricity transmission network to accommodate new energy projects in the region. Coordination of the timing/staging of infrastructure projects will also be required to maximise an ongoing pipeline of opportunities and provide certainty to encourage investment. Coordinated community engagement in this process will ensure community has an active role in the energy transition.

Existing industry, new project developers and governments should work together to encourage local supply chain participation and support growth aligned to new opportunities in sectors such as offshore wind. Supply chain transition support is essential for businesses currently working with the Yallourn and Loy Yang Power Stations. Energy Australia estimates it has over 200 businesses in its supply chain.

The growth of First Peoples businesses through government procurement presents enormous potential and will require a shift in focus to support supply and the ability to address market demand. The need for collaborative partnerships between levels of government and First Peoples businesses, including the private sector, provides the building blocks that will drive growth and ongoing sustainability.

The circular economy

Companies in Gippsland's timber, paper and horticultural industries are already generating bioenergy on site to power their operations. The food and fibre industry across Gippsland creates organic waste that offers further resource recovery and value adding opportunities. This includes developing higher order products and markets from food and garden organics and bioenergy. With growing expertise in resource recovery, there will be further opportunities to expand services into metropolitan Melbourne and/or other parts of Victoria.

⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012) *Linking Renewable Energy to Rural Development*, OECD Green Growth Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris.



Gippsland Regional Organics

Gippsland Regional Organics is located at Dutson Downs, 23 kilometres from Sale. It is one of the largest recycling facilities and best examples of a circular economy business in the state.

Licensed to take up to 250 kiloton of organic waste per annum, the site is producing over 50,000 tonnes of AS4454 certified high quality compost each year. Gippsland Regional Organics currently receives between 170 and 190 kilotons a year and employs 21 people.

The site is preparing to undergo a major expansion which will create new jobs and have the potential to attract further investment, particularly for other waste management businesses that process different waste streams to Gippsland Regional Organics.

The expansion will see additional processing areas developed, as well as water and power infrastructure, and new processing equipment. This will allow the facility to meet high demand for its services, recycle more organic materials and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

Gippsland Water has been awarded \$4.788 million from the Victorian Government under the Circular Economy Organics Sector Transformation Fund and the Australian Government under the Food Waste for Healthy Soils Fund for the expansion project.

The total project is estimated to cost \$11.6 million with Gippsland Water contributing \$6.82 million.

The upgrade is due to be completed and the site operational by the end of 2024, with future upgrades also being considered.

Driving collaborative innovation to position Gippsland as a Victorian industry leader

There is strong evidence that regional communities and economies benefit when they are dynamic, responsive, and resilient. Partnerships and collaboration stimulate opportunities for innovation.

All regions, but particularly regions experiencing transition, need to identify and develop their capacity for innovation in local industries and activities that represent genuine competitive advantages.

Implementation of new ideas and ways of doing things can assist diversification into areas and activities that have high knowledge-based components and potential for generating new jobs and economic growth across a broad supply chain.

Innovation is the development of new products, services and ways of working. It can include processes and policies in organisations and institutions; governance frameworks; social practices; and economic models.⁹ It's a critical source of job growth and productivity for knowledge-based economies.

Innovation requires different partners in a region working together to achieve results that individuals or organisations could not achieve alone. For example, the Morwell Innovation Centre and Hi-Tech Precinct Gippsland act as a gateway to establishing connections between advanced manufacturing businesses, research and industry.

In 2022, Regional Development Australia committees partnered with the Victorian Government to build a first-of-its-kind *Regional Digital Connectivity Prioritisation Framework* to frame the investment narrative for better digitisation in regions. Benefits cases were developed including one for the Traralgon cluster, which contains Churchill, Morwell, Traralgon and Moe-Newborough.

The benefits case identified that enabling digital connectivity in the Traralgon cluster will enhance productivity across a broad range of industry sectors, delivering a direct potential gross value added uplift of \$25 million. Another potential

⁹ Adey P, et al, (2022) *Just Transitions in Australia: Moving Towards Low Carbon Lives Across Policy, Industry and Practice*, Royal Holloway University of London and Monash University.

benefit is enabling small and medium businesses to digitise, making them more attractive for investment and professional talent.

There is already evidence of innovation supported by the *Forestry Transition Program*, including the development of Australia's first domestically manufactured engineered floorboards made from plantation timber by Australian Sustainable Hardwoods in Heyfield, and the installation of a new log line at Radial Timbers in Yarram to use different sized logs from its plantations.

The National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI) is a national initiative with centres in Gippsland, Mount Gambier and Launceston

focused on research, collaboration and innovation across the forestry industry. The Gippsland NIFPI was established in 2020 and has provided more than \$8.4 million in funding for 11 research projects.

Collaborative innovation in the water sector is critical to achieving the objectives of this Plan and supporting the Gippsland economy. The Gippsland Integrated Water Management Forum has collaboratively identified and delivered 14 projects since 2018, with further opportunities identified that benefit the local economy, adapt to climate change and reflect community values.



Sailor's Grave Brewing

Food & Fibre Gippsland has partnered with the Latrobe Valley Authority to deliver a food and fibre work program, which includes exploration of collective craft malting as an opportunity for innovation.

Gippsland is recognised as a brewery hotspot. Gippsland's breweries and distilleries market beer and spirits locally, nationally and to the world. But their key ingredient – malt – isn't locally available.

LVA facilitated a series of co-design workshops resulting in the delivery of the Craft Malt Demand Report. This led to Sailor's Grave Brewing in East Gippsland being identified as an ideal site for a pilot malting facility.

The malting facility will operate as a social enterprise situated within the Sailor's Grave Brewing Dune Town precinct – a brewery and experiential tourism destination – located between Marlo and Cape Conran.

Yarram Renewable Energy Park

In a first for the area, Radial Timbers has partnered with Spiegel Energy, the Latrobe Valley Authority and Wellington Shire Council to transform Radial Timber's Yarram sawmill into a renewable energy producer.

By using solar power, a sodium nickel chloride battery and a process called pyrolysis on their residual timber products, Radial Timbers will create a closed-loop site, turning the sawmill into the Yarram Renewable Energy Park.

Energy created from residual timber at the sawmill, such as saw dust, along with solar power captured on the warehouse roof, will reduce the sawmill's reliance on the energy grid and gas usage.

Excess energy created by the park's solar panels will flow into the local grid to help power Yarram.

The project will also generate local employment opportunities, as bioproducts from the Yarram Renewable Energy Park will support emerging industries and local farmers. The park's creation of new revenue streams will also help Radial Timbers retain local jobs as the industry transitions away from native forest harvesting.

Phase One of the Yarram Renewable Energy Park, which is supported by \$2 million from the Forestry Transition Program, is due for completion in August 2023.



Liveability

As Gippslanders, we are proud of our region. Liveability is important to Gippsland's future – making it easy to visit and easier to stay. An attractive lifestyle based on a vibrant social, creative and cultural scene, sport, recreation and leisure opportunities plus a beautiful environment and geography will encourage skilled employees to stay or relocate to the region.

Our communities want more control over their environmental impact. Initiatives such as energy microgrids, neighbourhood batteries and community-owned renewable energy projects that can maintain power availability during extreme events such as bushfires provide that opportunity.

Enhanced environmental outcomes such as greener, cooler urban areas, water sensitive urban design and community assets, such as healthy parks and waterways will also enhance liveability in Gippsland.

We want welcoming, diverse and inclusive communities that are healthy and connected. The following factors were identified as being essential for liveability in the region.

Sufficient housing to improve social outcomes and accommodate a growing workforce

There is a need to increase housing availability, affordability and diversity to improve social outcomes and assist in attracting and retaining workers. We need to cater for population increases, enable economic growth and keep up with the changing ways people live in today's world.

Expanding access to affordable, safe and stable housing can reduce homelessness and relieve pressure on health, child safety and criminal justice services. Additionally, it can help people connect within their community, promote equality of opportunity and boost labour market performance.

In East Gippsland, the housing challenge was exacerbated by the 2019/20 bushfires which destroyed hundreds of homes in the area. The rebuild has been slow, compounding the shortage of accessible rental accommodation. There has also been increased demand to not only

accommodate those who lost their houses, but also recovery workers and tradespeople moving to the area to help rebuild in the aftermath of the fires.

Lack of suitable accommodation, either to rent or buy, has led to workforce shortages across a range of sectors including tourism, education, construction and healthcare. These impacts have been felt across Gippsland.

Addressing the housing issue is complicated and will require planning and collaboration across government, industry and communities. A successful affordable housing strategy will support and attract diverse residents, assist aging residents and provide young people with accommodation near employment and services.

There is a strong desire for a coordinated approach from local authorities across the region and Victorian Government to examine ways land-use planning and regulations can be reworked to unlock further land for residential growth and address out of sequence and infrastructure costs.

Peri-urban growth

Gippsland's peri-urban localities are among the fastest growing in regional Victoria. It's estimated that populations in Baw Baw and Bass Coast will increase by 115.4% between 2000 and 2036. To foster a healthy, productive community that will help drive prosperity it's important that jobs, services and infrastructure keep pace with population growth. Baw Baw Shire Council is proactively working to identify future infrastructure needs; implementing and reviewing strategic planning policies; and identifying prudent ways to ensure that Council continues to be financially sustainable. Whilst Council and the community are responding to these issues, targeted investment in key infrastructure and services will transform high growth areas and improve the lives of this growing population.

A healthy and attractive natural environment

Gippsland's natural beauty and open spaces are regional strengths and green spaces such as parks and sporting reserves are at the heart of many communities.

This shared love of our natural environment means that we need to protect and enhance our country. Part of this approach will mean that we develop agricultural, tourism, energy production, extractives and manufacturing opportunities in a responsible and considered way.

Our natural environment is fundamental to our health and wellbeing and to our agricultural and tourism sectors. The region's water resources underpin the local economy and our existing and future industries. Protecting and preserving our waterways and balancing economic and environmental needs through a whole of water cycle approach is a priority. Climate action will also help protect our region's flora and fauna and improve the health and wellbeing of our community by restoring landscapes and reducing pollution of our water, air and soil.

The shift from traditional extractive and forestry industries to less environmentally impactful economic activity provides an opportunity to support improved health and wellbeing for our communities. Communities are supportive of enhanced employment and skill development opportunities and want to contribute to decisions about the economic transition for Gippsland. Communities want economic prosperity for the region, however not at the cost of human or environmental health.

There is a willingness to meaningfully partner with First Peoples communities in their Caring for Country. The term 'Caring for Country' reflects the importance that Indigenous Australians place on traditional land management of lands unaltered by development or other land use such as agriculture.¹⁰ The GLaWAC Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy identifies opportunities linked to Caring for Country like establishing sustainable bushfood businesses and horticulture enterprises. Collaborative partnerships between Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Traditional Owners, industry and related sectors can be supported by government to increase First Peoples capacity to operate and sustain enterprises within the native and bushfood sector.

¹⁰ Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (2021) *Gunaikurnai Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy Gippsland: Building on the Legacy*, p 18

Cultural tourism presents another opportunity to improve economic outcomes for First Peoples through employment and business growth. Increasing capacity for Gippsland's First Peoples to operate and sustain cultural tourism enterprises will enable greater economic empowerment and provide a means by which Aboriginal heritage and culture can be preserved and fostered across the region.

An inclusive and safe built environment that is appreciated by and caters to the needs of the community

Improving the built environment is essential to liveability. Attractive, easily accessible and safe public spaces for community gathering strengthen community connection and build community pride. In particular, our young people have indicated that they need safe, welcoming and accessible places to gather.

Engagement undertaken by the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority (MLRA) revealed that there is a strong community appetite for well-coordinated community consultation, communication and education about complex issues, and meaningful involvement of community groups and Traditional Owners in mine rehabilitation planning processes. The Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy (LVRRS) released in 2020, provides a blueprint to progress rehabilitation planning for the Latrobe Valley's three brown coal mines.

Developed in consultation with industry and the community, the LVRRS focuses on delivering outcomes that ensure people, land, environment, infrastructure and First Peoples values are protected and long-term benefits and future opportunities to the community are optimised.

The rehabilitation and transformation of the mines aims to produce safe, stable and sustainable landform outcomes for the Latrobe Valley coal mine voids and surrounding areas. Mine rehabilitation presents an opportunity to add value to the region and holds potential for future industry, environment, recreation, tourism, industry, parkland and residential use.

The Victorian Government has committed to a first offshore wind target of at least 2 gigawatts by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040. To avoid multiple, uncoordinated transmission lines running from the coast to the existing transmission network in the Latrobe Valley, VicGrid will work with local communities to coordinate a 500 kilovolt double circuit transmission line and terminal station that extends the existing network to the coast.

Early and meaningful engagement with directly affected landowners, communities and Traditional Owners is essential to understand local values, priorities and concerns. It will also minimise negative impacts whilst ensuring benefits from these developments. This is particularly important in relation to planning that considers current and future land use and community, environmental, cultural and agriculture effects. Renewable energy readiness and impact studies produced by Gippsland's local governments will support this work. The *Gippsland Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy*, developed through a partnership between the Victorian Government and communities, will support community-led action to help communities and landscapes cope with climate change challenges and impacts in the region.

In 2021, the Latrobe Health Assembly worked with Urban Scale Interventions to co-design the Looking Forward Latrobe initiative. Looking Forward Latrobe focuses on changing perspectives of the Latrobe Valley from an uncertain, transitional and industrial place to one that is beautiful, diverse, healthy and welcoming. Fostering community pride is a cornerstone of this work. Linked with this is the long-term goal of ensuring the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang mines is informed by community aspirations and delivers safe, stable and sustainable landforms.

The *Gippsland Destination Management Plan* identifies the renewal of key urban and rural locations as a priority. Infrastructure investments like inclusive and all access facilities, improved toilet facilities and improved public and open spaces will continue to improve the liveability of the region, as well as making Gippsland a better place to visit.

Safeguarding our communities, environment and economy from the future effects of climate change with long-term investments in the built and natural environments to improve resilience and support adaptation is a priority.

Empowered and thriving communities that are diverse and socially cohesive

Promoting, fostering and valuing diversity and creativity in Gippsland's communities is integral to a thriving and inclusive Gippsland.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recognises 'the importance of diversity of local leaders and community members to guide and lead efforts to promote social connection and inclusion in Victorian communities.' Providing opportunities for all sections of communities to connect through sport and recreation, the arts, community groups, clubs and volunteering will support this and provide direct benefit to the region.

Volunteers are a vital element of socially cohesive communities. Volunteering provides opportunities for people to connect to each other and feel proud of where they live. Volunteers are particularly important to community sport and active recreation, enabling many sporting clubs to operate. Creating a regional volunteer framework for developing skills and employability in sport and recreation, as well as the arts and community sectors, could maximise opportunities to grow and retain a volunteer network across the region that can be sustained into the future.

Gippsland's communities have indicated a desire to be welcoming for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and new families. Providing safe and culturally-responsive social support and celebrating diversity through events, activities and

experiences were recognised as ways to boost awareness of and participation by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. This could also attract CALD residents to the region and reduce experiences of racism when they access services, seek employment and engage in community life. Providing language services, translated information and increased access to cultural and religious goods and services would also make it easier for CALD communities to participate in society.

Creativity and culture play an important role in building inclusive and dynamic communities. They can bridge our diverse experiences, build understanding and empathy, engage our imagination to explore new ways of thinking, strengthen pride and identity, and increase wellbeing.

Accessible social, sport and recreation, arts and community activities catering to aged, First Peoples, people living with disabilities, gender diverse families, young and LGBTIQ+ people will support more socially cohesive communities with strengthened inclusion and greater community connection.



Communities Leading Change program

Founded in 2018 by Climate for Change and the Gippsland Climate Change Network, the Communities Leading Change program trained 33 local people to facilitate compassionate conversations with their communities about what transition meant to them and what their vision of the future looked like.

More than 200 members of the community joined these and other conversations over two years. The conversations helped motivate people to become personally involved in energy transitions and climate action.

Through community capacity building, participants of the program developed confidence and skills in community engagement and leadership, and were encouraged to take an active, positive role in supporting others through the transition process.

Transitions magazine documents the stories of Communities Leading Change participants. It is available online at www.communitiesleadingchange.org.au/resources

MONTASER RAHAMA



Years in the Latrobe Valley: 17

Role: Manager

Employer: KFC, Moe

Based in: Trafalgar

Age: 21

Key Latrobe Valley benefits: Quiet, easy access, familiar, the community

Montaser lives in a close-knit Gippsland community where everyone knows his name – it's something he really loves about living in Trafalgar – although it wasn't always like that. Political turmoil in Egypt in the early 2000s led his mum to make the difficult decision to uproot the then three-year-old's and his one-year-old sister's lives and emigrate to Australia without the children's father. After a brief stint in Melbourne's outer southeast, the family made its way to the Gippsland region and originally settled in Morwell. His mum got a job at their local primary school, which quickly accelerated her learning of English. But those early years were a struggle, financially and culturally. As the only Egyptian family in the area, they found support with the local Sudanese community who helped them navigate their adopted home.

He grew up speaking mainly English at home as his mother was determined to be able to help her children with their schooling, but as Montaser reached his teenage years, she was just as likely to have a conversation with him in her native Arabic. It's something that Montaser values as he aspires to travel to his homeland one day to reconnect with his heritage when he's in a financial position to do so.

In 2014, when Montaser was in Year 8, the family moved to Trafalgar, where they remain today. High school was generally a positive experience for him, although it was another adjustment, starting again in a new environment. He initially felt quite left out and marginalised. It was hard to make friends, but he was determined to be accepted for who he was and

to get his school mates to acknowledge his different background. Playing soccer with the Trafalgar Victory was one way Montaser connected with his peers, but it was something he gave up to focus more on his studies. He received lots of support from his teachers, and he credits one teacher in particular for going above and beyond to give him extra help outside school hours with Business Studies. It was an area he was attracted to, so he applied to study a Bachelor of Business Administration at Victoria University once he graduated in 2019.

Despite receiving an offer for admission, Montaser never got to accept the spot. Instead, he continued working at KFC – something he had done on a casual basis since he was 17 – to help financially support his mother and sister. He admits it was a sacrifice, but one that was necessary at the time.

'I'm still keen to study but there aren't any face-to-face university courses nearby that will allow me to study Business whilst working,' he said.

'My learning needs to be face-to-face as I struggle with the online study environment – so enrolling in a distance education program isn't the right fit for me. If something was available locally and in person, I'd be interested.'

Montaser has worked both on a voluntary and paid basis for the Centre for Multicultural Youth and he is proud of the contribution he has made providing ideas for multicultural community members, often discussing the barriers he faced to inspire the young people he meets. He participated in an event in Bass Coast Shire giving insight into his personal experiences as an example of the benefits of establishing local multicultural youth initiatives.

Fast forward to 2023 and Montaser has his own car and was just made Manager of the Moe KFC. He's also moved out of home for the first time, sharing a house with two friends a few streets away from his family and he's optimistic about the future.

Accessible and inclusive services for health and wellbeing

Gippsland has an ageing population with a much higher proportion of retirement aged workers than the Victorian average. Demand for the healthcare and community services support, that contribute to improving quality of life and population attraction, is set to increase.

There is a direct link to education and workforce through the provision of training and accreditation pathways for healthcare practitioners and attracting skilled workers for hard-to-fill positions in allied health, social work and general practice.

A diverse workforce will be critical to making health services inclusive and accessible for all Gippslanders. A key focus of the Victorian Government has been building a healthcare system that reflects the community's diversity to increase trust and drive use of primary care before health problems deteriorate.

Through community engagement, the Latrobe Health Advocate identified some of these health and wellbeing aspirations for systems reform in Latrobe:

- First Peoples change – agents in Latrobe were embraced as champions by governments and services and offered even greater support to help others in their community to achieve their health and wellbeing goals
- The wisdom of those with lived LGBTIQ experiences could be utilised to design how services are offered to communities into the future
- Latrobe Valley communities made a collective commitment to significantly reduce the impact of financial stress on everyone in the region
- Young people in Latrobe were given even more opportunities to have their voice heard and contribute to the design and delivery of local services within the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone.

A shift towards person-centric approaches is desirable to build better health and wellbeing outcomes and enable all individuals to feel accepted, safe, affirmed and celebrated. There is an opportunity to learn from First Peoples health services and communities about ways to embed the mindset of 'seeing the person before the business' across the broader healthcare system. A coordinated approach across government and other key stakeholders to codesign future models of primary healthcare has also been emphasised.

Integrated transport for access to jobs, education and services

Gippslanders want a connected region that caters to the needs of communities in a sustainable way.

Communities have identified a desire for culturally safe, well-lit, and well-staffed public transport services that also meet the needs of older people, people living with disabilities and people with mental health issues. Programs and initiatives that deliver travel, training and services to help people experiencing transport anxiety would build community confidence and capability in accessing public transport and increase the use of services.

People facing barriers to entering education and the workforce are often limited by their ability to attend the classroom or the workplace. To increase equitable participation in education and the workforce across the region, frequent, reliable and affordable public transport is required.

Integrated transport networks that incorporate reliable intermodal passenger transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, provide transport options that are socially equitable and respectful of the environment.

Young people have indicated that improved public transport would support them to develop independence, strengthen social and community connections and enhance their connection to place. Sustainable transport options including walking and cycling networks can improve physical and mental health, and the environment.

Improved transport infrastructure and rail services between Melbourne and Gippsland is a priority for attracting skilled workers and students to the region, and to enable people to reliably access healthcare and essential services. It's also important for supporting flexible working options



Transport solutions for South Gippsland and Bass Coast VET students

Students in South Gippsland and Bass Coast face barriers to accessing education opportunities in other towns.

AGA Apprenticeships Plus, the South Gippsland Trade Skills Alliance (SGTSA), Wonthaggi Secondary College, Foster Secondary College, Mirboo North Secondary College and local councils identified the need for a bus service to transport VET students to programs in Korumburra and Leongatha.

Through the Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program, the Department of Transport provided funding to AGA Apprenticeships Plus to commence a trial bus service in 2019. The trial provided safe and direct transport for around 60 Bass Coast and South Gippsland students over two days a week.

The bus trial gave students access to education opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have had. This supported education retention and a greater take up of apprenticeships, allowing students to pursue a trade career of their choice.

The trial was very successful and ran for three years. As a result, it is now a permanent service managed under the Department of Transport and Planning's School Bus Contacts.

that enable people to commute for work or study while continuing to live in Gippsland.

Quality rail services connecting Melbourne with Gippsland, as well as reliable intermodal passenger transport around the region, will support the visitor economy by encouraging increased visitation to Gippsland's nature-based and cultural tourism destinations.

Enabling interconnection within the region's cities and towns can support growth and investment opportunities. Improved productivity and efficiency of freight networks could encourage increases in trade and improve local supply chains.

Reliable digital connectivity to enable businesses and the community to access the full benefits of digital innovation and inclusion

Gaps exist in digital infrastructure throughout regional Victoria and infrastructure investment is not keeping pace with current population growth. Limited and inequitable access to fast and reliable internet services inhibits businesses from embracing new technology. It also impacts emergency response and is a barrier to participation in education, with lower levels of digital capability in Gippsland compared to metropolitan areas compounding the issue.

Improvements to digital infrastructure and access in Gippsland have the potential to achieve significant returns on investment with transformative

economic and social benefits. High-capacity digital connectivity and capability in the region could increase opportunities for flexible work and study, making the region an attractive option for workers looking to relocate. It would also allow more people to remain in the region while taking up jobs or education opportunities elsewhere. This is particularly important for retaining young people in the region, who are part of a digital, globally connected generation. Young people in primary and secondary school need digital connectivity and capability to keep them engaged in learning and encourage further study. This is particularly crucial for the region's First Peoples who face a relatively low level of digital inclusion and literacy compared with the national average.

High-capacity digital connectivity, inclusion and literacy will also expand technology adoption, which in turn will lead to increased productivity and enable the region's businesses to remain competitive while widening access to new markets. It would enhance innovation in sectors like agriculture (through smart farming) health (through telehealth and other digital health services) and tourism.

Digital infrastructure is recognised as essential for emergency response, particularly in rural and remote communities across the region. Improving telecommunications resilience and capabilities is a high priority for the region and will lead to better connectivity for emergency services, communities and businesses during emergencies.



Coordination, collaboration and shared leadership

Clear roles and responsibilities across industry, education, community and governments

Industry, communities, the education sector and multiple levels of government all have roles to play in the transition process.

Providing clarity and coordination of roles and responsibilities in creating Gippsland's bright future presents an opportunity to incorporate transition into our everyday way of working.

Working together on shared priorities and action; clear communication; evidence-based decisions; consulting widely: valuing and including diverse voices including those not usually represented; and working together across sectors and industries will build trust and lead to better outcomes. Collective action will achieve more than any single party can alone.

Shared local leadership by business, industry and the community will ensure local ownership of the Plan and the development of nuanced and targeted actions suiting the diverse needs of the region.

This multi-stakeholder collaboration will also contribute to achieving positive outcomes aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals.

Communities

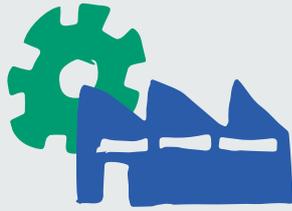
Communities and community organisations must be active participants in discussions about their future. Community organisations are vital to ensuring community voices are heard, understood and are equal participants in discussions about transition. People need to have ownership and be part of the transition process, in particular those who will be most affected. Including Traditional Owners in discussions and decision-making is a priority.

Workers and their families need new jobs near where they live, not new jobs in a different part of the country that is hard to access and will disrupt their lives.

This is important for people who aren't able to move away from the region for various reasons, but also to keep people who can move from leaving, to avoid the breakdown of the economic and social fabric of communities. We also need to be strong advocates for our own communities and region, promoting our strengths and the opportunities transition will bring.

The Indigenous Employment Program (IEP), a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between GLaWAC and Latrobe City Council, is a positive example of a collaborative partnership established to support First Peoples employment and training. The MoU was designed to allow both parties to work collaboratively to support the delivery of programs and projects for the benefit of Indigenous recipients across Gippsland.

Since its establishment in 2019, the IEP has supported the placement of 93 Aboriginal people into employment in the region. The program is tracking at a 78% retention rate for participants being in a role for 26 weeks or greater and going on to be employed in various roles with GLaWAC, such as natural resource management, land care, administration and hospitality. Employment opportunities have also extended to other industries including health, retail, local government and within the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations sector.



Industry

The impact and scale of the change in major industries across Gippsland is immense. Workers and employers must be key partners in the transition process. Organisations that advocate for workers' rights and interests, such as unions, have an important role to play in social dialogue, as do businesses and employers' associations.

Businesses and enterprises are more likely to commit to creating decent jobs, reskilling and retaining workers and investing in communities if they have more certainty from governments. Industry should also lead by example by aligning investment to identified areas of strength and future opportunity that will support a positive transition.

Social licence and social impact are important considerations for industry, particularly those companies in transitioning sectors that will maintain a presence in the region. Being open and honest with their workforce and community, as well as engaging with and being informed by them, will build trust and support.

Industry sectors should promote strong climate targets, employment targets and a just transition process – and support businesses to achieve them. Government can support industry to do this, for example by collaborating with industry to develop workable and pragmatic climate targets and to see those targets reached.

Working together, industry can partner with the education sector to position the region's institutions as centres for excellence. Industry sectors can also jointly advocate to government for policies, regulation and investment that will foster a thriving economy focused on identified areas of strength within the region.

Industry includes investors and financiers who can influence other stakeholders and mobilise capital to support communities, businesses and workers as part of a transition to a net zero carbon economy.



Education and training sector

The education sector is partnering with industry to understand areas of opportunity and growth in the region. This will enable institutions to offer tailored courses and programs to meet Gippsland's workforce and skills needs. The aim should be to establish the region as a centre of excellence to not only retain young people in the region by giving them a broad range of skills and career development opportunities, but also to attract other young people to the region to receive high quality, specialised education.

A strong and enduring relationship between education and industry is essential to provide students with training and work experience that allows them to understand a wider range of opportunities within an industry. This should cater to every aspect of industry supply chains – from trade and manufacturing to research and technology. It will enable students to connect with their communities in a way that enhances their understanding of how they can personally contribute to the community and the region more broadly.

There is also an opportunity for the education sector to work with industry and government to support young people in the region to participate in education beginning as early as primary school. Education, industry and government should collaborate to identify innovative ways to educate and inspire young people about the employment possibilities and pathways available to them in Gippsland.



Local government

Local governments facilitate planning processes and decisions. They use community engagement to inform development of council plans and strategies, collecting valuable information on current community priorities and sentiment. Local government can also communicate, educate and inform the community of changes and opportunities.

Local governments are well placed to advocate for local priorities and act as intermediaries to facilitate partnerships across all tiers of government, industry, education and communities. They have intimate knowledge of the region and its challenges and can establish strong connections through their extensive networks and engagement.

One Gippsland is an example of this. Its membership consists of six Gippsland LGAs, key industry bodies, education and training institutions, and the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation. One Gippsland connects the dots between government, business and community while working together to champion the interests of our region and our people.

One Gippsland can harness the collective efforts of local government, the private sector and communities to advocate for economic and social investment from State and Australian Government that will help advance the liveability, connectivity and productivity of Gippsland.



The Victorian Government

The Victorian Government is committed to partnering with communities to support them to prioritise and achieve their own objectives and aspirations. The government brings policy, legislation, funding and coordination to the table including in the school and Vocational Education and Training sectors. Wherever possible, government programs, projects and initiatives will respond to local priorities as part of a partnership approach to achieving locally developed and mutually agreed outcomes. The Victorian Government will support a best practice, place-based approach to transition, with a long-term commitment to affecting change and a focus on broader economic development and revitalisation.

Evidence shows locally led transitions produce better outcomes, but State Government support is needed for implementation. Investment facilitation, funding, policy and regulation across areas including the environment, climate change, local procurement and employment prioritisation can all contribute to positive transition results.

There is a strong desire in Gippsland for the Victorian Government to play a lead role in coordinating the transition process. A commitment to government in-place, embedded in the region with sufficient authority and discretion to coordinate and collaborate over the timeframe of this Plan will be crucial to success.

The LVA will continue to work in partnership with the Victorian Forestry Transition Team and Regional Development Victoria (RDV) Gippsland to facilitate partnerships and coordinate transition responses that respond to the needs of the region. The LVA will also work with the re-established State Electricity Commission, VicGrid and Offshore Wind Energy Victoria to implement the *Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan* to support coordinated transition opportunities.

The LVA and RDV have had demonstrable impact in collaborating with the existing power suppliers, particularly in worker transition planning, and coordinating energy initiatives in Gippsland including the Wellington Renewable Energy Forum, Gippsland New Energy Coordination Group, 2022 New Energy Conference and the Renewable Energy Information Hub concept for Morwell and Sale.

The LVA will lead implementation of the Plan in collaboration with other departments and agencies and support the Minister for Regional Development as champion of the Plan. The LVA will monitor, evaluate and publicly report on the Plan's progress and communicate outcomes.



The Australian Government

The Australian Government can provide national leadership and clear direction. It is responsible for university and tertiary education and has a role in setting targets, affecting policy, and delivering streamlined legislative and regulatory changes, working closely with the Victorian Government, industry and other partners. The Australian Government should provide policy certainty to support investment and action particularly by industry.

The Australian Government should also fund and facilitate coordinated action between states and industry for the development of national infrastructure. An example of this is the Marinus Link project – a proposed 1500-megawatt capacity undersea and underground electricity connection that will link North West Tasmania with the Latrobe Valley as part of Australia’s future electricity grid.

The Australian Government has primary responsibility for ensuring the adequacy of telecommunications infrastructure across Australia and has announced a range of telecommunications investment programs, including the \$200 million Regional Connectivity Program, which will result in more than \$600 million of contestable co-funding programs for digital connectivity over the next five years. It is important the Victorian Government also continues to co-invest alongside the Australian Government to access these funding programs.



Victoria’s emission reduction targets

Victoria has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75–80% (below 2005 levels) by the end of 2035, achieve net zero emissions by 2045 and 95% renewable energy generation by 2035. This will require coordination between all levels of government, across Victorian Government departments and agencies and with industry and community with a strong focus on the individuals, businesses and communities most affected whilst maximising opportunities and benefits from investment across Gippsland.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Education and training

Access to relevant study and training opportunities

- Build understanding of the various growth sectors and associated opportunities across the region and ensure the provision of good quality and specialised educational offerings to satisfy industry and workforce needs.
- Provide options for onsite delivery and accessible local courses, delivered by quality educators.
- Provide flexible arrangements and support for workers to participate in transition reskilling while still employed in their existing occupation.
- Continue to foster collaborative partnerships between schools, VET providers and higher education providers that make training and education more accessible to learners.
- Develop collaborative options with the private sector such as seconding industry experts to deliver training whilst still employed in industry.

Young people aspire to study and work in the region

- Create and promote clear pathways for young people to study and secure meaningful employment in Gippsland.

- Raise awareness of opportunities through partnerships with primary and secondary schools, local learning and employment networks, career practitioners, educators, industry and government.

Employment

High quality, valued jobs and employment pathways in industries with a long-term future

- Align education and training to future industry needs to build on our region's strengths and grow employment.
- Ensure that workers are upskilled or reskilled at the appropriate time to balance the decline in transitioning industries with the rate of growth in new and emerging sectors.
- Support constructive dialogue between local employers and unions to increase the likelihood of well-paid, sustainable employment opportunities in new industries and create greater certainty and security for employers.
- Build digital capability in the existing and emerging workforce so they have the skills they need for the job they wish to pursue and the options to obtain these skills in the region through vocational and higher education training.

Grow, develop and retain a skilled workforce to meet the future needs of the region

- Coordinate workforce development involving employers, unions, the education/training sector and government to:
 - understand the current workforce’s skills and demographics
 - determine future workforce needs and the skills required
 - identify gaps
 - develop targeted programs to reskill and upskill the existing workforce
 - implement training and education for new job entrants to ensure the new energy sector has a workforce with the right skills and qualifications available at the right times.
- Continue investment in services, infrastructure and amenities that will attract and retain sufficient skilled workers in the region.
- Ensure that education and training systems support the skills development needed for inclusive and sustainable growth in the context of twin transitions to digital and green economies.

Increased workforce participation through accessible employment pathways and inclusive employment practices

- Provide support through community networks, organisations and social groups to build confidence and self-esteem, and help overcome job hesitancy and disengagement from the workforce.
- Design focused programs to increase workforce participation and remove barriers to employment.
- Increase opportunities and support for Aboriginal women to participate in the workforce and encourage young Aboriginal people to consider pathways to business and entrepreneurship.

Support for transitioning workers in traditional industries

- Support and empower workers affected by industry closures to move to a future that they value. This includes career and financial planning, clear pathways to alternative employment, appropriate training and skilling and potentially, redundancy payments.

- Governments and employers should work together supporting worker transition and affected supply chain businesses, in partnership with unions, healthcare providers, the education and training sector and community.
- Victorian Government should continue to work with Energy Australia, AGL, industry and training providers to ensure that training and support are available for workers, businesses and impacted community.

The economy

A thriving economy focused on identified areas of strength

- Use evidence provided through the Gippsland Regional Economic Development Strategy to identify economic development priorities and maximise opportunities in the food and fibre, renewable energy, health and community services, tourism and advanced manufacturing industries.
- Build the First Peoples community’s contribution to the economic development of the region through leveraging opportunities in cultural tourism, creative industries, the native plants and bush food sector and business and entrepreneurship.

Increased opportunities for local supply chains and local procurement

- Industry and governments should work together to encourage local supply chain participation and support growth aligned to new opportunities in growing sectors.
- Coordinate the timing/staging of infrastructure projects to maximise an ongoing pipeline of opportunities for supply chain businesses and provide certainty to encourage investment.

Driving collaborative innovation to position Gippsland as a Victorian industry leader

- Establish partnerships between research institutions, industry and government to foster industry innovation and create potential for generating new jobs and economic growth.
- Identify and develop capacity for innovation in local industries and activities that represent genuine competitive advantages.

Liveability

Sufficient housing to improve social outcomes and accommodate a growing workforce

- Increase housing availability, affordability and diversity to improve social outcomes and assist in attracting and retaining workers.
- Local and State governments should examine ways land-use planning and regulations can be reworked to unlock further land for residential growth and address out of sequence and infrastructure costs.

A healthy and attractive natural environment

- Develop agricultural, tourism, energy production, extractives and manufacturing opportunities in a responsible and considered way to help protect our region's flora and fauna and improve the health and wellbeing of our community by restoring landscapes and reducing pollution of our water, air and soil.

An inclusive and safe built environment that is appreciated by and caters to the needs of the community

- Improve the built environment to provide attractive, easily accessible and safe public spaces for community gathering.
- Maximise opportunities from mine rehabilitation to add value to the region for future industry, environment, recreation, tourism, industry, parkland and residential use.
- Continue early and meaningful engagement with directly affected landowners, communities and Traditional Owners to minimise negative impacts whilst ensuring benefits from new energy projects and transmission line developments.

Empowered and thriving communities that are diverse and socially cohesive

- Promote, foster and value diversity in Gippsland's communities.
- Provide safe and culturally responsive social support and celebrate diversity through events, activities and experiences to boost awareness of and participation by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

- Provide accessible social and community activities catering to aged, First Peoples, people living with disabilities, gender diverse families, young and LGBTIQ+ people to support more socially cohesive communities with strengthened inclusion and greater community connection.

Accessible and inclusive services for health and wellbeing

- Provide training and accreditation pathways for healthcare practitioners and attract skilled workers for hard-to-fill positions in allied health, social work and general practice to meet increased demand for healthcare and community services support as the population ages.

Integrated transport for access to jobs, education and services

- Increase provision and access of frequent, reliable and affordable public transport across the region to enable equitable participation in education and the workforce, and access to healthcare and services
- Improve transport infrastructure and rail services between Melbourne and Gippsland to:
 - attract skilled workers and students to the region
 - enable access to healthcare and essential services
 - support flexible working options that enable people to commute for work or study
 - support the visitor economy by encouraging increased visitation to Gippsland.

Reliable digital connectivity to enable businesses and the community to access the full benefits of digital innovation and inclusion

- Improve reliable high-capacity digital connectivity and capability in the region to:
 - increase opportunities for flexible work and study, making the region an attractive option for workers looking to relocate
 - keep young people engaged in learning and encourage further study
 - increase digital inclusion and literacy for the region's First Peoples
 - expand technology adoption, which in turn will lead to increased productivity and enable the region's businesses to remain competitive while widening access to new markets

- provide better connectivity for emergency services, communities and businesses during emergencies.

Coordination, collaboration and shared leadership

Communities

- Ensure communities and community organisations are active participants in discussions about their future and development of responses.

Industry

- Align investment to identified areas of strength and future opportunity that will support a positive transition.
- Build trust and support by being open and honest with workforce and community, as well as engaging with and being informed by them.
- Promote strong climate targets, employment targets and a just transition process.
- Partner with the education sector to position the region’s institutions as centres for excellence.
- Advocate for policies, regulation and investment that will foster a thriving economy focused on identified areas of strength within the region.

Education and Training

- Partner with industry to understand areas of opportunity and growth in the region and offer tailored courses and programs to meet Gippsland’s workforce and skills needs.
- Build and maintain a strong and enduring relationship between education and industry to provide students with training and work experience that allows them to understand a wider range of opportunities within an industry.
- Collaborate with industry and government to identify innovative ways to educate and inspire young people about the employment possibilities and pathways available to them in Gippsland.

Local government

- Communicate, educate and inform the community of changes and opportunities.
- Advocate for local priorities, businesses and not-for-profits and act as intermediaries to facilitate partnerships across all tiers of government, industry, education and communities.

The Victorian Government

- The Victorian Government should:
 - partner with communities to support them to prioritise and achieve their own objectives and aspirations.
 - prioritise a Gippsland first approach to investment and procurement to support local businesses, supply chains and community sector organisations.
 - support a best practice, place-based approach to transition, with a long-term commitment to affecting change and a focus on broader economic development and revitalisation.
 - play a lead role in coordinating the transition process.
 - commit to government in-place, embedded in the region with sufficient authority and discretion to coordinate and collaborate over the timeframe of this Plan to ensure success.

The Australian Government

- The Australian Government should:
 - provide policy certainty to support investment and action particularly by industry.
 - fund and facilitate coordinated action between states and industry for the development of national infrastructure.
 - partner with State and Local Governments to help fund and resource activities that will contribute to a successful transition.

MEASURING PROGRESS



Through the LVA, the Victorian Government will measure and report on the Plan's progress.

Outcomes Framework

An Outcomes Framework has been developed as a tool to measure change and show contribution towards the outcomes of the Plan. It will provide a baseline and highlight progress over time. This tool helps stakeholders to have a shared understanding of what we hope to achieve and enables government to check if we are on track to achieve our goals.

The Outcomes Framework aims to align indicators and measures to the outcomes in the Plan. It will provide a basis for reporting and evaluation and can be reviewed to incorporate data that shows contribution towards achieving the outcomes in the Plan.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

A Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework is being developed to monitor the Plan's progress combining all these elements into one integrated system.

The MEL Framework will measure progress through:

- **Monitoring** – applying the Outcomes Framework for continuous and systematic observation of how the Plan is contributing to change in the priority focus areas. This is to ensure that activities are working towards their intended outcomes, supporting adaptive management and communicating progress

- **Evaluation** – evidence-based assessment of progress towards the long-term outcomes of the Plan
- **Learning** – applying the monitoring and evaluation data from the Outcomes Framework to inform future policy and programs to support the Plan’s evolution and Gippsland’s transition. This includes maintaining a shared understanding of successful transition across community, industry and government, and identifying factors that enable or constrain desired outcomes.

Review and updating the Plan

The Plan will be reviewed over time. Whilst the overarching vision, focus, goals and guiding principles are expected to remain relevant, they will be adapted, if necessary, as circumstances change. Updated versions will be developed and measurement of progress will continue.



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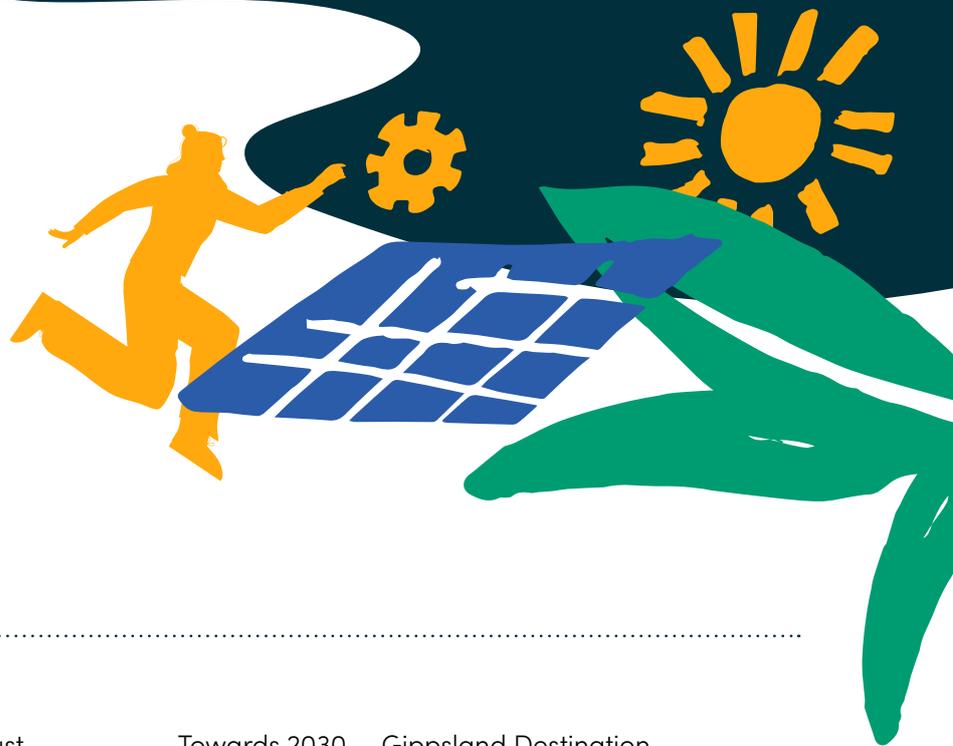
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Appendix

GIPPSLAND REGIONAL SNAPSHOT



Industry output

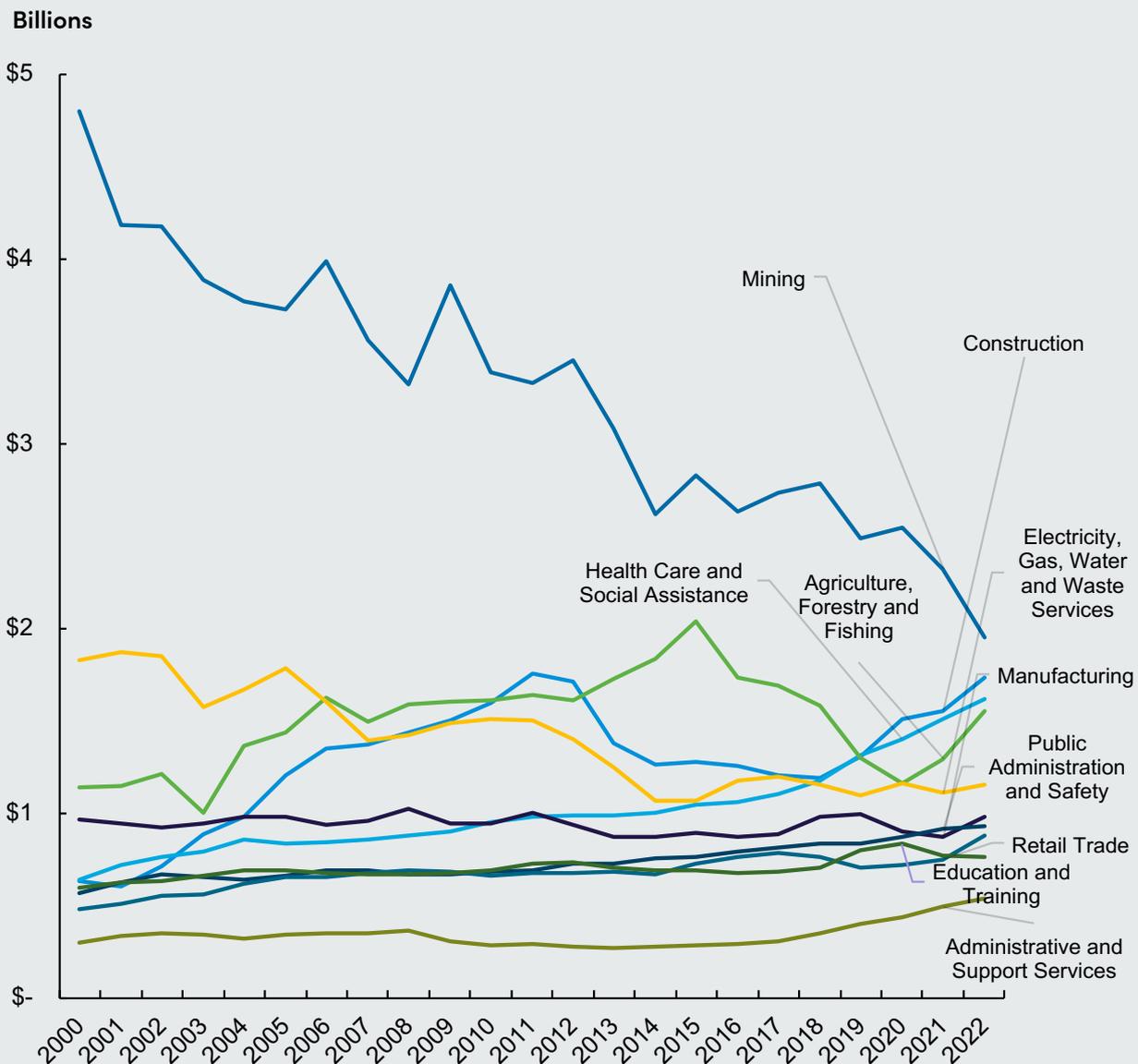
Despite fluctuations over the past 20 years and being one of the smallest employing industries, mining is the largest contributor to Gross Value Add (GVA) in Gippsland.

The construction sector has also experienced GVA growth over the past two decades. Since the 2018 financial year, it has been the second largest contributor to the region's GVA (see Figure 1).

Consistent with a larger ageing population, Gippsland has seen expansion in healthcare and social assistance, making it the third largest industry.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing which saw steady growth at the start of the century, has been declining since 2015. It's now the region's fourth largest sector.

Figure 1: Gross Value Add (GVA) of Ten Largest Industries, Gippsland (2000 to 2022)
Gross Value Add (GVA), NIEIR (2022)

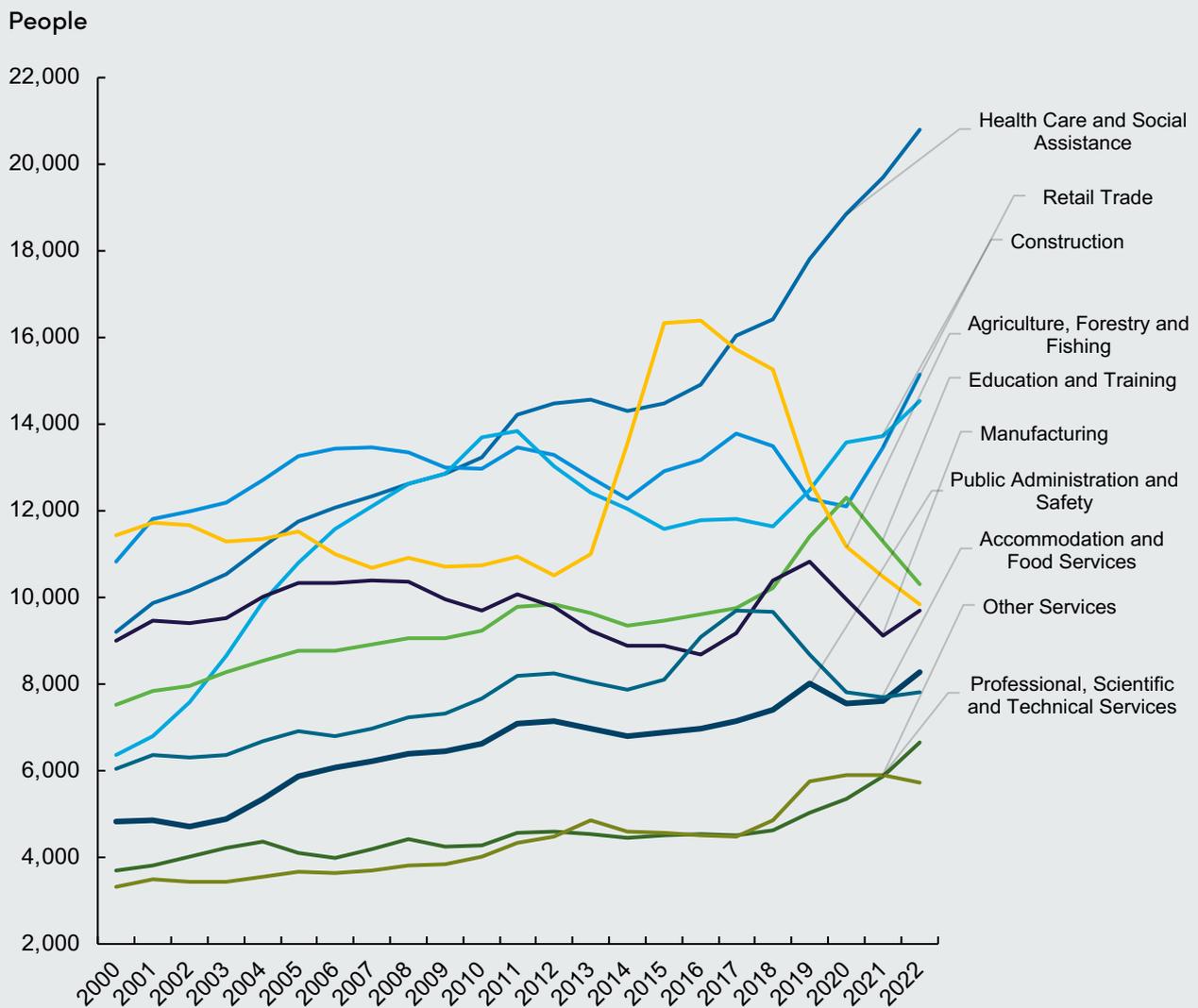


Employment

With the exception of 2015 and 2016 the healthcare and social assistance sector has been the region's largest employer since 2009. This is consistent with Gippsland's growing demand for services related to population growth and ageing. Other sectors associated with population growth have also grown consistently over the past two years, including education and training and public administration and safety.

Construction is the region's third largest employer and the second fastest growing industry in terms of employment since 2000 behind health care and social assistance (see Figure 2). The industry is likely to grow to support the establishment of the renewable energy sector and housing.

Figure 2: Employment of Ten Largest Industries, Gippsland (2000 to 2022)
Employment (Place of usual residence), NIEIR (2022)

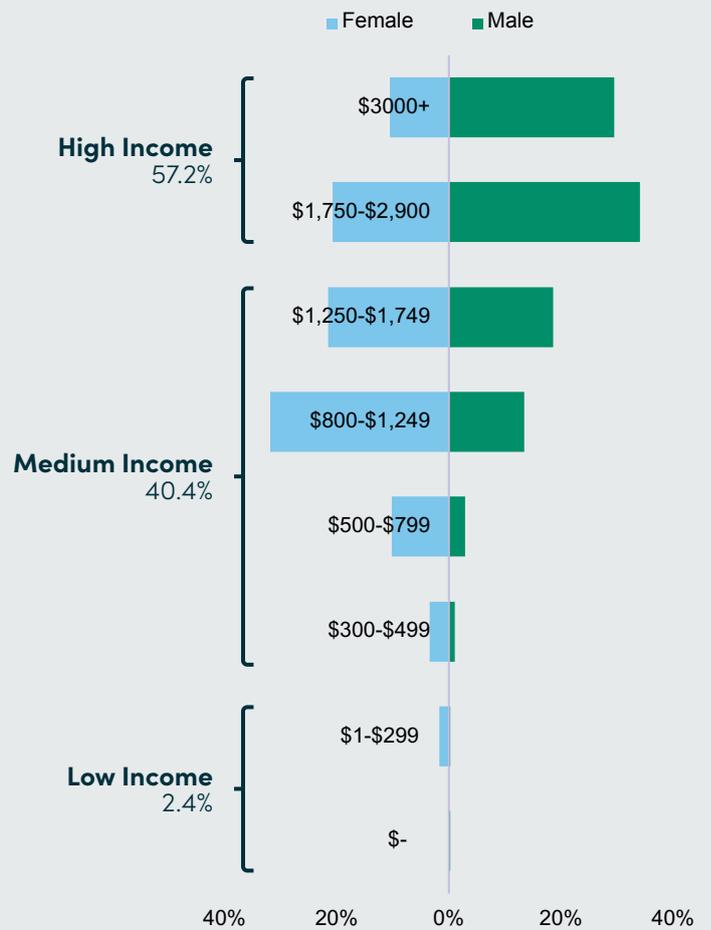
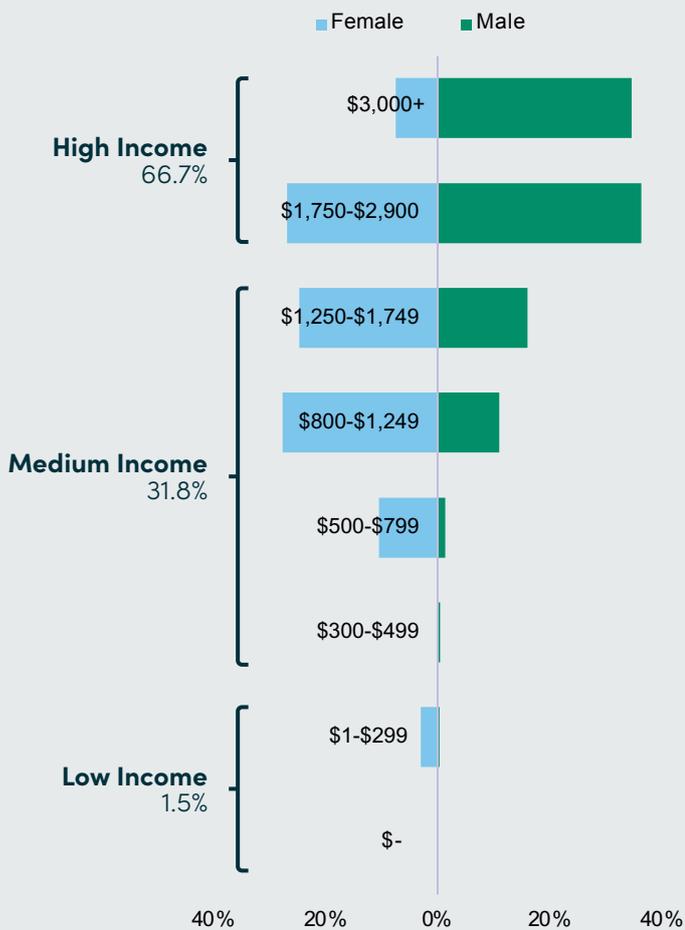


While mining has the highest proportion of workers on high incomes, it's the third smallest industry by total number of workers employed (1.4% of Gippsland's total workforce).

Similarly, the utilities sector accounts for 2.9% of Gippsland's total workforce.

Figure 2.1: Weekly Income and Sex, Mining – largest contributor to GVA, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021

Figure 2.2: Weekly Income and Sex, Utilities* – 5th largest contributor to GVA, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021



*Utilities represents the Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services ANZSIC Industry

Although mining is the biggest contributor to Gippsland’s GVA with the greatest number of highly paid jobs, the largest employing industries employ more workers in the medium income bracket.

Figure 2.3: Weekly Income and Sex, Health Care – largest employing industry, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021

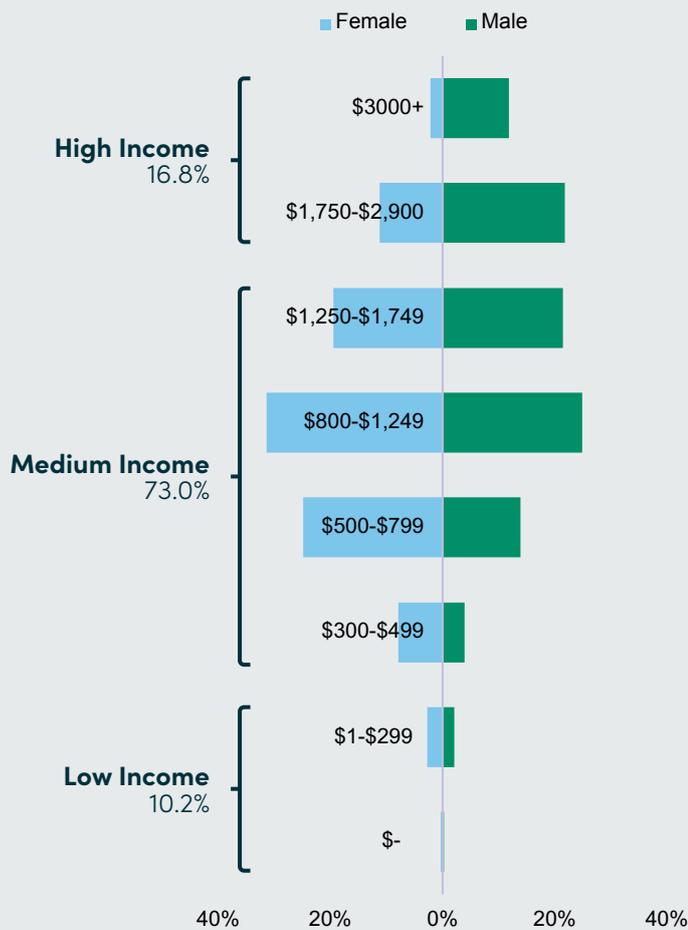


Figure 2.4: Weekly Income and Sex, Construction – 2nd largest employing industry, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021

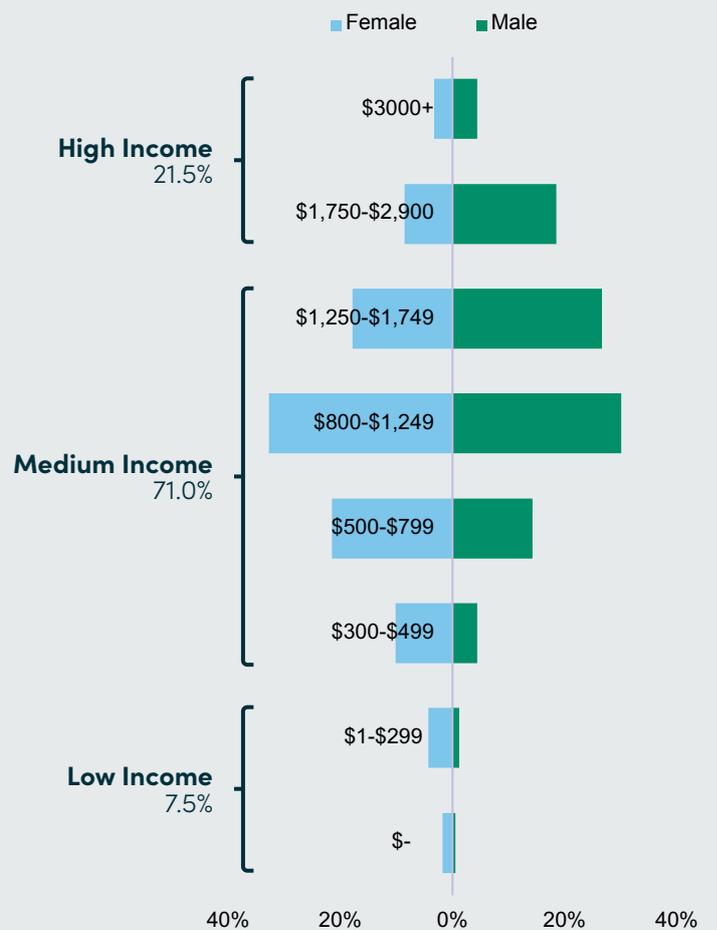




Figure 2.5: Weekly Income and Sex, Retail Trade – 3rd largest employing industry, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021

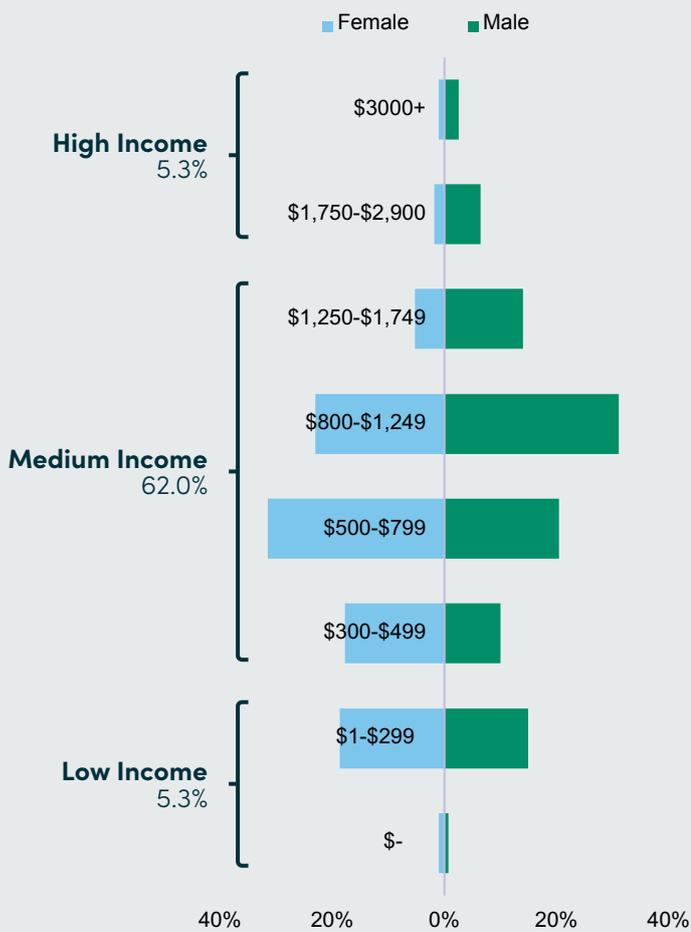


Figure 2.6: Weekly Income and Sex, Education & Training – 4th largest employing industry, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021





Figure 2.7: Weekly Income and Sex, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing – 5th largest employing industry, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021

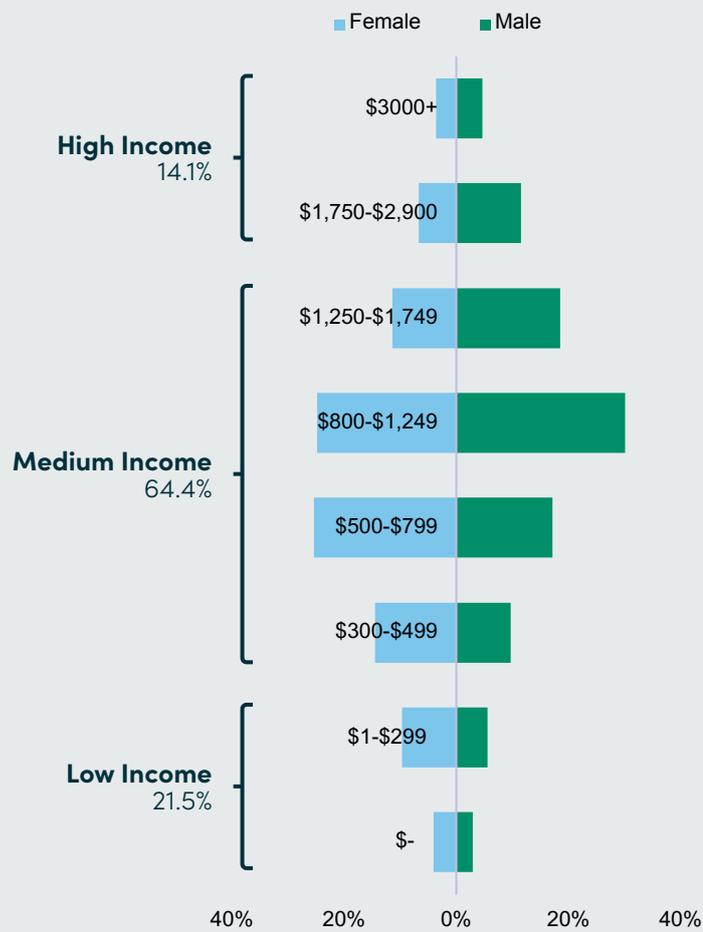
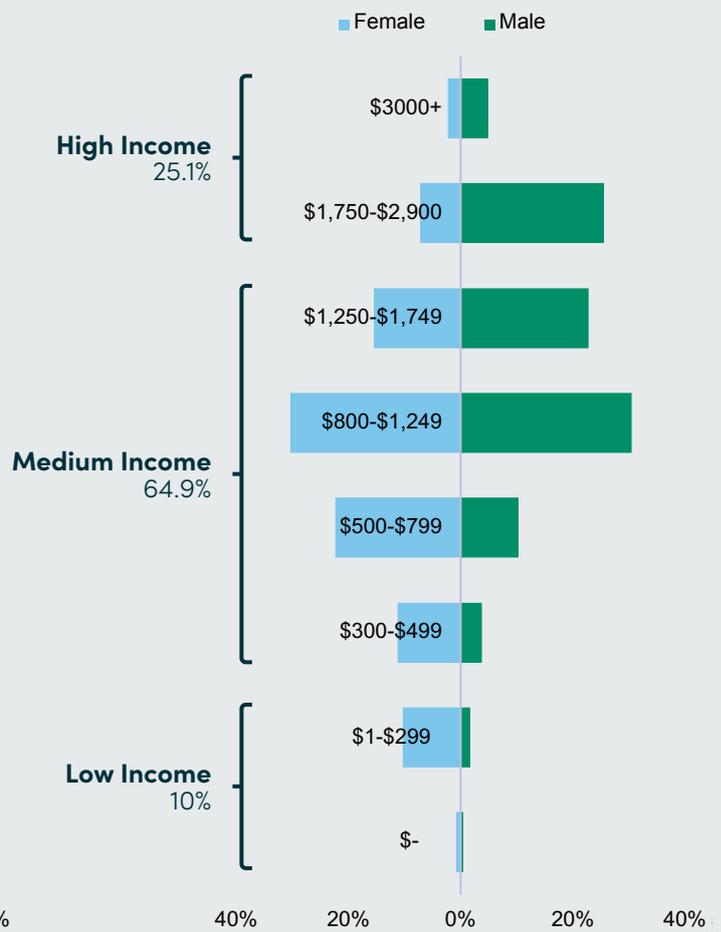


Figure 2.8: Weekly Income and Sex, Manufacturing – 6th largest employing industry, Gippsland (2021)
ABS Census 2021



Workforce

Gippsland has an ageing population, which translates to an ageing workforce. Gippsland has a much higher proportion of retirement aged workers than the Victorian average with 7.6% of all workers in Gippsland being of retirement age compared with 4.8% at the Victorian level.

Figure 3: Age & Sex, Workers & Non-Workers*, Gippsland (2021).

Population by 5-Year Age Cohorts & Sex
ABS Census 2021

Figure 4: Age & Sex, Workers & Non-Workers*, Victoria (2021)

Population by 5-Year Age Cohorts & Sex
ABS Census 2021



*Workers are defined as those who are employed, whereas non-workers are defined as those who are unemployed or not in the labour force.

From 2001 to 2021, the proportion of retirement age residents in Gippsland increased by 8.9 percentage points to 24.2%, surpassing the proportion of young people in 2012.

The decline in the number of young people is largely due to their tendency to move to Melbourne

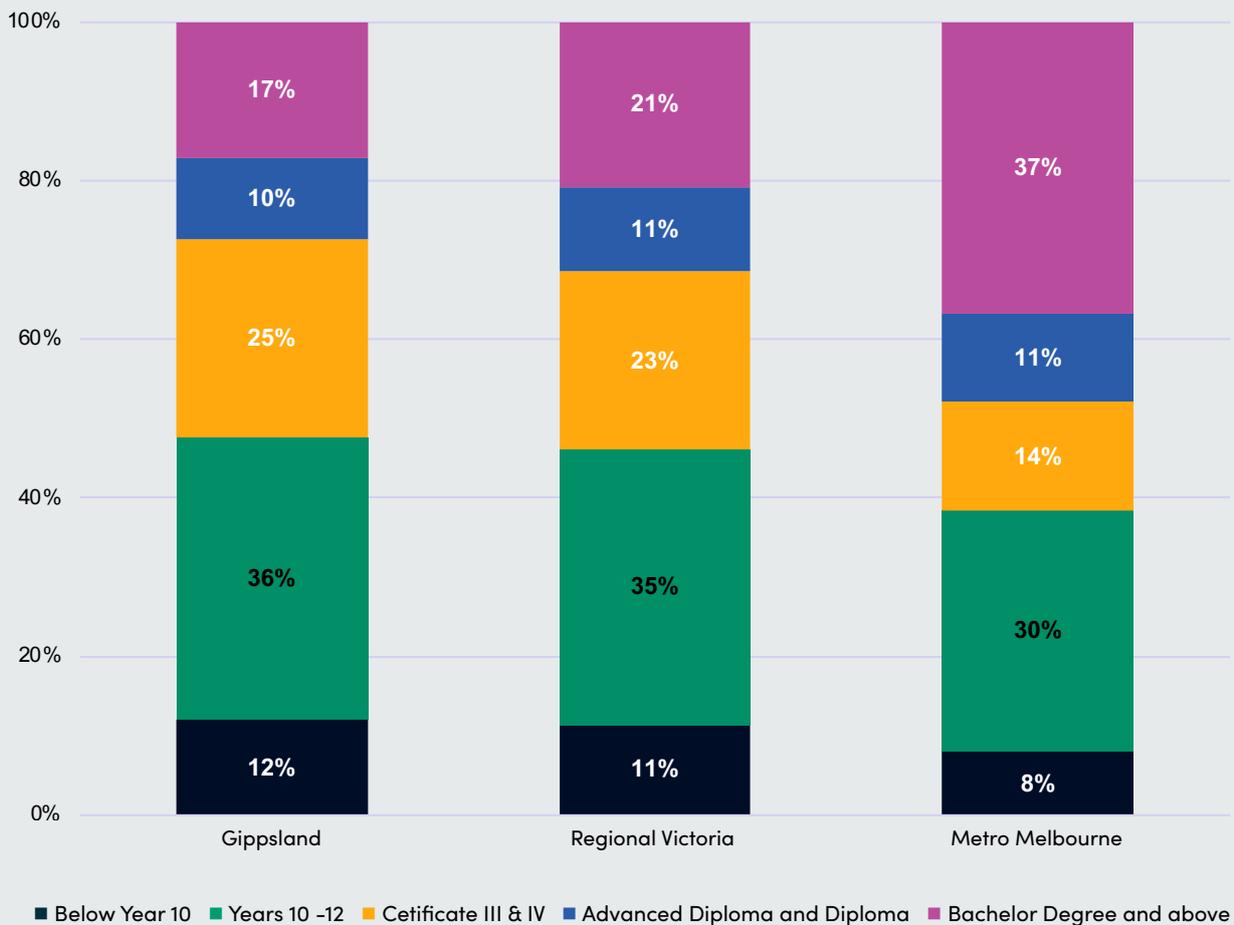
or beyond for greater education, training and employment opportunities. Keeping and attracting young people to Gippsland to study or work presents an opportunity to develop a long-term future workforce in the region.

Educational attainment

Gippsland has similar levels of educational attainment to regional Victoria as a whole.

The qualification levels of Gippslanders (48% do not have a post high school qualification and 35% have a diploma or certificate) can be partly explained by what is required for major employment industries in the region, as well as the region's older demographic profile.

Figure 5: Highest level of Education Attainment
Proportion of population, ABS Census 2021



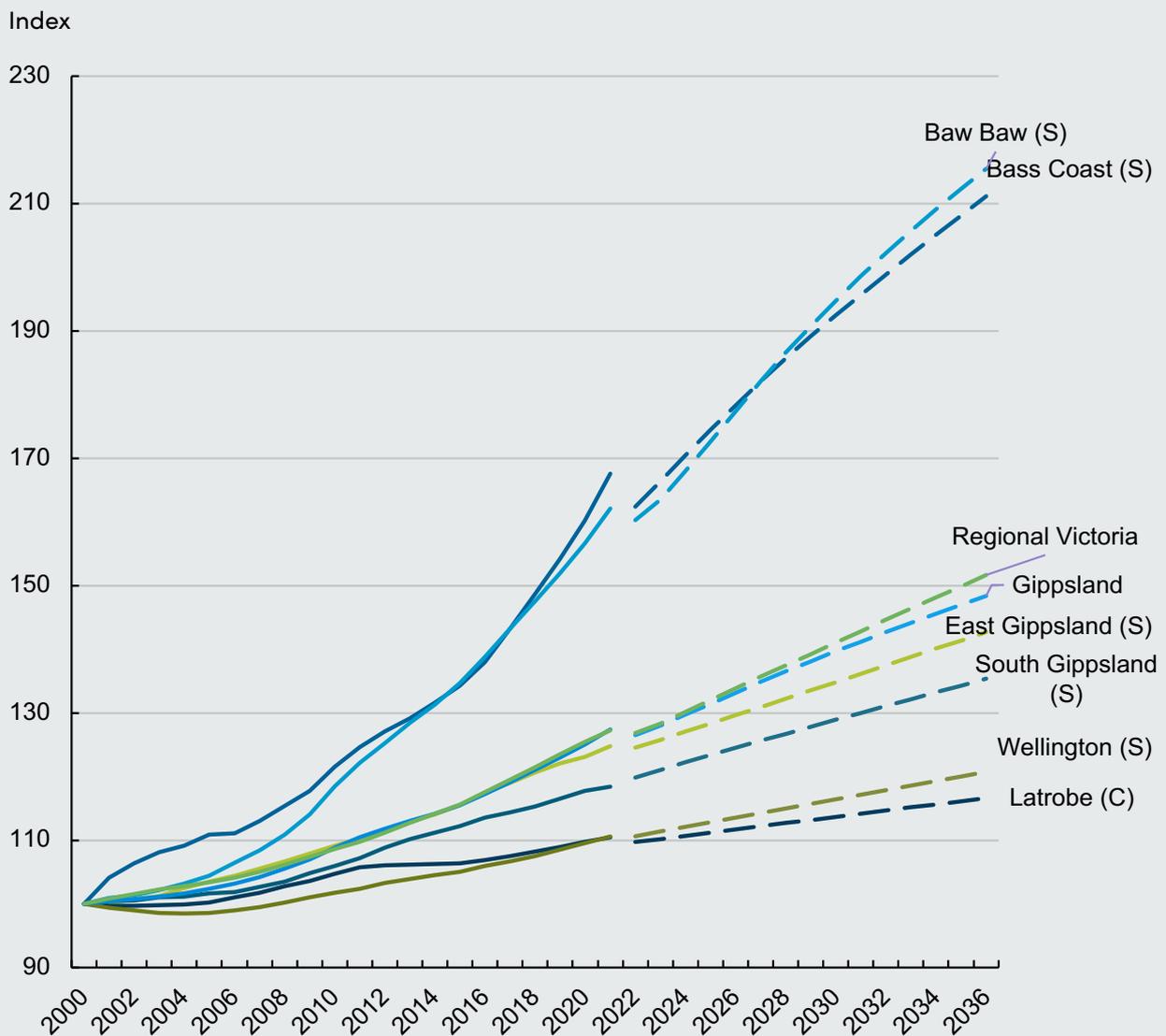
Population

From 2000 until 2021, population growth across Gippsland was in line with regional Victoria. From 2021 onwards Gippsland and regional Victoria's population is expected to grow at a similar rate.

Peri-urban localities are expected to expand much quicker than other localities. It's estimated that populations in Baw Baw and Bass Coast will increase by 115.4% between 2000 - 2036.

Figure 6: Past & Projected Population Growth, Gippsland (2000 to 2036)

Estimated Resident Population, Victoria in the Future Population Projections (2019), index=100



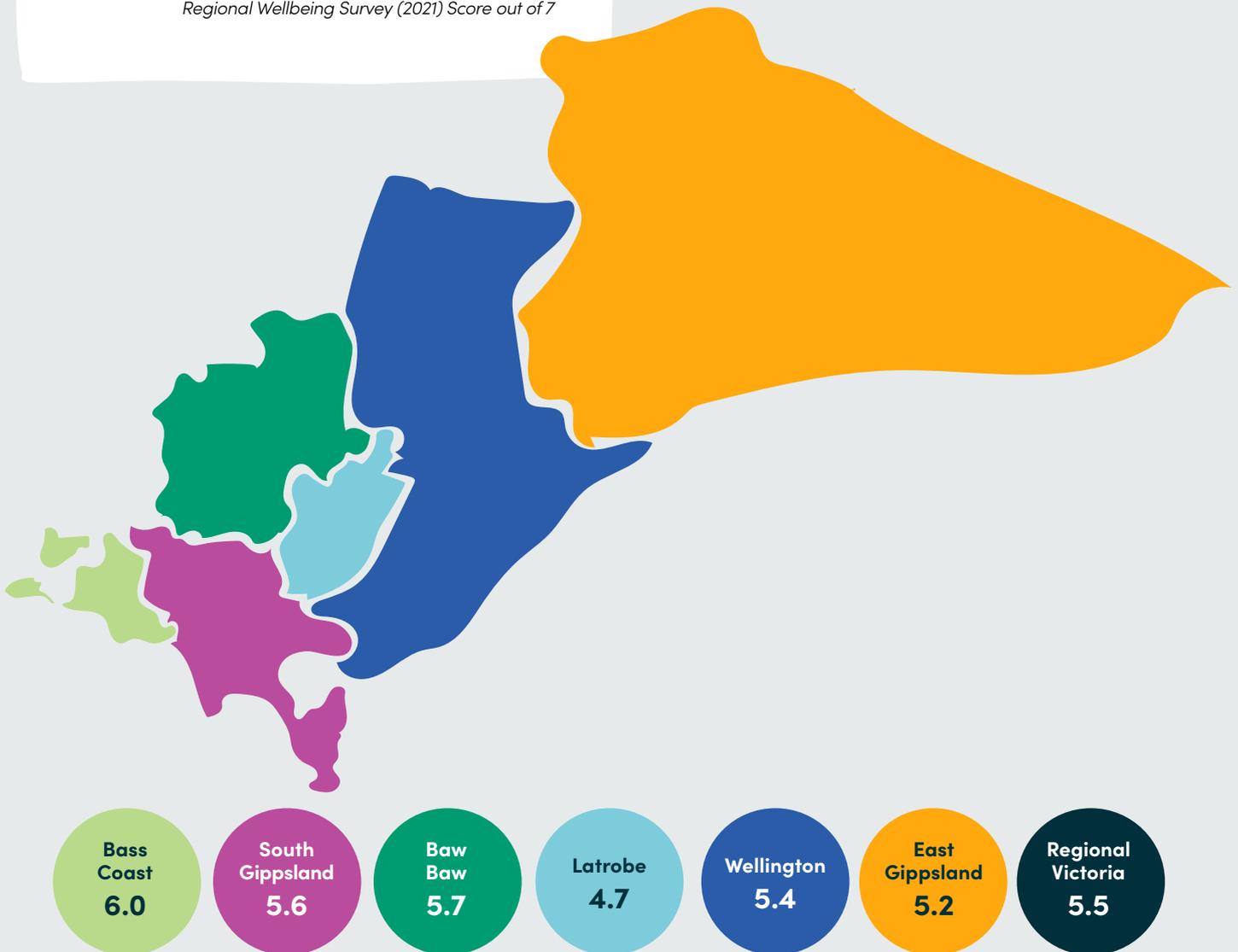
Note the population projections are sourced from the Victoria in the Future Population Projections of 2019 and as a result do not estimate impacts of COVID-19 on population.



Confidence in the future

Forecast declines in employment in industries under transition are not reflected in the communities' perception of the future. Despite socioeconomic changes, Gippsland's communities align with regional Victorian averages in terms of perceptions of a bright future.

Figure 7: Community has a Bright Future (2020)
Regional Wellbeing Survey (2021) Score out of 7



THANK YOU

This Plan has been developed in partnership with the region and informed by extensive engagement to capture the diverse voices and opinions of individuals, community groups and organisations. We acknowledge the formal contribution of leaders from the following organisations who supported the development of the plan through the Project Control Group and the Implementation Working Group.

- AGL
- Alinta
- AusNet Services
- Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN
- Baw Baw Shire
- Committee for Gippsland
- Destination Gippsland
- East Gippsland Shire
- Energy Australia
- Environment Victoria
- Federation University
- Food & Fibre Gippsland
- Gippsland Climate Change Network
- Gippsland Forestry Hub
- Gippsland Regional Partnership
- Gippsland Water
- GippSport
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Gippsland Trades and Labour Council
- Latrobe City Business Chamber
- Latrobe City Council
- Latrobe Health Advocate
- Latrobe Health Assembly
- Latrobe Youth Space
- Latrobe Valley Authority
- Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority
- One Gippsland
- OPAL
- Regional Development Australia Gippsland Committee
- RDV Gippsland
- Star of the South
- State Electricity Commission Implementation Office
- South Gippsland Shire
- TAFE Gippsland
- Victorian Skills Authority
- Voices of The Valley
- West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority



THANK YOU

Latrobe Valley and Gippsland
Transition Plan

Our Region.
Our Future.