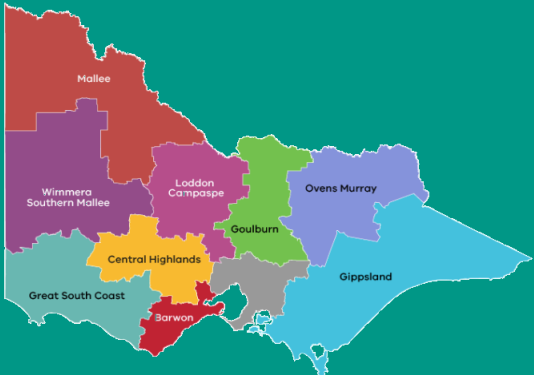


Great South Coast

Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) 2026

Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS)

▶ **Victoria's Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) were released in 2022 and identified strategic directions to further drive growth and prosperity in regional Victoria**



Every Regional Partnership region is supported by a tailored Regional Economic Development Strategy

Role of the REDS

- The REDS play a foundational, place-based role in Victoria’s economic policy landscape by translating whole-of-government priorities into region-specific economic reform and investment agendas.
- The REDS provide a consistent evidence-based framework for understanding Victoria's regional economies.

How to use the REDS

- The REDS can be used by all levels of government, regional communities, and businesses to work together, innovate, tackle challenges and make targeted investments to achieve stronger outcomes for their region.
- Regional communities and businesses can use the REDS to:
 - communicate innovative capacity in their region, now and in the future
 - collaborate with government to better understand regional strengths, challenges and opportunities
 - attract investment to the region based on clearly identified strategic priorities.

REDS interactive data dashboards

9 interactive data dashboards—one for each Regional Partnership—complement the REDS, providing deeper insights into economic performance and regional trends.

Explore the region’s dashboard:

[View Great South Coast Dashboard](#)

<https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/priorities/reds>

Refreshing the REDS in 2026

▶ The 2026 REDS translate Victoria’s current strategic policy directions into place-based economic opportunities

Why REDS Refresh in 2026?



- Time has passed since the original 2022 REDS.
- The 2022 REDS established a strong, evidence-based foundation, but underlying data, economic conditions and forecasts have evolved significantly.
- The refresh incorporates major policy developments since 2022—particularly Victoria’s Economic Growth Statement and Victorian Industry Policy—ensuring regional priorities remain aligned with whole-of-government direction.
- New economic opportunities, sector shifts and investment priorities have emerged across regions, requiring an updated, place-based lens.
- The 2026 refresh does not replace the 2022 REDS. It selectively updates data, insights and priorities where change has occurred, while retaining the core strategic intent.
- The 2022 REDS remain a valid and standalone product. The refresh builds on this foundation, ensuring continuity while strengthening relevance for current decision-making.

Why REDS Refresh in 2026?



- **Boosting productivity is central** to Victoria’s long-term economic growth, workforce capability and prosperity. Achieving this will require coordinated economy-wide, sectoral and place-based initiatives.
- **Priority sectors underpinning growth** include advanced manufacturing and defence, health technologies, circular economy (including renewable energy), digital technologies, agribusiness and critical minerals.
- Many of these **knowledge-intensive, export-oriented sectors are regionally concentrated**, presenting significant opportunities to drive regional growth and prosperity.

Great South Coast REDS 2026

The Great South Coast REDS revisits the strategic directions for the region, reflecting place-based opportunities under Victoria’s Economic Growth Statement and key economic development policies that were released since 2022

2022 REDS Strategic Directions

In 2022, RDV delivered the Great South Coast REDS which identified place-based strategic directions to drive economic growth.

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

[Click here to read the 2022 REDS](#)

2026 REDS Refresh Opportunities & Priorities

Since 2022, new opportunities and priorities have emerged that are shaping economic development across the region.

- 6 **Grow key worker housing supply in the Great South Coast**
Unlocking affordable housing supply can support economic growth in the Great South Coast and enable the development of strategic directions within the region.
- 7 **Develop water infrastructure to unlock investment**
Developing water infrastructure in the Great South Coast can unlock new investment by increasing waste capacity needed to support expansion of food processing hubs, whilst also enabling tourism growth through improved amenity and visitation capacity.

See pages 5, 6, 21-23 for further detail on these emerging opportunities and priorities, as well as how existing strategic directions have developed in the region since the 2022 REDS

Enablers and investments supporting REDS strategic directions

2022 REDS Strategic Directions *(See appendix for extended analysis)*

	Development since the REDS	Alignment with state and local priorities since the REDS
Add value to and diversify within the agri-food supply chain	▪ Establishing new high-value, export-oriented agri-food industries ▪ Expanding high-value aquaculture production and export capacity ▪ Moving the region up the value chain in dairy	▪ Victorian Investment Fund ▪ Economic Growth Statement ▪ Trunk Infrastructure Fund ▪ Victorian Industry Policy
Maximise the potential of the region's energy resources	▪ Positioning the region as a producer of low-emissions fuels ▪ Enabling large-scale renewable energy integration ▪ Supporting reliability and firming of renewable energy supply	▪ Portland Diversification Fund ▪ Victorian Investment Fund ▪ Economic Growth Statement
Grow and equip the workforce needed to enable future economic opportunities	▪ Improving Great South Coast access to higher education ▪ Building a pipeline of industry-aligned technical skills	▪ Regional Worker Accommodation Fund ▪ Economic Growth Statement ▪ Victorian Skills Plan
Expand existing strengths in cultural and nature-based visitation	▪ Strengthen globally significant cultural tourism assets and enhance accessibility at key nature-based destinations ▪ Increase the capacity and quality of visitor servicing at iconic natural assets	▪ Regional Worker Accommodation Fund
Capture the greater potential of the 'Green Triangle' cross-border economic zone	▪ Improving freight efficiency and export competitiveness ▪ Strengthening cross-border forestry and manufacturing value chains through downstream processing opportunities	▪ Portland Diversification Fund ▪ Victorian Investment Fund ▪ Victorian Industry Policy

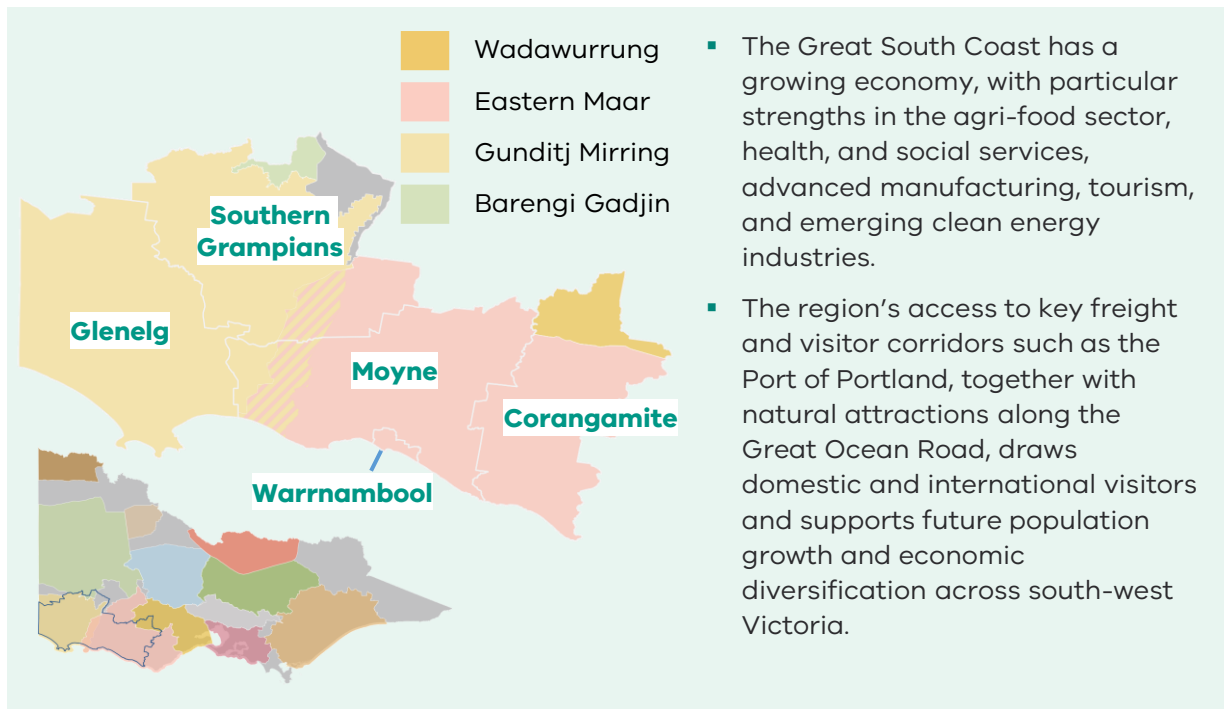
Enablers and investments supporting REDS strategic directions

2026 REDS Refresh Opportunities & Priorities

(see appendix for extended analysis)

	Significance	Supporting projects and catalysts to support future growth	
Grow key worker housing supply in the Great South Coast	On a per capita basis, Great South Coast’s availability of 1-2 bedroom rentals is less than half that of metropolitan Melbourne. ¹	Supporting projects ▪ Timboon Rural Healthcare Worker Accommodation ▪ Dunkeld Worker Accommodation Project ▪ Midfield Key Worker Housing Development ▪ Noorat Butter Factory Worker Accommodation ▪ Great South Coast Housing Expo	Catalysts to support future growth ▪ Visitor dispersal to Great South Coast hinterland ▪ Food & Fibre export growth, particularly meat products ▪ Support new on-farm investment
Develop water infrastructure to unlock investment	The Great South Coast is a major contributor to Victoria’s agriculture sector, generating 17.6% of the state’s GVA, but only accounts for 3.8% of food product manufacturing. ² Improved water infrastructure unlocks further investment in value-adding industries across the region.	Supporting projects ▪ Regional Investment Attraction Project / Camperdown Production Precinct ▪ 12 Apostles Hot Springs Resort	Catalysts to support future growth ▪ Investment in value-add food and fibre manufacturing ▪ Supporting the growth of ancillary businesses around the 12 Apostles

Great South Coast Regional Profile



Key Economic Statistics

Metric	Great South Coast	Regional Victoria	Metropolitan Melbourne
Population ¹ (2025)	106k	1.7m	5.3m
Population Growth ¹ (2020 – 2025)	0.9%	6.1%	7.2%
GRP ² (2025)	\$8.1b	\$115.8b	\$494.7b
GRP Growth ² (2020 – 2025)	16.7%	12.5%	11.9%
Unemployment Rate ³ (Mar 2026)	1.8%	3.7%	4.8%
Unemployment Rate Change ³ (Mar 2021 – Mar 2026)	-1.6% pts	-1.1% pts	-2.4% pts
Employment Growth ² (2020 – 2025)	0.5%	9.7%	13.0%

Great South Coast Top Employing Industries²

1.		Health Care and Social Assistance	9,500	4.		Accommodation and Food Services	4,800
2.		Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	7,400	5.		Manufacturing	4,300
3.		Retail Trade	5,700	6.		Construction	4,200

Great South Coast growth is underpinned by strong agricultural production

Population 106k Population (2025)¹ ↑ +0.9% Since 2020	Population growth in the Great South Coast is behind both regional and metropolitan averages. - The Great South Coast is home to 106,100 people with population growth over the past 5 years (0.9%) slower than both regional (6.1%) and metropolitan (7.2%) averages.¹ - Warrnambool and Moyne both recorded positive population growth over the past five years, increasing by 2.4% and 3.9% respectively.¹	Population change since 2020 15% -4%
Gross Regional Product \$8.1b GRP (2025)² ↑ +16.7% Since 2020	Growth in the Great South Coast economy has outpaced both metropolitan and regional averages. - Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing remains a key economic driver, with its share of gross value add (31%) exceeding its share of employment (14%), indicating strong productivity.² - The region's economic growth has predominantly been driven by Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, which grew by 39% over the past 5 years.	GRP change since 2020 32% 10%
Employment 53k Employed (2025)² ↑ +0.5% Since 2020	Great South Coast's employment growth is underpinned by population driven and service-based industries. - Services-based sectors are driving employment growth, with Health Care & Social Assistance, Accommodation & Food Services and Retail Trade seeing the largest increase in workers. - Demand for Health Care & Social Assistance workers is expected to remain strong, with 4,600 new roles by 2035 (32% of new workers), significantly above its current share of the workforce (19%) and higher than regional and metropolitan benchmarks.³	Employment change since 2020 11% -11%
Unemployment Rate 1.8% Unemployment Rate (Mar Qtr 2026)⁴ ↓ -1.6% pts Since Mar Qtr 2021	Great South Coast's unemployment rates vary, highlighting disparity in labour markets and challenges. - The region's labour market has tightened over the past 5 years, with the unemployment rate falling by 1.6 percentage points to 1.8%, well below both regional Victoria (3.7%) and metropolitan Melbourne (4.8%).⁴ - Unemployment rates vary but remain low across the region, from 1.0% in Corangamite – South to 3.0% in Portland.⁴	Unemployment rate 3.0% 1.0%

Key industry strengths driving Great South Coast's economy



Wind Power, Hydrogen & Renewable Fuels

The Great South Coast is recognised for having a large amount of wind resources spread across the region. The region accounts for **40% of operating wind energy projects in the State**.¹ As well as vast wind resources, the Great South Coast is home to a **hydrogen hub (Hycel)**, and supporting the development of **sustainable aviation fuel production** capability in Portland (**HAMR Energy**)



Agri-Food & Forestry Sectors

The Great South Coast is home to some of **Victoria's largest dairy, beef, lamb and wool producers**, which provides productivity benefits through economies of scale. The region contributes to **20% of Australia's milk production**,² and it utilises this agricultural production to generate **\$329 million in Food Product Manufacturing GVA**.³

The Green Triangle, which spans the border in the far south west corner of Victoria and South Australia's Limestone Coast, is one of **Australia's major forestry regions** with end-to-end supply chain of soft and hardwood plantations through the port of Portland.



Visitor Economy & Creative Industries

The region is home to iconic landscapes including the **Shipwreck Coast** and the **Twelve Apostles**, which attract visitors all year round and provide environmental, social and cultural amenity to the region. Tourism in the Great South Coast generated **\$1.0b in annual spend** in year ending June 2026.⁴ Creative and Performing Arts Activities have also seen growth, driven by events such as the Port Fairy Folk Festival, as well as the Warrnambool and Hamilton Art Galleries, generating **\$5.6 million in GVA, a 112% increase since 2020**.³



Connectedness & Transport Linkages

The region is well connected to markets via road (**Princes Highway**), a deep-water port (**Port of Portland**) and rail. The Port of Portland has 300 people working on it daily, handles **5.4 million tonnes of exports and imports annually**, and **45% of Victoria's dry-bulk cargo** passes through it.⁵

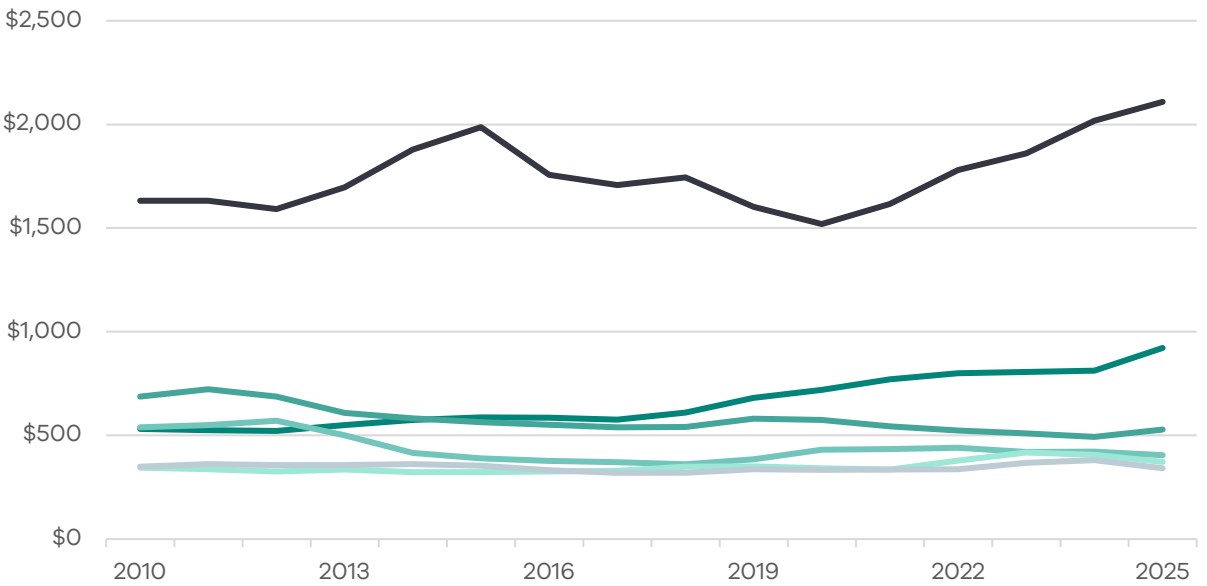
Key industry strengths driving Great South Coast's economy

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing was the largest and one of the fastest growing industries in the Great South Coast in 2025, accounting for almost a third (31%) of total GVA in the region.³

- Great South Coast's economy is benefitting from its Agri-Food and Forestry sectors, with Agriculture, Food Product Manufacturing and Forestry & Logging making up 35% of GVA within the region.³
- This concentration of economic activity within a limited number of sectors indicates relatively low economic diversity across some communities in the Great South Coast. Initiatives such as the Portland Diversification Fund have sought to broaden the economic base, supporting more sustainable growth and enhancing resilience during periods of downturn.
- Despite a drop in manufacturing output over time, this industry remains critical for the region's economic development, with future growth in advanced manufacturing, clean energy and food processing.

Great South Coast gross value added for key industries

National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR)



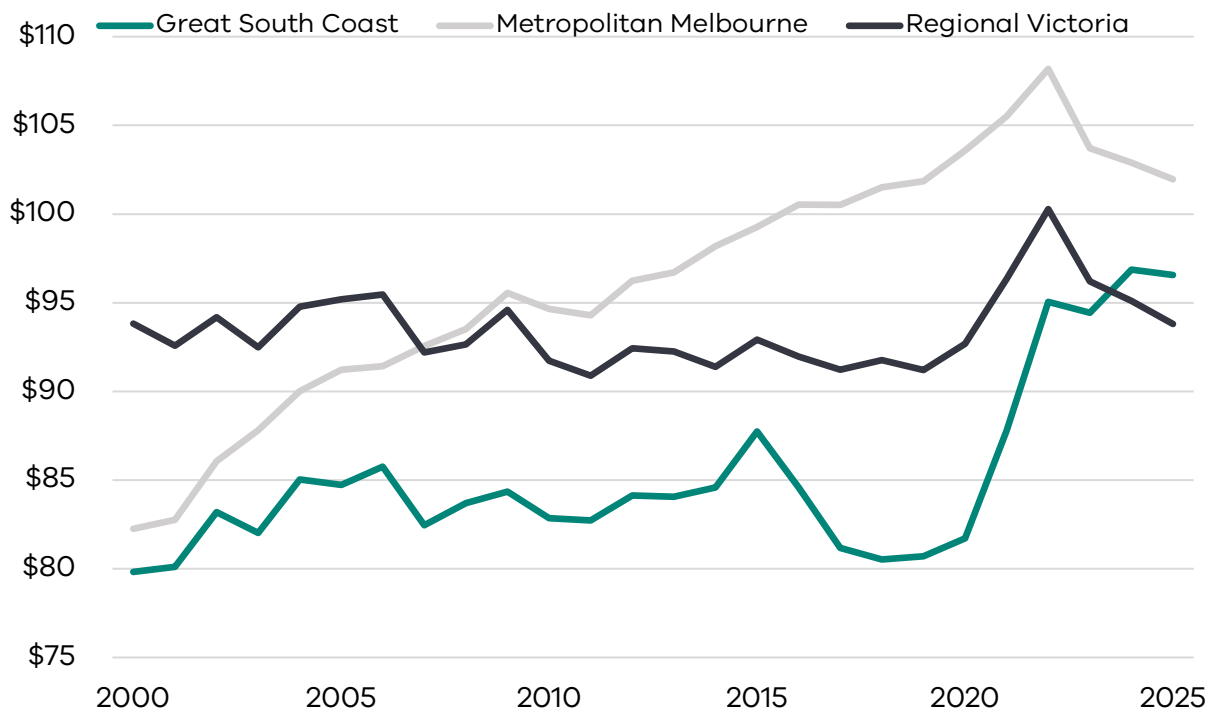
Top sectors by GVA¹

	Industry 1-digit ANZSIC	GVA (\$M)	5-Year Change
—	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	\$2,109	38.8%
—	Health Care and Social Assistance	\$922	28.0%
—	Manufacturing	\$528	-8.0%
—	Construction	\$405	-6.1%
—	Retail Trade	\$372	8.9%
—	Education and Training	\$342	2.5%

Boosting productivity and growing high-value industries is critical to the region’s economic future

Labour Productivity (GRP per hour Worked)

Dollars, NIEIR, 2000–2025



Productivity has grown strongly, driven by economic growth in agriculture

- The Great South Coast’s labour productivity has increased since 2020, as agriculture experienced strong commodity prices and capital deepening, this has increased the region’s productivity past regional Victoria.
- Closing the productivity gap with metropolitan areas remains a key opportunity to lift incomes, competitiveness and long-term economic growth.

High-value industries provide the strongest pathway to productivity growth

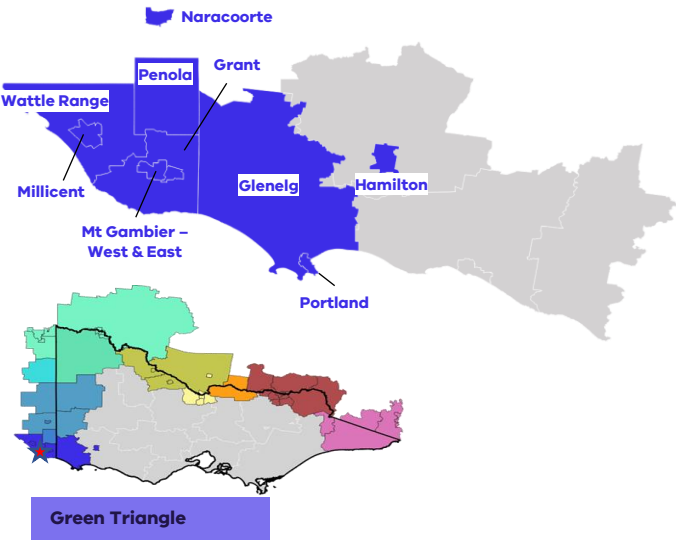
- Several priority sectors identified through the Great South Coast REDS, including agriculture, are among the region's most productive industries.
- Over the past 5 years the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing sector has driven the regions economic growth, accounting for an additional \$589 million in GVA.¹
- Continued growth in highly productive sectors such as agriculture will increase the share of economic activity occurring in higher-value, higher-productivity industries.

Skills and innovation are critical enablers of future productivity

- Investing in value-adding industries, water infrastructure, and workforce skills will compound these productivity gains and broaden the region's economic base.

Key assets in the Green Triangle Cross Border Economic Region are fundamental to realising economic growth in the region

Green Triangle Cross Border Economic Region (CBER)



* Note: each colour in the map above denotes a CBER, the Green Triangle CBER is defined by the SA2's of Glenelg, Portland, Grant, Mount Gambier – East, Mount Gambier – West, Millicent, Penola, Wattle Range, Hamilton and Naracoorte.

Opportunities for Economic Growth

- The Green Triangle Freight Action Plan is a joint Victorian–South Australian initiative aligning cross border freight priorities to **support growth across key transport corridors and nodes**. Continued collaboration is critical to improve High Productivity Vehicle access and connect markets.
- Developing growth sectors and assets such as the Port of Portland. With significant forestry assets, the demand for timber high and local assets such as the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub and Forestry Centre of Excellence, there is an opportunity to **further develop the forestry sector** in the region, including scaling up local processing and manufacturing across the forestry supply chain and export uplift through the direct access to the Port.
- The Green Triangle has a strong emphasis on Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, with this sector contributing to 21% of overall GVA and accounting for 14% of the workforce.² With region strengths in beef, dairy & forestry, there is opportunity to **further develop value-add processing** in the region.
- There is significant existing tourism interest in the region (717,000 annual overnight trips and 884,000 annual day trips taken in the region).⁵ There is opportunity to leverage off the regions natural endowments including: the Naracoorte Caves world heritage area, the Coonawarra wine region (South Australia) and the Budj Bim Cultural landscape to **further grow tourism in the region**.
- There is an opportunity for local **education institutions to attract local youth** to avoid losing young people relocating out of the region for educating purposes.



Key Population Centres/ Service Hubs

Mount Gambier (SA); Naracoorte (SA); Millicent (SA); Portland (Vic); Hamilton (Vic)



Key Tertiary Education Providers

University of South Australia, Mt Gambier Campus; TAFE SA, Mt Gambier Campus; South West TAFE, Hamilton Campus; South West TAFE, Portland Campus



Transport Corridors and Strategic Assets

Princes Highway; Port of Portland; Warrnambool Railway Line; Mount Gambier Regional Airport; Portland Airport



Largest Industries and Related Assets

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing:

Livestock saleyards (Mount Gambier and Naracoorte); Teys Abattoir; Forest Research Mt Gambier; Dairy Milk deliveries to Mondelez around Mt Gambier and UDC south of Penola

Manufacturing

Dairy Processing; Meat Processing; Timber milling

Tourism

Budj Bim Cultural Landscape; Naracoorte Caves National Park; Coonawarra

Health Care & Social Assistance

Aged Care; Portland District Health; Active Health Portland; Mt Gambier and Districts Health Service; Casterton Memorial Hospital; Heywood Rural Health; Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation; Dhauwurd-Wurrang Elderly and Community Health



Journey to work flows

More than 270 workers cross the border between Victoria and South Australia. 58% were outflows from Victoria into South Australia.⁴



Other Activity Flows

Timber sales and processing; Dairy and Livestock processing

Key economic indicators show improvement in socio-economic outcomes.

Metric	Green Triangle
Population ¹ (2025)	86.3k
Population Growth ¹ (2020 – 2025)	1.3%
GRP ² (2025)	\$5.8b
GRP Growth ² (2020 – 2025)	13.1%
Unemployment Rate ³ (Mar 2026)	3.2%
Unemployment Rate Change ³ (Mar 2021 – Mar 2026)	-2.0% pts
Employment Growth ² (2020 – 2025)	4.4%

First Peoples-led economic development in the Great South Coast

The 2022 Great South Coast REDS identified 5 priority opportunities for First Peoples Economic Development



Natural Resources & Traditional Practices

Identify opportunities to leverage natural resources for economic benefit, including through adopting traditional hunting agricultural techniques and practices.



Cultural Tourism, Enterprise & Procurement

Invest in the growth and awareness of First Peoples - owned industry development, including nature based and cultural tourism, business enterprise and procurement.



First Peoples Land Ownership & Resource Management

Pursue greater First Peoples ownership of land to sustainably manage resources.



Cultural Significance, Country & Healing

Focus on restoring landscape systems and promoting recognition of the land, its waters and its cultural significance to ensure that economic activities generate benefits.



Cultural Practices & Traditions

Encourage the use of cultural places and practices as a mechanism for telling stories, maintaining traditions and creating economic opportunities, particularly in the tourism sector

First Peoples-led economic development in action

First Peoples-led strategies and investments are building economic capability and creating pathways across the region



Eastern Maar Aboriginal Economic Hub
(Warrnambool)

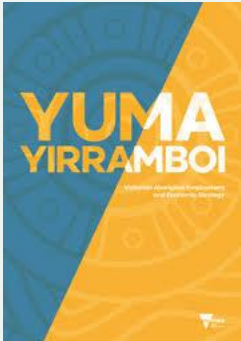


Gunditj Mirring Aboriginal Economic Hub
(Heywood)



Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre

Evidence of momentum



Key economic indicators show improvement in socio-economic outcomes between 2016 and 2021.



First Peoples participation rate increased by 2.6% points¹



First Peoples unemployment rate decreased by 8.6% points¹



First Peoples households earning below \$650 per week decreased by 17.8% points¹

Opportunities to strengthen inclusive growth in the Great South Coast

Build on First Peoples Economic Strengths

As an example, First Peoples are underrepresented in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Approximately 17% of First Peoples workers in the Great South Coast are employed in both the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing and Manufacturing industries, below the region average of 24%.¹ Agriculture & manufacturing are some of the main drivers of economic output in the Great South Coast, and increasing First People's participation in productive sectors such as these can further drive economic growth in the region.

Focus Investment Across Communities

Portland, Hamilton, Glenelg, Corangamite – North and Camperdown have relatively lower Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) rankings (in the bottom 30% statewide).³ Moyne – East has the region's highest relative IRSD ranking SA2, ranking within the top 40% statewide.³ Over the past 5 years, the IRSD ranking has improved for Glenelg and Warrnambool, whilst Southern Grampians and Corangamite observed declines, and all other LGAs remained steady. Ensuring that the Great South Coast's economic growth reaches all communities is essential to realising economic prosperity.

Boosting Female Participation

The female participation rate (59%) remains below male participation in the region (66%) and below that of the female participation in metropolitan Melbourne (65%).⁴ Female employment in the Warrnambool and South West experienced growth over the past 5 years (4.7%).⁴ However, this growth is below both metropolitan (18%) and regional Victorian (9.2%) averages.⁴ Boosting female participation in the workforce can further enhance economic growth.

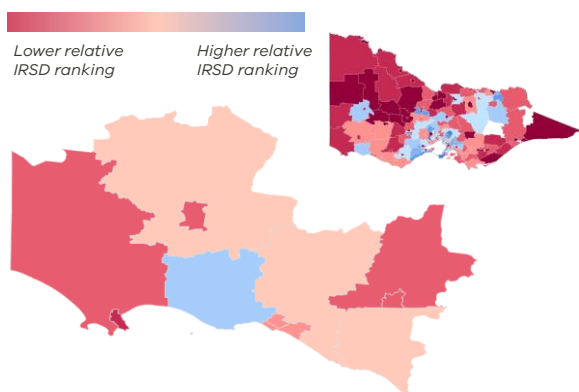
Expand Pathways for Young People into the Workforce

The youth (15-24) unemployment rate in Warrnambool & South West is currently 7.5%, more than twice the unemployment rate of all age cohorts within the region (2.9%). The Warrnambool & South West youth unemployment rate has also increased by 0.6% pts over the past 5 years, faster than the growth rate observed for all cohorts in the region (0.1% pts).⁴ Supporting the youth workforce can increase labour supply capacity and help to further stimulate economic growth in the region.

Socio-economic conditions vary across the Great South Coast, highlighting opportunities for targeted investment

Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)

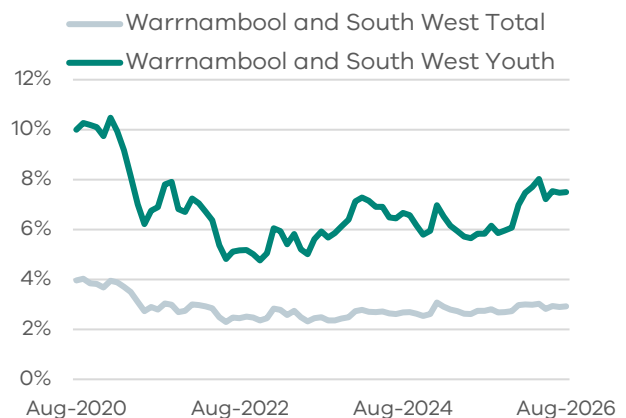
SEIFA, ABS Census (2021), SA2



There is an opportunity to close the gap between the youth unemployment rate in the Great South Coast with the overall rate

Unemployment Rate (%), Youth (15-24) & Total

ABS (Aug-26), Warrnambool and South West SA4



Unlocking affordable housing supply to enable economic growth in Great South Coast



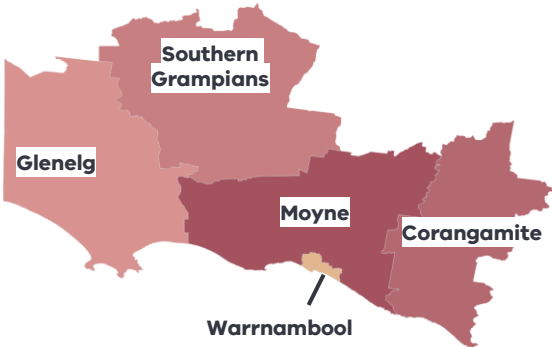
On a per capita basis, Great South Coast’s availability of 1-2 bedroom rentals is less than half that of metropolitan Melbourne⁶

Limited rental supply has been driven by significant price growth in Barwon South West, with rents increasing by 33% between 2020 and 2025 – nearly double the rise recorded in Victorian wages (17%) over the same period.⁷

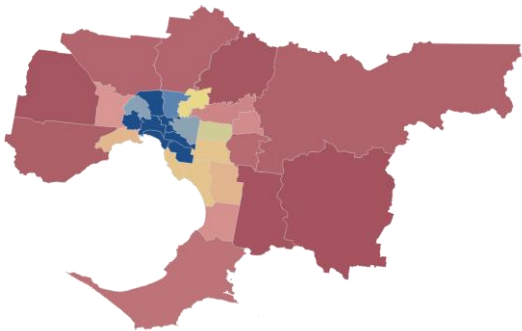
1-2 Bedroom Dwellings to Rent per Capita
DDFH Rental Report, ABS Regional Population

Below Vic Av.      Above Vic Av.

Great South Coast



Metropolitan Melbourne



Supply shortages of smaller dwellings are limiting the ability for the Great South Coast to attract key workers that are critical to economic growth

- Limited availability of worker housing within Great South Coast communities can require workers to travel outside of a local community, often a considerable distance and a large contrast to housing dynamics in metropolitan areas. This can reduce opportunities for workers to participate in and contribute to the local economy and broader community life.
- This is particularly prevalent in tourism hotspots, where the prevalence of short-term rentals further constrains long-term housing supply. This is likely to play out at the 12 Apostles Precinct Redevelopment, where there is limited access to long-term rentals for tourism workers in the nearby coastal town of Port Campbell.
- Key worker housing is also critical to attracting and retaining workers across key industries such as Agri-Food and health.
- A growing disparity between housing costs and wage growth impacts workforce attraction and retention, particularly for essential and lower-waged jobs.

There are signs that housing supply is improving

- Over the past year, building approvals in the Great South Coast have increased by 59%, a rate greater than both metropolitan Melbourne (-8.5%) and regional Victoria (26%).¹
- Warrnambool has the fifth largest building approvals per capita in the regional Victoria and has seen a 96% increase in approvals over the past year, the third highest in the state.²
- However, higher enabling infrastructure costs and cost of building in regional areas can constrain private development, making incentives to build, including infrastructure co-funding, critical to sustaining building momentum.

Government initiatives are supporting additional housing supply

- The Victorian Government's Regional Worker Accommodation Fund is investing \$150 million to deliver housing for key workers in regional communities.³
- The \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund will deliver more than 1,300 homes across regional and rural Victoria through new builds and redevelopment projects.⁴
- The Victorian Government’s housing targets for the Great South Coast region aim to deliver 14,150 homes by 2051, close to jobs, services and transport.⁵
- The VicSmart reforms are streamlining planning approvals to accelerate eligible residential developments.

A skilled and productive workforce is key to further drive economic activity in the region

An ageing population is reducing workforce availability, despite a growing and more skilled population

- The share of residents with a bachelor degree or above has grown from 15% to 18% in 5 years, although this is less than half the share in metropolitan Melbourne (37%) signaling capacity to deepen the region's skills base.¹
- VET and TAFE pathways are critical to the region and account for a significant proportion of the skills base for one of the largest employing sectors in the region, Agri-Food.
- 91% of projected jobs growth over the next decade is expected to be in skilled roles,⁵ highlighting the importance of investing in skills to meet this demand.
- Between 2025 and 2036, the working age population (15-64) in the Great South Coast is expected to contract by 3,300 residents.² The working age share is also expected to decrease from 58% to 54% over the same time period.²

Boosting female participation is one of the greatest workforce opportunities to increase labour supply in the region

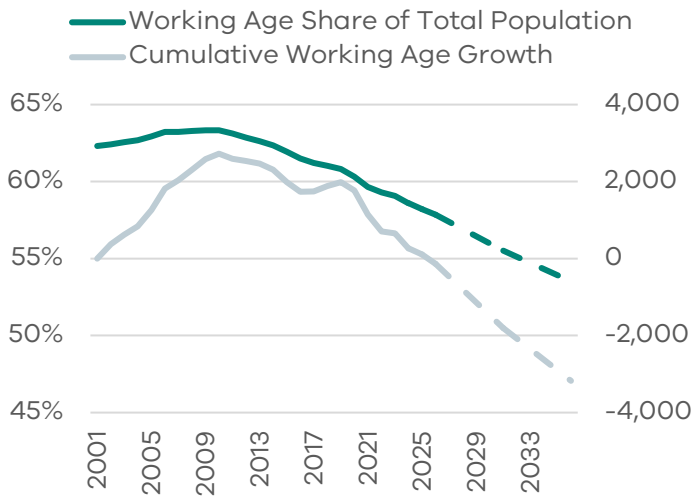
- Warrnambool and South West's female participation rate (59%) trails both male participation in the region (66%) and metropolitan female participation (65%).⁶ Increasing female participation represents a significant source of labour supply in the region.
- The opportunity is particularly compelling given the region's industry outlook: employment within Health Care & Social Assistance is projected to increase by more than 2,000 jobs over the next 10 years,⁵ an industry, typically female dominated.
- Improving access to childcare, a large barrier to female participation, can help to unlock more workers in its highest-growth sector, at a time when working age population is tightening.

Government initiatives are supporting workforce growth and skills development

- Free TAFE, the Victorian Skills Plan, and migration settings are helping to build the skilled workforce required by regional industries.
- Efforts are focused on aligning training with industry demand, strengthening vocational and higher education pathways, and accelerating skills recognition.
- Increasing workforce participation, particularly among women and underrepresented groups, remains a key opportunity to support long-term economic growth.

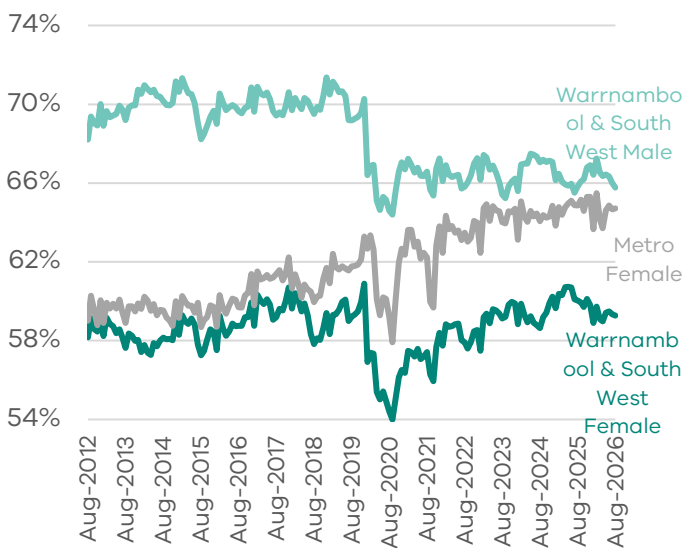
Working Age Population (15-64): Share and Cumulative Growth, Actual and Projected

ABS Regional Population by Age and Sex 2024-25, VIF, Great South Coast



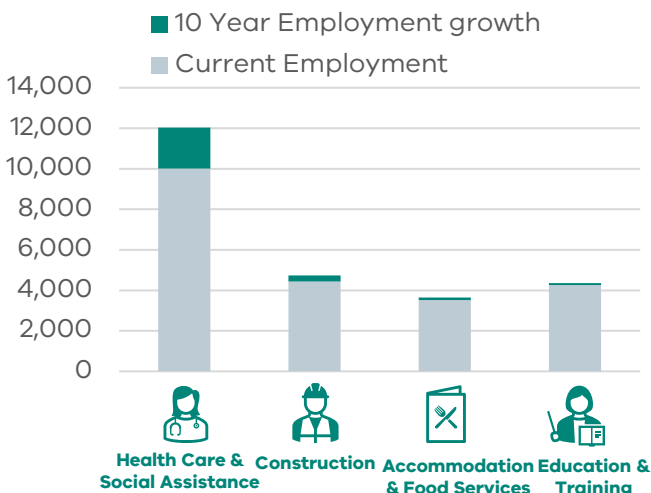
Labour Force Participation Rate

ABS Aug-26, Warrnambool and South West SA4

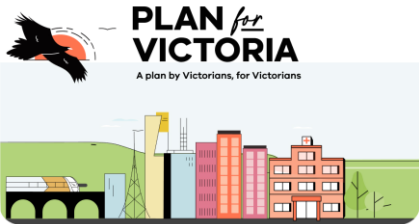


Largest projected employment growth

VSA 2025-2035, Industry, Great South Coast



'A 10-year plan for industrial land' positions state-significant regional industrial land as a key growth enabler



Trunk Infrastructure Fund



Enabling infrastructure is a growing constraint but also a major lever for Great South Coast's future economic growth.

Targeted infrastructure upgrades in industrial precincts can unlock private investment in high productivity industries, particularly in the food manufacturing industry and its supply chains.

In the Great South Coast region several industrial precincts play key roles in the state and regional economy, connecting the region to domestic and export markets

Camperdown Production Precinct

- The precinct is located in one of Victoria's most productive agricultural zones, with strong dairy, beef, lamb, and wool industries. This provides opportunities to attract and scale up value-added food processing and advanced agri-food manufacturing activities in the region.
- Camperdown is a designated regional priority project for Great South Coast Regional Partnership and South West Victoria Alliance to support food value add outcomes in the region. It also integrates sustainability and circular economy practices, including integrated water re-use and renewable energy.

Investment opportunities exist in several further significant industrial precincts in the region including:

- **Horne Road Industrial Precinct** sits across 60 hectares of serviced land in the City of Warrnambool, offering heavy vehicle access to the Princes and Hopkins highways, and creating further opportunities for manufacturing and food processing.
- **Portland North Employment Precinct:** The Portland North Employment Precinct covers approximately 15 hectares of land situated in a broader 441-hectare industrial zone in Portland. The precinct was supported through a \$2.5 million investment from the Portland Economic Diversification Plan, to site improve drainage and road access.¹ The precinct targets supply chain businesses with export connections via the Port of Portland – including light industrial and big box retailers.

Great South Coast is leveraging policy and investment to accelerate growth in key industries

- The **Economic Growth Statement (2024)** set out an ambition to achieve higher productivity, improve living standards, wages and competitiveness in a more contested global environment.
- The **Victorian Industry Policy (2025)** provides the framework to deliver on Victoria's economic growth and productivity ambitions.
- The \$150m **Victorian Investment Fund** provides a \$50 million regional stream, and access to the broader fund.¹
- A **Designated Area Migration Agreement** between the City of Warrnambool and the Australian Government continues to provide the area with greater access to skilled overseas workers.

Recent and ongoing investments in priority industries, TAFE skills sector, and key industrial precincts will anchor Great South Coast's future growth and productivity

- The region is home to some of **Victoria's largest dairy, beef, lamb and wool producers**, as one of Australia's leading dairy regions. This provides a strong foundation to boost productivity through increased value-added food processing and advanced agri-food manufacturing.
- **Alcoa's Portland smelter** remains nationally significant, producing almost 20% of Australia's aluminium in 2025.² In addition to its export value, the smelter is a key customer of wind generated energy in the region.
- **Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub** represents around 90% of the Green Triangle's forest industry, and focuses on growing the value of the regional forestry and wood fibre industry, including diversifying into higher value engineered products and circular economy opportunities.³
- The region is **well connected** to national and export markets via road (**Princes Highway**), a deep-water port (**Port of Portland**) and rail.

Major investments in the regions visitor economy continue to grow and diversify this key regional sector

- Tourism is a key economic driver in the Great South Coast. The region is host to significant visitor sites, including the **UNESCO World Heritage listed Budj Bim Cultural Landscape**, and the **Twelve Apostles**, with the latter attracting 2.8 million visitors a year.⁴
- This sector will benefit from the \$126m redevelopment of the **Twelve Apostles Visitor Centre** as part of the Geelong City deal.⁵
- Further opportunities include an ongoing feasibility study for a Hamilton Art Gallery, growth opportunities for the Warrnambool Airport, improved accessibility to Budj Bim and enhancing the visitor experience at Tower Hill.
- A redeveloped **Archie Graham Centre**, a new **community arts and community center** in the Eastern Aberline growth area, are among the key projects identified in the City of Warrnambool Council's Draft Warrnambool Community Service Futures Plan 2040.

The Great South Coast region plays a key role in Victoria's energy transition commitments and fuel security priorities

- The Great South Coast's abundant, high-quality wind resources and strong access to biomass feedstock, position the region to play a significant role in **renewable energy generation** and **renewable fuels**, such as renewable methanol and sustainable aviation fuels.
- Clean energy opportunities, including the Warrnambool bus lines hydrogen transition project and the SW Renewable Energy Zone, can leverage geographical proximity to the border and location within the 'Green Triangle CBER'.
- HAMR energy has announced the construction of the **Portland Renewable Fuels (PRF) project**. The plant will process over 500,000 tonnes of under-utilised forestry residues to produce 300,000 tonnes of low carbon methanol per annum.⁶

The Great South Coast REDS 2026 sets out strategic economic development priorities to be delivered across government

REDS 2026 priorities continue to be implemented through RDV's regional network, and facilitated through Victoria's investment and trade agencies, business program delivery, and policy advocacy across all levels of government.



Great South Coast regional businesses and investors can pursue economic development opportunities through several Victorian Government agencies and initiatives

- RDV's Barwon South West team (Warrnambool and Portland offices) are the main point of contact in the region for facilitating and coordinating regional development outcomes: **Contacts and Assistance - Regional Development Victoria**
- A range of **grants and program support** is available to enable economic opportunities across regional Victoria.
- Victoria's **Investment Front Door** provides a single access to point to the Victorian government for investors.
- Support for Victorian Businesses is also available through the **Business Victoria** website including guidance, services and skills you need to successfully start, run and transform your business.
- **REDS data dashboards are available online** providing deeper economic and community analysis and insights into each region.

RDV works across all levels of government to promote place-based policy considerations that strengthen government investments in regions

- The REDS 2026 guides RDV's ongoing work with the Regional Partnerships, Regional Development Australia committees, and in policy making across the Victorian Government.
- Place-based regional opportunities and challenges identified in the REDS Refresh continue to inform the delivery of major energy projects and housing supply initiatives across Victorian Government.
- RDV works closely with Victoria's economic development agencies, including Invest Victoria, Global Victoria and Business Victoria, to advocate for regional economic development opportunities, and ensure that they are informed by place-based regional insights.
- Ongoing work across government towards the delivery of regionally located major projects will maximise opportunities for regional jobs, investment and supply chain businesses.

Appendix

Great South Coast strategic directions, progress since the inception of the REDS and alignment with refreshed policy settings

Strategic Direction	Significance	Development since the REDS	Alignment with government initiatives since the REDS
Add value to and diversify within the agri-food supply chain	The Great South Coast is a major contributor to Victoria's agriculture sector, generating 18% of the state's GVA, but only accounts for 3.8% of food product manufacturing. ¹	▪ Establishing new high-value, export-oriented agri-food industries while supporting emissions reduction in livestock systems, supported through the asparagopsis aquaculture feasibility project in Portland. ▪ Expanding high-value aquaculture production and export capacity, reinforcing comparative advantages in premium seafood, through development of the Yumbah Portland Bay abalone farm. ▪ Moving the region up the value chain in dairy by expanding into high-value nutraceutical and protein products, increasing export capabilities, enabled by ProviCo's processing expansion.	▪ Victorian Investment Fund: Catalyses private sector investment into value-added processing, agri-tech and supply chain innovation, directly supporting uplift in regional value capture. ▪ Economic Growth Statement: Establishes food and fibre as a priority sector, reinforcing policy settings that support export growth, innovation and diversification. ▪ Trunk Infrastructure Fund: Enables critical enabling infrastructure (freight, utilities, industrial land) required to support processing, storage and distribution at scale. ▪ Victorian Industry Policy: Provides sector-specific support for advanced food manufacturing, innovation and export competitiveness across the agri-food system.
Maximise the potential of the region's energy resources	The Great South Coast region is a rapidly growing hub for renewable energy, driven by major wind farms, large scale solar projects, innovative bioenergy and leadership in hydrogen production.	▪ Positioning the region as a producer of low-emissions fuels, also leveraging existing industrial and port infrastructure, with investment in HAMR Energy's Portland Renewable Fuels project. ▪ Enabling large-scale renewable energy integration by strengthening grid stability and storage capacity, supported through development of Pacific Green's Portland Energy Park. ▪ Supporting reliability and firming of renewable energy supply, enabling further investment in clean energy generation, as exemplified by the Atmos Energy Heywood BESS project.	▪ Portland Diversification Fund: Played a central role in facilitating industrial transition in Portland toward renewable energy, hydrogen and low-emissions industries. ▪ Victorian Investment Fund: Accelerates private investment in renewable generation, hydrogen and associated supply chains, aligning strongly with regional energy opportunities. ▪ Economic Growth Statement: Positions clean energy as a core pillar of economic growth, providing overarching policy alignment and investment confidence.

Great South Coast strategic directions, progress since the inception of the REDS and alignment with refreshed policy settings

Strategic Direction	Significance	Development since the REDS	Alignment with government initiatives since the REDS
Grow and equip the workforce needed to enable future economic opportunities	Since 2020, employment in the Great South Coast has grown by 0.5%, well below regional (9.7%) and metropolitan (13%) averages, ¹ highlighting the need to strengthen growth in the local workforce.	- Improving Great South Coast access to higher education through establishment of the Country Universities Centre in Hamilton, which encourages local professional development. - Building a pipeline of industry-aligned technical skills and supporting long-term workforce capability in priority sectors, highlighted by the South West Tech School at SW TAFE Warrnambool.	Regional Worker Accommodation Fund: Directly addresses a binding constraint on workforce attraction and retention by increasing housing supply in high-demand locations. Economic Growth Statement: Embeds workforce development as a core economic priority, aligning skills policy with future industry demand. Victorian Skills Plan: Represents the primary mechanism for delivering education, training and reskilling, ensuring alignment between labour supply and emerging industry demand.
Expand existing strengths in cultural and nature-based visitation	The Great South Coast has a strong tourism sector, with domestic expenditure generating an annual spend of \$988 million in the year ending March 2026. ² The region's tourism assets are headlined by the Twelve Apostles which attract more than 2 million visitors per year. ³	Strengthen globally significant cultural tourism assets and enhance accessibility at key nature-based destinations to drive increased visitation and regional dispersal, highlighted by upgrades to the Budj Bim Visitor Experience and Tower Hill Nature Reserve. Increase the capacity and quality of visitor servicing at iconic natural assets, which support higher-yield tourism outcomes and long-term growth in international competitiveness, through the Twelve Apostles Visitor Experience Centre and broader Precinct Redevelopment.	Regional Worker Accommodation Fund: Addresses acute accommodation constraints for tourism workers, enabling businesses to operate at capacity and extend seasonal activity.
Capture the greater potential of the 'Green Triangle' cross-border economic zone	The Green Triangle has a thriving economy, with \$5.8 billion in GRP and growth of 13% since 2020, outpacing state averages. ¹ Manufacturing is significant contributor to the economy, with \$571 million in GVA. ¹	Improving freight efficiency and export competitiveness by strengthening first/last mile connections to key ports, supported by the Portland local freight roads upgrade. Strengthening cross-border forestry and manufacturing value chains through downstream processing opportunities, through the Future Fibre hardwood timber manufacturing hub feasibility study.	Portland Diversification Fund: Strengthens Portland's role as a strategic export and industrial hub within the Green Triangle, supporting cross-border economic integration. Victorian Investment Fund: Attracts investment that leverages integrated supply chains across Victoria and South Australia, particularly in forestry and manufacturing. Victorian Industry Policy: Aligns industry development with sectors that operate across the Green Triangle (forestry, processing, logistics).

Emerging opportunities and priorities in the Great South Coast Region

Opportunity / Priority	Significance	Supporting projects and catalysts to support future growth
Grow key worker housing supply in the Great South Coast	On a per capita basis, the availability of 1-2 bedroom rentals in the Great South Coast is less than half that of Melbourne. ¹ The lack of supply has driven up costs, with rents increasing by 33% between 2020 and 2025, just under double the rise recorded in wages (17%), and lower than both regional (38%) and metropolitan (34%) averages. ²	Supporting projects (current and since the inception of the REDS) ▪ Timboon & District Healthcare Service – Purpose Built Rural Healthcare Worker Accommodation (Timboon): This initiative delivers dedicated, fit-for-purpose housing for healthcare staff, improving attraction and retention of essential workers in Timboon while directly increasing the supply of secure, affordable accommodation for key health personnel. ▪ Dunkeld Pastoral Co – Dunkeld Worker Accommodation Project: By developing on-site or nearby worker housing, this project supports the agricultural workforce in Dunkeld, reducing commuting barriers and boosting local housing availability for key primary industry employees. ▪ Midfield Meat International – Midfield Key Worker Housing Development: This development provides targeted housing for meat processing workers, addressing critical labour shortages by enabling workforce stability and expanding the stock of affordable rental options in the region. ▪ Noorat Butter Factory – Worker Accommodation: The adaptive reuse of the historic butter factory into worker housing increases local accommodation supply while preserving heritage assets, supporting employment needs in surrounding agricultural and food production industries. ▪ Great South Coast Housing Expo: The expo facilitates partnerships and showcases innovative housing solutions, accelerating the delivery of key worker accommodation by connecting industry, government, and developers to unlock new housing supply pathways across the region. Catalysts to support future growth ▪ Investment in premium accommodation and hospitality offering in the hinterland to encourage greater dispersal of visitors across the region. This dispersal of visitation will ease pressure on housing in areas with high demand for short-term accommodation, creating greater supply for long-term rentals which are accessible to key workers. ▪ Increased production that will lead to growth in food and fibre exports, particularly processed meat products. Increased production will translate to investment in housing infrastructure to accommodate workers that facilitate this growth. ▪ Support new on-farm investment that strengthen workforce attraction and accommodation capacity, helping to increase agricultural productivity and output.
Develop water infrastructure to unlock investment	The Great South Coast is a major contributor to Victoria's agriculture sector, generating 18% of the state's GVA, but only accounts for 3.8% of food product manufacturing. ³ Improved water infrastructure could help unlock further investment in value-adding industries across the region.	Supporting projects (current and since the inception of the REDS) ▪ Regional Investment Attraction Project / Camperdown Production Precinct: This project assessed opportunities to unlock growth in regional Victoria's food and fibre sector through a series of viability-tested case studies, including the Camperdown Production Precinct. The analysis identified constrained trade waste capacity as a key barrier to further investment; addressing this constraint would enable expansion within the precinct and more broadly across the Great South Coast, supporting increased local value-adding from regional agricultural production. ▪ 12 Apostles Hot Springs Resort: Through the Geelong City Deal, targeted investment in enabling infrastructure, which includes sewer and stormwater connections, potable water supply, and road upgrades - is supporting the development of the 12 Apostles Hot Springs Resort. This investment is expected to contribute to higher-yield tourism outcomes and support sustained growth in visitation to the region over the longer term. Catalysts to support future growth ▪ Investment in value-add food and fibre manufacturing that will support employment growth and improved commodity returns, while also driving the development of critical infrastructure within the Great South Coast, including water and sewerage infrastructure. ▪ Supporting the growth of ancillary businesses around the 12 Apostles, especially small and artisanal businesses. These businesses can leverage the enabling infrastructure being delivered at the 12 Apostles.

Glossary

Gross Regional Product (GRP)	An estimate of the total market value of all final goods and services produced in a specific region within a given period. The major components of GRP are consumption, government spending, net exports and investment. GRP often measures the economic output of a region and is the regional equivalent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
Gross Value Added (GVA)	The value of gross output minus intermediate consumption within a given period. GVA estimates enable analysis of industry contributions to the economy. GVA is an important measure to determine GRP. It is calculated by taking GDP, adding subsidies on products and taking away taxes products.
Visitor Economy	The visitor economy comprises the wide range of industries that provide goods and services to visitors who travel to a destination for a variety of purposes, including leisure, education, business and employment.
Productivity	The productivity measure used in this report is labour productivity, which is output on a per hour worked basis. It is calculated by dividing total GRP in a region by the number of hours worked in said region. For an industry analysis, GVA per hour worked was used, which is calculated by dividing the GVA by the number of hours worked in an industry. Hours worked used were for those in Journey-to-Work employment (see below).
Labour Force Participation Rate	The labour force participation rate shows the proportion of people in the labour force, relative to those who are deemed outside of it. The participation rate is calculated by summing the number of employed and unemployed persons and dividing that by the population aged 15 and above.
Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	A general socio-economic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area. The IRSD only includes relative disadvantage. A low score indicates relatively greater disadvantage, and a high score indicates a lack of disadvantage.
Employment	Residents of working age who were engaged in any activity to produce goods and services for pay or profit. Employment can be divided up into part-time (less than 35 hours worked per week) and full-time employment (35 or more hours worked per week), as well as Journey-to-Work (where employed persons work) and Usual Residence (where employed persons live).
Occupational Skill Level	Describes the skill level of a person's occupation, where level one is the highest level of skill and level five is the lowest. The skill level is determined from the characteristics of a person's occupation as defined under the Australian and New Zealand Classification of Occupations. Skilled occupations are defined as level one (bachelor degree or higher qualification) to three (Certificate III with at least two years of on-the-job training and Certificate IV), whilst low-skilled occupations are defined as levels four (Certificate II and III) and five (no formal qualification up to Certificate I).
Working Age Population	The working age population is generally defined as between the ages of 15 and 64 years old. This does not mean people outside this age bracket cannot be employed but rather reflects the age profile of the majority of workers.
Agri-Food Sector	The Agri-Food Sector is defined as the ANZSIC Level 2 Industries Agriculture and Food Product Manufacturing.

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