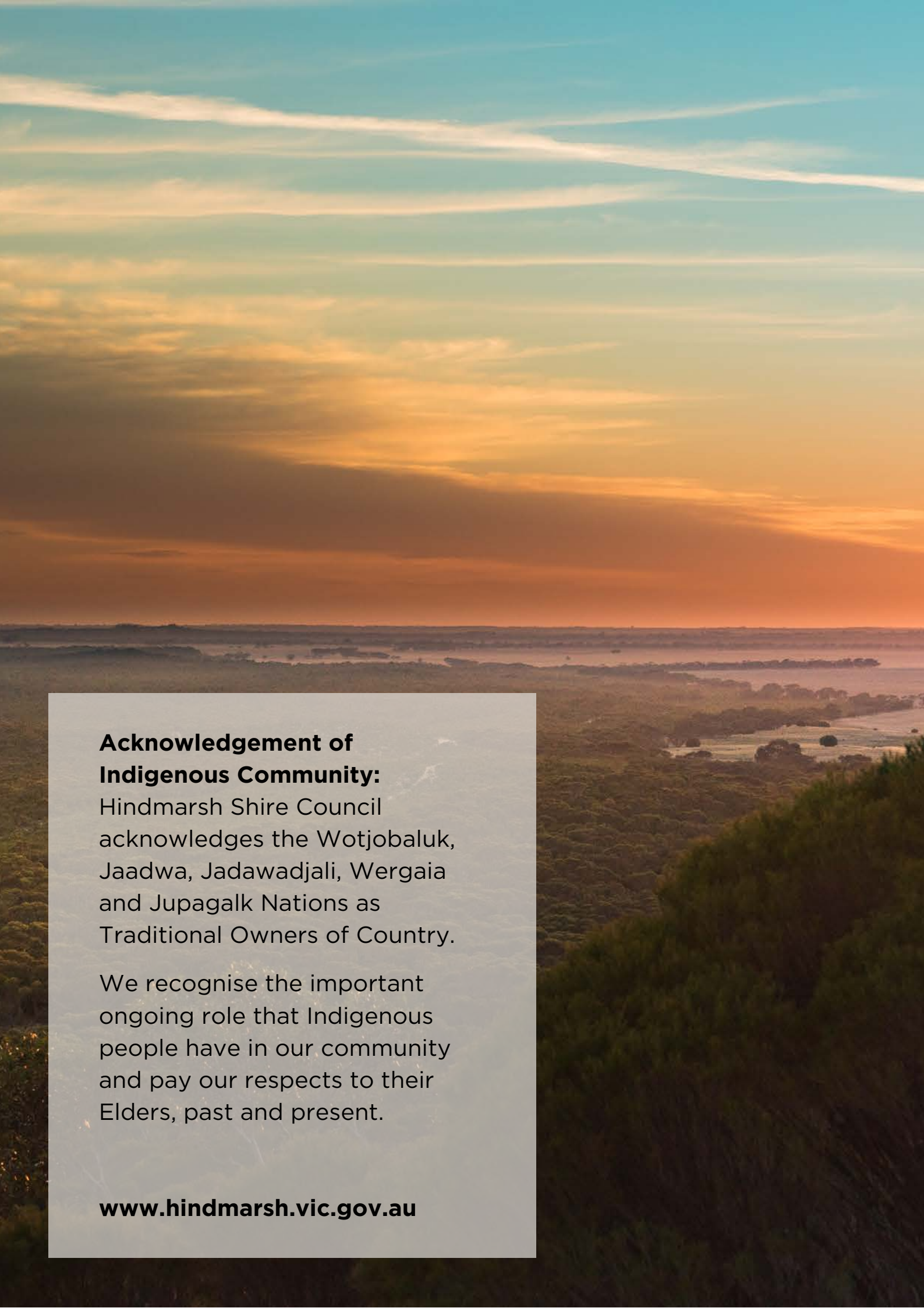


Hindmarsh Shire Council

Economic Development Strategy 2024-28

DRAFT - October 2023



**Acknowledgement of
Indigenous Community:**

Hindmarsh Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations as Traditional Owners of Country.

We recognise the important ongoing role that Indigenous people have in our community and pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

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SUMMARY

Momentum is Building

There have been many recent economic development successes in Hindmarsh Shire over recent years. The time is right to seize further opportunities and to continue the momentum created from investments of the past decade. Among the Shire's recent economic development achievements are:

- Construction of new self-contained cabins in Dimboola, Rainbow, Nhill and Jeparit adding to both visitor and short-term worker accommodation availability.
- Inclusion of Hindmarsh in the Silo Art Trail with investment in silo artworks at Albacutya and Arkona, and progress towards the multi-faceted Schilling's silo development.
- Investment in agricultural production in the Shire (which has been high for the past few years after excellent seasonal conditions) to reach almost \$300 million in gross value (\$292.5 million) in 2021 including 8% of Victoria's lentils, 6% of barley and 5% of wheat.
- Construction of Rainbow Lake and redevelopment work at Nhill Lake.
- Security of water (from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline) has increased the economic contribution from the Shire's recreational waterbodies, particularly at Dimboola and Jeparit weir pools, the new Rainbow Lake and soon at redeveloped Nhill Lake (with new pumping system being installed).
- Recommitment of rail passenger transport connecting the Shire with Adelaide and Melbourne via The Overland.
- Regional project to crush glass waste from the Shire and recycle into road surfacing material.
- Central business district revitalisation work (involving both private and public investment) in Dimboola.
- Expansion of West Wimmera Health Service's range of facilities.
- Introduction of new events and festivals in the Shire, highlighted by the Steampunk Festival.
- Investment at Luv a Duck to increase processing throughput (more than doubling the throughput of 5 years ago).
- Further investment in Blue Lake Milling following its acquisition by the CBH Group.








Strategies for a New Economic Landscape

The strategies in this document provide direction for Council to:

- Guide Hindmarsh communities through a period when the Shire is expected to have many emerging economic development opportunities, offset by challenges which could derail the prospects for delivering the opportunities.
- Attract investment in industry sectors for which the Shire has an apparent competitive advantage.
- Participate in innovative housing development initiatives to address shortages of both rental and for sale housing.
- Deliver infrastructure to support and drive the potential population growth in the Shire.
- Attract new investment and reinvestment in innovative and sustainable businesses.
- Collaborate in regional activities (with Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, Wimmera Mallee Tourism and neighbouring Councils) to efficiently implement relevant economic and tourism initiatives which are beyond local government boundaries.
- Assist key Hindmarsh towns to increase visitation and the economic impact from visitors.
- Cost-effectively resource Council's involvement in local economic development and tourism with a small team, and selective outsourcing.

Strategy Snapshot

Current Estimates			Strategy Targets
Shire population	5,698		5,650 by 2036
Shire local jobs	2,233		2,300 by 2036
Dwelling stock	2,954		3,280 by 2036
Visitor economy	\$17.8 million		\$25.5 million by 2028
Total output	\$721.5 million		\$800 million by 2028

3 Strategy Pillars >>> 10 Strategies >>> 40 Actions

Strategic Pillars have been developed to help in Hindmarsh Shire Council contributing to the delivery of the economic targets.

- Pillar 1: Council as a proactive facilitator.
- Pillar 2: Reducing barriers to investment in the local economy.
- Pillar 3: Building the Shire's reputation for liveability, tourism and events.

Strategies are grouped by Strategic Pillar although not necessarily mutually exclusive (implying that some strategies contribute to more than one objective), as indicated in Figure 1.

Pillar 1 Strategies:

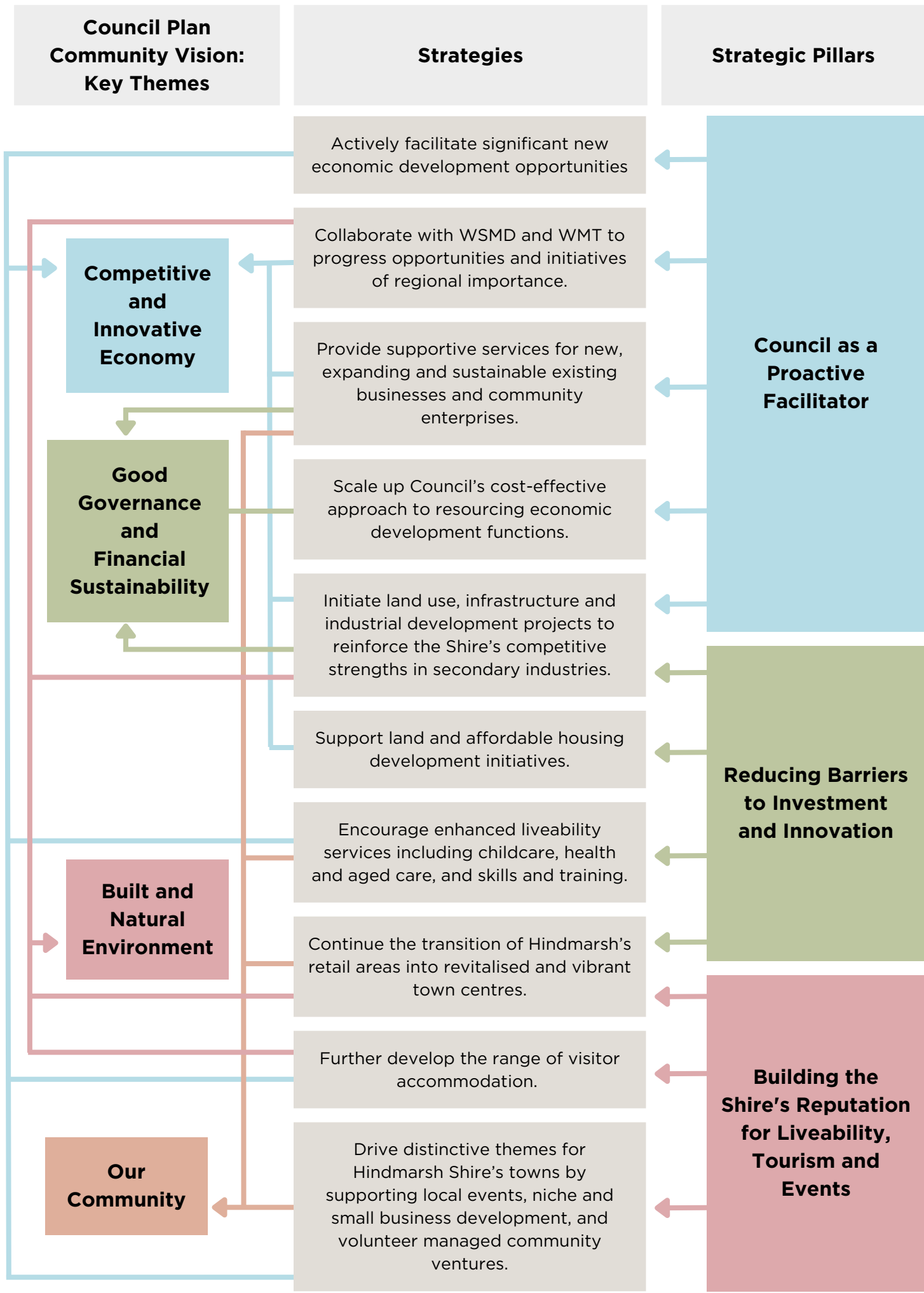
- Actively facilitate the Shire's significant new economic development opportunities, which build on local supply chains, to achieve investment readiness and support their implementation.
- Collaborate with Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSMD) and Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) to progress opportunities and initiatives of regional importance.
- Provide supportive services for new, expanding and sustainable existing businesses and community enterprises (including support for Aboriginal owned and controlled enterprises).
- Scale up Council's cost-effective approach to resourcing economic development functions.

Pillar 2 Strategies:

- Initiate land use, infrastructure and industrial development projects to reinforce the Shire's competitive strengths in secondary industries.
- Support land and affordable housing development initiatives for key workers and older residents.
- Encourage enhanced liveability services including childcare, health and aged care, and skills and training.

Pillar 3 Strategies:

- Continue the transition of Hindmarsh's town retail areas into revitalised and vibrant town centres.
- Further develop the range and quality of visitor accommodation.
- Drive distinctive themes for Hindmarsh Shire's towns.



Designed around Community Input

Economic development strategy consultation forums were conducted in Nhill, Dimboola, Rainbow and Jeparit, attended by around 60 community members and Council representatives. The discussions and suggestions at the forums unambiguously showed that Hindmarsh Shire communities believe Council has a direct role in delivering economic development initiatives. The issues and suggestions which emerged from working groups across the four towns are overwhelmingly reflected in the Economic Development Strategy.



Compatible with State and Regional Strategies

Wimmera Mallee Regional Partnerships and Regional Development Australia

The Wimmera Mallee Regional Economic Development strategic directions are:

1. Strengthen agriculture and food product manufacturing through diversification.
2. Promote growth and development of the visitor economy, leveraging natural assets and Aboriginal heritage.
3. Support and expand economic opportunities in growing sectors (health and social services)
4. Position the region to benefit from emerging growth opportunities in natural resources.

Tourism Development

- The Strategy is consistent with Victoria's Visitor Economy strategic pillars outlined in the Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan of 2023: Nature - Epicurean - Arts and culture - First Peoples' led experiences.
- The decision to structure Victorian Tourism Regions into Visitor Experience Partnerships is acknowledged in this Strategy.





People

Human habitation in Hindmarsh Shire spans at least 1,600 generations of occupation by the Wotjobaluk peoples. Established trade networks allowed goods and information to flow over substantial distances. Mobility helped the people to manage cycles of droughts and floods. Only since the mid-1800s (or the last 10 generations) has the area been also settled by squatters, missionaries, and Chinese miners moving along the ‘gold escort route’ between South Australia and Victorian goldfields. By the end of the nineteenth century, the area which is now Hindmarsh Shire had become a significant part of the Victorian Wheatbelt and a heartland of broadacre agriculture.

Hindmarsh Shire is the third largest local government area in the Wimmera Southern Mallee (after West Wimmera and Buloke) and has the second smallest population (West Wimmera Shire has the smallest). These three large Shires of West Wimmera, Buloke and Hindmarsh have the lowest population densities of all municipalities in Victoria. Around 80% of Hindmarsh’s population reside in its four main townships; Dimboola, Jeparit, Nhill and Rainbow. The largest of these townships (Nhill) is 74 kilometres north of the urban area of Horsham.

In the twentieth century, Hindmarsh Shire’s residents of overseas origin tended to be from Western Europe. Indeed, at the 2021 Census, 63.1% of residents claimed an ancestry from the British Isles (England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales) and a further 16.0% has German ancestry. However, only 2.6% were actually born in the British Isles or Germany. Most recent migrants to Hindmarsh are from Asian countries. Of the 2021 population the largest overseas born origins were:

- Myanmar (2.0%)
- Thailand (1.5%)
- Philippines (0.9%)
- India (0.8%)

The Hindmarsh population from these four Asian countries was 278 people in 2021.



Nhill is recognised for its success in attracting and retaining the Shire’s cohort of Karen people (from southern Myanmar), initially recruited to live in Nhill with some family members working at Luv-a-Duck’s processing plant. The Karen people now constitute a significant sub-community in the Shire. If key worker vacancies are to be filled over the next five years, it is likely there will be increased reliance on international migrants being attracted to the Shire.

At the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, Hindmarsh had a population of 5,698, having almost stabilised in the past five years. Within the Shire, Table 1 shows the town of Nhill is the largest urban centre with 2,401 residents in 2021, having increased at 1.9% per annum since 2016. Jeparit’s population of 476 people remained relatively stable over the five years 2016 to 2021. Rainbow decreased at just 0.3% per annum and Dimboola experienced greater decline at 1.1% per annum but has shown evidence of reversing that trend since 2021.

Table 1: Population of Hindmarsh Shire Towns, 2016 and 2021*

Town	2016	2021	%pa change
Nhill	2,184	2,401	1.91%
Dimboola	1,730	1,635	-1.12%
Rainbow	683	672	-0.32%
Jeparit	477	476	-0.04%
Rural Balance	647	514	-4.50%
Shire Total	5,721	5,698	-0.08%

*SOURCE: ABS Censuses of Population and Housing 2016 and 2021

The Shire's age profile is notably older than regional Victoria and Victorian averages (the median age is 50 years, compared with the Victorian average of 38 years). Although this ageing profile should peak over the next fifteen years, there will be continuing service demands from a large elderly population.

The Shire's post-World War 2 population was 10,067* and has steadily declined over seven decades at an average annual rate of 0.8%. In the fifteen years 2006 to 2021 the rate eased to -0.5% per annum and between 2016-21 the change of less than -0.1% shows the population is approaching population stability**.

Projections have been prepared by Wimmera Southern Mallee Development for Hindmarsh Shire's population following extensive interviews with local employers and insights on potential new industry investments. These projections are summarised in Table 2 and indicate continued progress towards population stability over the next 15 years, with the average annual decrease reducing to just 0.06% per annum over the 2021-36 period. The projections are considered realistic, with their achievement being challenged only by barriers preventing new job creation (especially available housing).

The population pyramids in Figure 1 demonstrate net-migration to satisfy new jobs will not only help to stabilise the overall population but will lead to a more balanced age structure, and a reduction in the percentage of people aged 65 years and over.

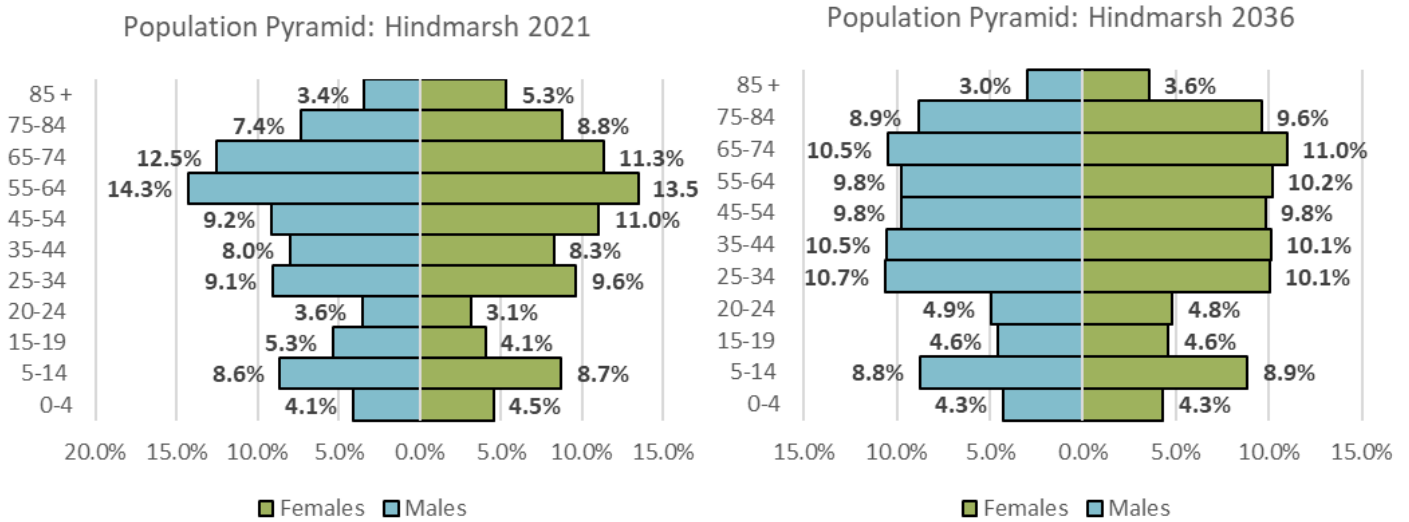
Table 2: Hindmarsh Shire Population Projections

Age Group	2021	2026	2031	2036	% change pa
0-4	284	269	272	281	-0.07%
5-9	282	282	281	286	0.08%
10-14	288	291	290	292	0.08%
15-19	309	303	301	301	-0.18%
20-24	220	291	312	319	2.50%
25-29	317	306	324	336	0.39%
30-34	297	313	328	343	0.96%
35-39	268	304	325	342	1.63%
40-44	265	290	314	334	1.56%
45-49	288	287	304	324	0.78%
50-54	376	319	308	318	-1.11%
55-59	423	363	329	321	-1.82%
60-64	489	413	360	333	-2.52%
65-69	415	422	384	349	-1.15%
70-74	369	392	380	353	-0.30%
75-79	308	337	344	331	0.49%
80-84	221	256	274	274	1.45%
85+	286	223	215	215	-1.89%
Total	5,698	5,659	5,645	5,650	-0.06%

* Wimmera Region Profile (1961), Victorian Central Planning Authority

** ABS Censuses of Population and Housing 2006 to 2021

Figure 1: Population Pyramids 2021 and 2036: Hindmarsh Shire



Employment and Socio-Economic Wellbeing

The largest industry is agriculture (principally grain, sheep, oilseeds and legumes) which accounted for 27.1% of its workers in 2021, and actually increased at a rate of 1.7% per year between 2016 and 2021 (the first time in many decades). Value adding to agriculture is also important, with major duck processing, and grain handling businesses helping to make manufacturing the fourth largest employing industry (at 6.0%). Other significant industries include health services (which is the second largest employing industry at 18.1% of all jobs, and has been increasing at 0.86% per annum), and employment/training (the third largest employing industry, at 8.1%). Tourism is recognised as an emerging industry and Hindmarsh Shire is part of the Wimmera Mallee Tourism regional grouping.



It is useful to group the nineteen industries into just five sectors, which broadly describe the nature of the economic contribution. The classification also helps to understand structural changes in local economies over time:

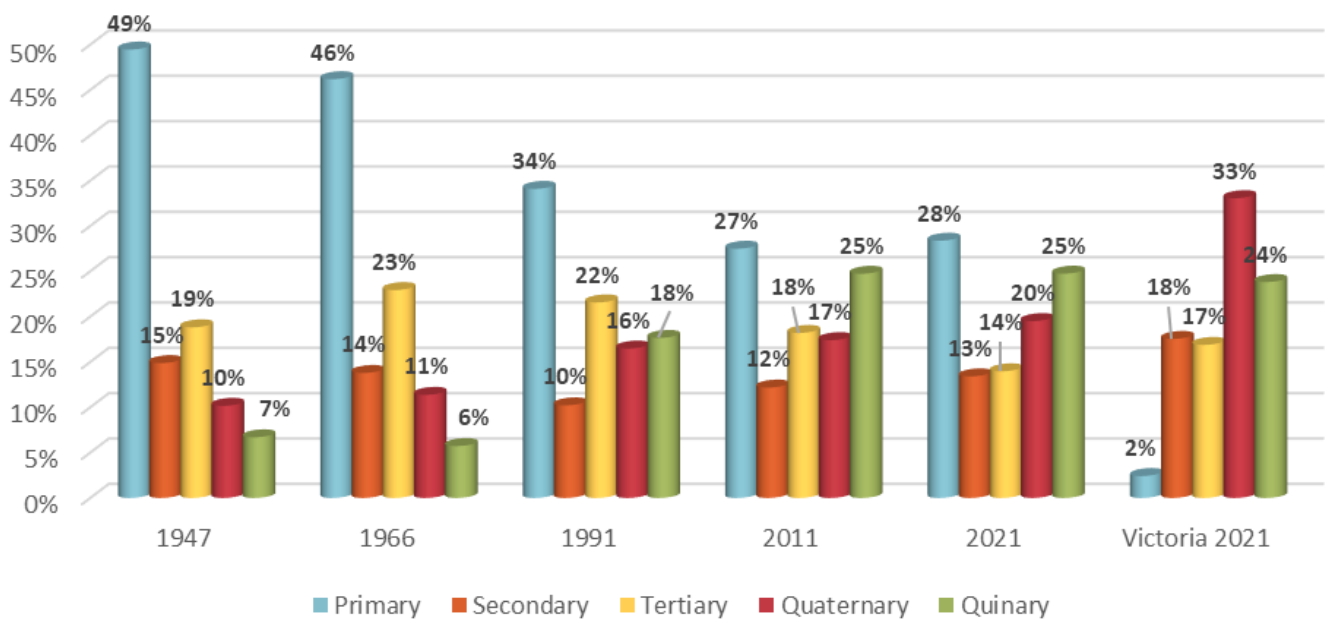
- Primary Sector (agriculture, fishing, forestry and mining industries): This sector generates products from the earth's natural resources.
- Secondary Sector (manufacturing, construction, electricity, gas, water and waste): This sector transforms and adds value to natural resource products.
- Tertiary Sector (retail trade, wholesale trade, transport, postal and warehousing): This sector provides services which deliver products to consumers.
- Quaternary Sector (finance, real estate, information/media, professional/technical/scientific, administrative, and education services): Services targeted largely to businesses, and other organisations.
- Quinary Sector (health, accommodation and food services, art and recreation, other personal services): Services targeted largely to individuals.



Unsurprisingly broadacre agriculture, and therefore the primary sector, has been the largest employing industry in Hindmarsh Shire since its colonial settlement. Perhaps more surprising is the Shire’s gradual shift from a production focused workforce to one that is now dominated by service industries. Figure 2 indicates that just after the second world war almost half the employed workforce had jobs in agriculture and another 15% worked in other production (secondary) industries such as manufacturing and construction.

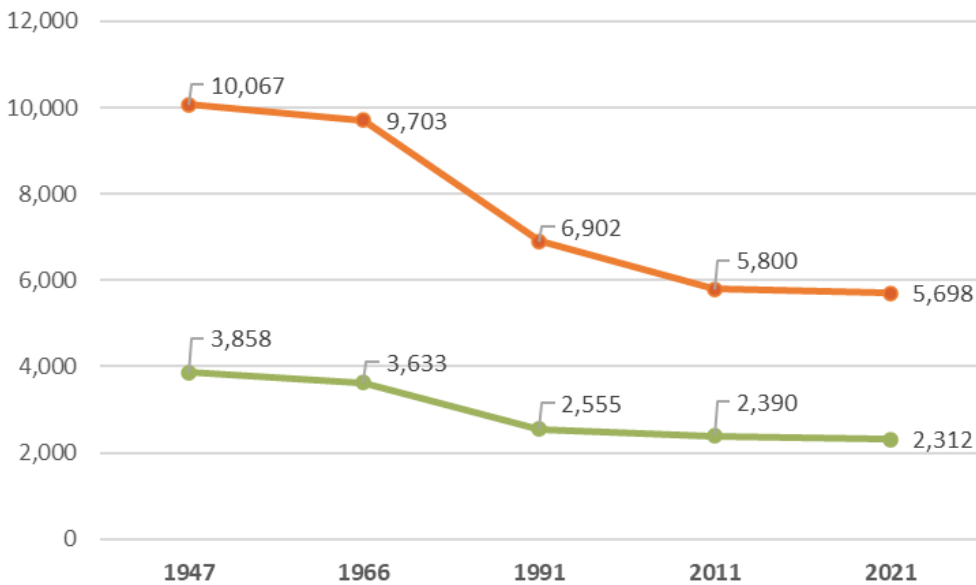
Farm aggregations and vastly improved agricultural technologies have seen agricultural jobs in Hindmarsh Shire fall by about two-thirds over the past 75 years (ie from 1,908 jobs in 1947 to 651 jobs in 2021); an average annual decrease of 1.5%. Service jobs (across the tertiary, quaternary and quinary sectors) now make up 58% of all employment in Hindmarsh Shire. This is considerably lower than Victoria as a whole (74% of all jobs are in service industries) and, with the continuing significance of agriculture and potentially value-adding to agricultural products, is unlikely to ever be comparable with the State average. Indeed, economic development opportunities in production industries suggest Hindmarsh’s production employment should be strengthened in future years, and jobs in agriculture increased in the Shire between 2016 and 2021 for the first time in decades (following several seasons with above average rainfall and relatively good commodity prices).

Figure 2: Employment by Industry



The rate of loss of jobs in Hindmarsh Shire (0.70% per annum) has been similar to the rate of population decline (0.77% per annum) since 1947. However, both the number of jobs and the population levels have begun to stabilise in the past decade.

Figure 3: Population and Employment



Hindmarsh Shire has a high level of socio-economic disadvantage*. It is in the highest decile for disadvantage in Victoria and is ranked the 8th most disadvantaged (over advantage) local government area in the State (of 79 total local government areas). The Shire's larger towns have high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The four main towns are within the most disadvantaged 20% of all 'suburbs' in Victoria, with:

- Jeparit being the most disadvantaged, ranking 53rd of all 2,816 suburbs and localities in the State.
- Dimboola ranking 156th
- Nhill ranking 313th
- Rainbow ranking 371st.

The median household income in Hindmarsh Shire was \$1,159 per week in 2021, which was just 65.9% of the Victorian median. However, the Shire's households have high levels of outright home ownership and, for those paying either a mortgage or rent, these levels are considerably lower than the State norms. The median rent in 2021 was \$180 per week (48.7% of the Victorian median) and median mortgage was \$750 per month (40.3% of the Victorian median). Availability of housing is a bigger liveability issue in Hindmarsh Shire than the cost.

* SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indices for Areas) indices of advantage and disadvantage are calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics using a range of variables on income, employment, housing, etc.



Housing

At the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, Hindmarsh Shire had 2,498 occupied dwellings with an average household size of 2.2 persons. Separate houses make up the overwhelming majority of residential dwellings (95.0%). The majority of occupied dwellings are owned outright:

- 52.2% of occupied dwellings (1,235) were owned outright by the occupants.
- 26.3% of dwellings (623) were owned with a mortgage.
- 16.8% of dwellings (393) were rented, and only 9.1% were rented from a managing agent or housing authority (with the balance rented through informal contacts). This compares with a Victorian average of 27.5% of occupied dwellings which are rented and the vast majority (21.9%) are rented through managing agents or a housing authority.

Table 3: Occupied Dwellings in Hindmarsh 2016-2021

Town	2016	2021	%pa change		
			Outright home ownership	Homes mortgaged	Homes rented
Nhill	884	951	0.55%	1.33%	3.24%
Dimboola	703	727	0.38%	1.27%	-0.53%
Rainbow	292	295	-0.12%	0.30%	-3.99%
Jeparit	200	209	2.06%	6.07%	-9.53%
Shire Total	2,429	2,498	1,236 to 1,257	594 to 626	343 to 408
Actual Change			21	32	65

There have been 25 new residential dwelling building approvals in Hindmarsh Shire since the 2021 Census (ie 2021-22 and 2022-23 to date – July 2022 to May 2023) at a value of \$8.164 million*, or \$327,000 in construction value per dwelling (excluding land purchase), which is somewhat higher than average local market value after the housing is constructed.

There has also been \$2.376 million in housing alterations and additions and \$10.011 million in non-residential building (farm, industrial and commercial) approvals in Hindmarsh in the past two years, making the total value of building approvals \$21.4767 million.

The population projections presented earlier would generate estimated demand for 12-14 new dwellings per annum through to 2036, excluding pent-up demand.

* Australian Bureau of Statistics, Building Approvals, Australia 2021-22 and 2022-23 year to date



Economic Output

Although employment in the primary and secondary sectors has been surpassed by the quaternary and quinary sectors, the Shire’s economic output remains dominated by the product sectors, and agriculture and manufacturing in particular. The estimated economic output of the Shire in 2022 was \$721.5 million and 57.3% was contributed by the primary and secondary sectors.

The Shire has a net-commuting outwards workforce (ie people commuting from Hindmarsh Shire to work in other locations) of 169, or 7.0% of the residents who are employed. Professional, scientific and technical services has the largest outwards commute with a net 22 people commuting from the Shire (44% of all people employed in this industry). Table 4 summarises the economic output and the jobs of employed residents and the jobs occupied within the local area, all by industry and sector.



Table 4: Employed Residents, Local Workforce and Economic Output

Sector	Industry	Hindmarsh 2021			Hindmarsh 2022	
		Residents	Workforce	Net-Commuting Workforce	Economic Output (\$million)*	% of Output
Primary Sector	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	651	644	-7	227.0	31.5%
	Mining	5	5	0	0.0	0.0%
	Sub-total Primary	656	649	-7	227.0	31.5%
Secondary Sector	Manufacturing	143	155	12	135.6	18.8%
	Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	27	15	-12	5.4	0.8%
	Construction	140	116	-24	44.9	6.2%
	Sub-total Secondary	310	286	-24	185.9	25.8%
Tertiary Sector	Wholesale Trade	44	34	-10	1.1	0.2%
	Retail Trade	141	121	-20	23.1	3.2%
	Transport, Postal and Warehousing	138	122	-16	45.5	6.3%
	Sub-total Tertiary	323	277	-46	69.7	9.7%
Quaternary Sector	Information Media and Telecommunications	8	10	2	7.0	1.0%
	Financial and Insurance Services	18	14	-4	20.1	2.8%
	Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	13	8	-5	64.0	8.9%
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	50	28	-22	6.3	0.9%
	Administrative and Support Services	42	33	-9	8.4	1.2%
	Public Administration and Safety	126	120	-6	31.4	4.4%
	Education and Training	194	193	-1	21.6	3.0%
	Sub-total Quaternary	451	406	-45	158.8	22.2%
Quinary Sector	Health Care and Social Assistance	434	434	0	61.3	8.5%
	Accommodation and Food Services	60	52	-8	9.3	1.3%
	Arts and Recreation Services	17	10	-7	0.8	0.1%
	Other Services	61	42	-19	8.8	1.2%
	Sub-total Quinary	572	538	-34	80.2	11.1%
	Inadequately described/Not stated	97	78	-19		
	Total	2,402	2,233	-169	721.5	100%

* Remplan modelling 2022



COMMUNITY INPUT

Economic development strategy consultation forums were conducted in Nhill, Dimboola, Rainbow and Jeparit. These forums were attended by around 60 community members and Council representatives. At each forum, working groups were formed to agree on economic development issues of concern in the respective towns and across the Shire. The nature of discussions and suggestions at the forums unambiguously showed that Hindmarsh Shire communities believe that Council has a direct role in delivering economic development initiatives and that this role needs to be more prominent than is currently dedicated to the function.



The issues and suggestions which emerged from the 12 working groups across the four towns are embodied in both the Economic Development strategy directions and the specific strategies. The verbatim comments and suggestions are as follows.

RAINBOW

Group 1:

- Make it easier to subdivide/rezone land for housing
- Introduce recycling initiatives/enterprises
- Need to encourage the next generation of volunteers
- Being off-grid might attract some new residents.

Group 2:

- Vacant houses – finding a way to sell or rent them.
- Community ‘opportunity shop’
- Renewable energy – self sustaining
- Industrial estate/zoned area
- Large lot (say 2 acres) residential development
- Tourism – try to get visitors to stay 2 nights in the town.

Group 3:

- Promote remote working from home (infrastructure/internet)
- Attract workers – more vacancies than workers

- Need quality accommodation
- Volunteer burnout is a problem (too much expected).
- Volunteers – how to attract and retain? A funded central volunteer management body?
- Quality housing. Housing an issue for people wanting to work in town.
- Assistance to help older people stay in their homes (fee-for-service gardening, rubbish removal)
- Improving shopfronts in town – number of deteriorating empty shops looks poor.

Group 4:

- Residential subdivisions
- Large lot residential subdivision
- Industrial estate – no current industrial zoned land
- Residential attraction program (focusing on a welcoming community with jobs available)
- Find a way to deal with derelict housing and unavailable land allotments
- Renewable energy/off-grid power for town
- Grains value adding enterprise to be attracted/established.

JEPARIT

Group 1:

- Open, operating and well-maintained shops in the main street
- Jeparit secures the sale of mechanics workshop, not someone from out of town
- Museum – needs to be operating well with knowledge, signage, documented stories, resources to further develop, talking displays, try to engage new volunteers, Jeparit community fundraisers.
- New supermarket complex needed with supermarket, café, newsagency, post office.

Group 2:

- Retirement village to free up existing housing with one person style dwellings
- Tourism promotion
- Main street upgrade.

Group 3:

- Town to secure the sale of mechanics workshop, not someone from out of town to not use or maintain
- Shops need to be maintained and presented in an acceptable manner.
- Museum needs to be more interactive.
- Presentations of homes and gardens and nature strips in town need to be better maintained. Council sends letters annually but it is not considered to be enough.
- Lake Hindmarsh – keep water in it.

NHILL

Group 1:

- Expand commercial industry
- Housing – how to increase housing stock
- Tourism accommodation – innovative ideas
- Caravan master planning – consider potential growth
- Tidy up main street - Recommence grant for shopfront painting
- Employment advertising to market jobs in Nhill across all industries
- Electric car charger – is it slow or fast.

Group 2:

- Rail trail from river at Jeparit to Yanac
- Tourism initiatives (aerodrome, silo, signage, pinball museum)
- Upgrade main power grid

- Davis Park – sport, community involvement, all inclusive
- Changing places – Jaypex park
- Industrial estate.

DIMBOOLA

Group 1:

- Need more land and housing available (both for sale and rent)
- Shire to become more active in re-zoning for housing developments/reduce red tape for re-zoning
- Achieving new jobs means more housing.

Group 2:

- Industrial estate
- Events – support for major events
- Courses run in Dimboola for tourism (RSA, Farm Tours – desert tours and walks)
- Develop tourism influx strategies:
 - E-bikes
 - Short walk guided tours, birdwatching, information tours
- Salvage centre/art recycling
- Value adding – steam train engine visits.
- Establish a neighbourhood house
- Community noticeboard
- Corella management
- Senior citizens centre
- Fishing competitions expansion (and fish kill strategy).

Group 3:

- Retail responses to visitors with extended trading hours and extended supermarket hours.
- Medium density living close to CAA/CBD
- Backpackers accommodation (possible use for Allambi)
- New forms of community living/housing styles
- Create more arts and culture (vibrancy)
- Create more entertainment to attract and keep people.
- Create pop-up experiences/classes/craft.
- Establish a volunteer hub.

The suggestions from the consultation forums have been summarised and classified against the strategy to which each suggestion relates. The results and linkages are presented in Figure 4 on the next page.

Figure 4: Community Consultations and Economic Development Strategies

Strategy Area	Number and % of groups raising issues (12 groups in total)	Range of suggestions and issues raised
<p>1.1 Actively facilitate the Shire’s significant new economic development opportunities to achieve investment readiness and support their implementation.</p>	<p>3 (25%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling initiatives • Attraction of grains value-adding business • Salvage centres and art recycling
<p>1.2 Collaborate with WSMD and WMT to progress opportunities and initiatives of regional importance</p>	<p>3 (25%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rail trails • Towns going off-grid with renewable energies. • Renewable energies to make towns self-sustaining. • A range of regional tourism promotions
<p>1.3 Provide supportive services for new, expanding and sustainable existing businesses and community enterprises (including Aboriginal owned and controlled enterprises)</p>	<p>4 (33%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shire to become more active in rezoning for developments/reduce red tape for rezoning. • Industrial estates/zoned areas (x 3) • Community enterprise development (x 3)
<p>2.1 Initiate land use, infrastructure and industrial development projects to reinforce the Shire’s competitive strengths in secondary industries.</p>	<p>3 (25%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial estates/zoned areas (x 3)
<p>2.2 Support land and affordable housing development initiatives for key workers and older residents</p>	<p>9 (75%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more land and housing available (both for sale and rent) • Vacant houses – finding a way to sell or rent them. • Medium density living, close to CBD • New forms of community living/housing styles • Quality housing. Housing an issue for people wanting to work in town. • Residential subdivisions • Large lot residential subdivisions • Find a way to deal with derelict housing and unavailable land allotments. • Retirement village to free up existing housing with one person style dwellings.
<p>2.3 Encourage enhanced liveability services including childcare, health and aged care, and skills and training</p>	<p>7 (58%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shire to become more active in rezoning for developments/reduce red tape for rezoning • Neighbourhood house • Community noticeboard • Senior citizens centre • Create more arts and culture (vibrancy) • Create more entertainment to attract and keep people. • Create pop-up experiences, classes and craft. • Assistance to help older people stay in their homes (fee-for-service gardening, rubbish removal). • Davis Park - sport, community involvement, all inclusive • Changing places - Jaypex park.

Strategy Area	Number and % of groups raising issues (12 groups in total)	Range of suggestions and issues raised
<p>3.1 Continue the transition of Hindmarsh's town retail areas into revitalised and vibrant town centres</p>	<p>6 (50%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tourism influx strategies (e-bikes, short walk guided tours, birdwatching, information tours) • Retail responses to visitors – extended trading hours – extended supermarket hours • Try to get visitors to stay 2 nights in the town. • Open, operating and well-maintained shops in the main street • Jeparit secures the sale of mechanics workshop, not someone from out of town (x 2). • New supermarket complex needed with supermarket, café, newsagency, post office. • Main street upgrades • Improving shopfronts in town – number of deteriorating empty shops looks poor. • Shops need to be maintained and presented in an acceptable manner. • Presentations of homes and gardens and nature strips in town need to be better maintained. Council sends letters annually but it is not considered to be enough.
<p>3.2 Further develop the range and quality of visitor accommodation</p>	<p>4 (25%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backpacker accommodation • Retail responses to visitors – extended trading hours – extended supermarket hours • Tourism accommodation - innovative ideas • Caravan master planning - consider potential growth. • Need quality accommodation.
<p>3.3 Drive distinctive themes for Hindmarsh Shire's towns</p>	<p>8 (75%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a volunteer hub. • Volunteer burnout is a problem (too much expected). • Volunteers - how to attract and retain? A funded central volunteer management body? • Events – support for major events • Courses run in Dimboola for tourism (RSA, farm tours, desert tours and walks) • Value adding – train steam engine. • Museum needs to be more interactive. • Need to encourage the next generation of volunteers. • Pioneer Museum needs to be operating well with knowledge, signage, documented stories, resources to further develop, talking displays, try to engage new volunteers, Jeparit community fundraisers. • Tidy up main street - Recommence grant for shopfront painting.



STRATEGIES



A scenic view of a lake at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, shimmering reflection on the water's surface. The background is a dense line of trees silhouetted against the sky. In the foreground, there are tall reeds on the left side of the frame. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Strategic Pillar 1

Proactive Council Economic
Development Facilitation

STRATEGY 1.1

Actively facilitate the Shire's significant new economic development opportunities, which build on local supply chains, to achieve investment readiness and support their implementation.



Strategy Context

Decades long trends of farm aggregation and agricultural automation have reduced Hindmarsh Shire's population and jobs. The Shire has also seen mergers and acquisitions impact on its manufacturing base, leaving the export of agricultural commodities from the Shire as the mainstay of the local economy.

Several new ventures and value-adding opportunities have been identified by Hindmarsh communities and business operators. Council has not committed staff time or other resources to encouraging new investment and innovation in newly emerging opportunities in recent years, but the case to do so over the next five years is compelling. With a focus on Australian food production reaching \$100 billion per annum, Australia's reputation for clean and green production, the growing importance of grains-based protein in diets, and robust biosecurity which can be delivered in broadacre systems all point to good prospects for Hindmarsh Shire. The potential to value add to agricultural commodities produced in Hindmarsh Shire is at a peak. In addition:

- Agribusiness industry sectors are showing a shift towards the emergence of niche and smaller businesses.
- Broadacre agricultural environments are becoming increasingly attractive to producers and processors who are concerned with investment security (away from urban development pressure) and sustainability.

Water security from the Wimmera Mallee pipeline, the prospect of reticulated renewable energies in the region, improving connectivity, and Hindmarsh's location relative to the major population centres in both Victoria and South Australia all contribute to its suitability for ventures in some industry sectors.

Facilitation support should be limited to ventures which meet agreed selection criteria such as:

- Potential job creation.
- Expected social and economic benefits to the community.
- Supply chain links (ie business connection reasons for locating in the Shire).
- Investment and operational contribution to the Shire.

Council should focus on a manageable number of supply chain improvement opportunities rather than attempting to attract completely external investment in an untargeted way. Identified current prospects include:

- Malt barley production and processing.
- Stockfeed production.
- Indigenous plant foods production and processing.
- Central distribution facilities.
- Grain handling and storage equipment manufacture.
- Intensive livestock.
- Recycling and other circular economy projects.



One to two of these opportunities should be developed and facilitated by Council in each of the five years 2024 to 2028, with progress from one to the next being determined by success with the previous venture and the extent to which the opportunity remains current.

Council facilitation services to support investors in these opportunity areas could encompass:

- Supporting significant businesses in their applications for relevant State and Commonwealth grant programs
- Developing investment guides or business cases for specific ventures
- Assistance with feasibilities and/or business cases for significant individual investment opportunities
- Negotiating alliance partners in the supply chain (suppliers, processors or logistics providers)
- Provision of industrial land packages (such as flexibility on small or large lot configurations, support in connecting services to headworks, and the ability to stage land development)
- Liaison with infrastructure providers on behalf of businesses
- Liaison with regional organisations in garnering support for new business investments
- Assistance to build regional collaborative structures which involve one or more Loddon businesses.

ACTIONS | STRATEGY 1.1

1.1.1	Meet with relevant community stakeholders and selected local businesses in each supply chain to shortlist those opportunities which are ready to be progressed to facilitation support.
1.1.2	Decide how the facilitation will be resourced (in-house staff time, outsourcing, application for financial support from a grant, or fee-for-service).
1.1.3	Develop a program of support activities.
1.1.4	Implement the facilitation activities for 1-2 agreed opportunities each year.

STRATEGY 1.2

Collaborate with Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSMD) and Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) to progress opportunities and initiatives of regional importance.

Strategy Context

Regional opportunities which will have an impact on the Hindmarsh Shire economy include:

- Renewable energy developments
- Mineral sands mining projects
- New tourism trails
- Regional housing initiatives (covered in Strategic Pillar 2).

Renewable energy is a significant current economic development which began an implementation phase in the early 2000s. Wind and solar power investors have recognised the natural attributes, and the broadacre environment, of the Wimmera Southern Mallee and many new projects are under development. Uncertainty over the extension of powerlines to connect the new sources of energy to reticulated power grids are affecting the potential scale and timing of these developments, but the rate of change in renewable energy technologies and battery storage and the urgency of reducing fossil fuel carbon emissions require that these uncertainties are resolved. In Hindmarsh Shire, renewable energy company BayWa r.e. operates a 7.4 megawatts wind farm (more power than the current whole Hindmarsh Shire requirement) near Nhill which is connected to the grid via Nhill's electricity substation.

Among the 19 renewable energy projects totalling 10 gigawatts capacity under development around the region, Stage 2 of the Murra Warra wind farm is closest to Hindmarsh Shire and is located just over 20 kilometres east of Dimboola. It will involve 38 new turbines generating 109 megawatts of power.

Further renewable energy projects in the region and in Hindmarsh Shire are likely to emerge during the 2024-28 timeframe. It is quite possible local power generation capacity and storage battery capabilities will advance over the next five years to the point where micro-grid power supplies may be possible, and very cost-efficient, for some of Hindmarsh Shire's towns.

Hindmarsh Shire has negligible mining employment and economic activity and there are no mining projects in the pipeline. However, new mineral sands mines encompassing rare earth minerals are strongly tipped to commence both construction and operational phases in the next five years, creating jobs and new supply chains and placing demands on the region's housing, recreational and service sectors. Astron Corporation (trading as Donald Mineral Sands), WIM Resource Pty Ltd and Iluka Resources are companies which have been exploring and proving the resources in the region, with plans to establish large mineral sands mining construction works and operations in the next few years.



There is scope to assist in leading WMT (including any revised structure in which WMT is a participant) to further build on the iconic Silo Art trail and developing new integrated tourism trails in which Hindmarsh Shire has a prominent role, particularly:

- Recreational waterway trails, incorporating the Wimmera River at Dimboola and Jeparit, Nhill Lake, Rainbow Lake and Lake Hindmarsh.
- Museums and historic attractions, incorporating the Wimmera-Mallee Pioneer Museum as a minimum.

History, Heritage and Landscapes Trails (currently informal and in need of formal development). The Wimmera Mallee has a rich Indigenous history which has not been developed into organised tourism activity to date. Other landscapes are associated with flora, fauna, national parks, desert environments and broadacre farming. The region also has a strong post-colonial settlement history especially in cropping and other farming practices, and innovations in agricultural machinery and equipment (often preserved at local museums and historic buildings).

ACTIONS | STRATEGY 1.2

1.2.1	Participate in committees/working groups on renewable energies, mining, and tourism with WSMD/WMT.
1.2.2	Contribute local information and advocacy for WSMD business cases and information memoranda for new suitable renewable energies investments in the region.
1.2.3	Communicate with local Hindmarsh contractors and suppliers on individual and consortium work opportunities, as and when they arise, during both construction and operational phases of mineral sands mining and renewable energies projects in the region.
1.2.4	Assist WMT to further build on the successful silo art trail and develop new regional recreational waterbody trails, incorporating the Wimmera River at Dimboola and Jeparit, Nhill Lake, Rainbow Lake and Lake Hindmarsh. The market for these trails will overlap with silo art visitors but will add families and younger cohorts. This strategy could extend to collaboration with Grampians Tourism’s proposed ‘Victorian Great Lakes’ initiatives by incorporating Lakes Fyans, Bellfield, Wartook and Walkers into the trail options.
1.2.5	Lead regional efforts (in partnership with Yarriambiack Shire Council, WMT and WSMD) to upgrade the displays and sustainability of the region’s museums and historic attractions (incorporating Hindmarsh’s Wimmera-Mallee Pioneer Museum, Nhill Aviation Museum, Pinball Museum and Dimboola’ Print Museum as a minimum) by introducing, subject to accessing grant funding, shared curatorial expertise and offering interactive displays and exhibitions which change throughout the year (for example 2-4 themed exhibitions per year).

STRATEGY 1.3

Provide supportive services for new, expanding and sustainable existing businesses and community enterprises (including support for Aboriginal owned and controlled enterprises).

Strategy Context

Council's role in facilitating business growth in the Shire should not just be focused on attracting investment from outside, but also in offering similar support to 'growth from within'. That means supporting existing businesses planning to expand and diversify, and existing community members who would like to invest in their local communities.



Some Hindmarsh communities have expressed interest in actively participating, and investing, in the establishment of community enterprises which will strengthen and help to revitalise their communities. Concerned communities in several Wimmera Southern Mallee towns have been stepping up to raise investments for both for-profit and not-for-profit business operations to either retain important services in towns or to add a new dimension; some remain community owned and operated, others have appointed managers or have built the business prior to selling. Some examples include the Royal Hotel in Sea Lake, the independent supermarket in Rupanyup, Bakery on Broadway in Wycheproof, and The Border Inn at Apsley. Organisation structures for these community enterprises vary from cooperatives, partnerships, companies limited by shares to companies limited by guarantee, but the key commonality is that the shareholders all have an interest in strengthening their local community rather than necessarily receiving a competitive financial return on their investment.

It is understood that Barengi Gadjin Land Council intends to increase its involvement in plant nursery, food production and tourism enterprises which focus on cultural sites and stories. The timing and scale to develop these enterprises will, of course, be at the discretion of BGLC and Hindmarsh Shire Council should have only a supportive and encouragement involvement.

Designated Council officers could be responsible for liaison with other Council officers to assist businesses, investors and community stakeholders in working through planning, building, supply chain contacts, and other statutory agency contacts associated with proposed community businesses/enterprises.





In order to demonstrate that Council is 'open for business' in the context of new business investment and areas where community groups could assist and participate in new enterprises, it would be appropriate for Council to produce a broad Shire-wide investment guide. This would be both an advocacy document for potential grant funding and a formal confirmation of the Shire's readiness for targeted types of business. Among the business types which could be suited to community enterprises, other private investment and/or diversification by existing local business operators, which have been nominated during consultations, are:

- Rainbow hotel and brewery.
- Wimmera Mallee Chocolate Factory.
- Modular homes/caravan park cabins construction facility.
- Service station/truck stop.

ACTIONS | STRATEGY 1.3

1.3.1	Design a new enterprise investment guide for Hindmarsh Shire identifying generic features of relevance (town characteristics, infrastructure, social and recreational assets, etc) and, for each of the selected business opportunities, why the opportunity exists and an outline of the competitive strengths of a Hindmarsh Shire location. The document would be available on Council's website and in hard copy.
1.3.2	Maintain a register of appropriate legal, financial and business advisory professionals to recommend to Hindmarsh Shire community groups and business proponents on options for structuring community enterprises.
1.3.3	Support Barengi Gadjin Land Council to build and enhance First Nations visitor experiences in the region, and other Aboriginal owned and controlled enterprises (eg in nursery, landscaping, and food production)

STRATEGY 1.4

Scale up Council's cost-effective approach to resourcing economic development functions.

Strategy Context

Regional economic development was once delivered through 'top down' policies and programs of Commonwealth and State Governments, but this has changed in the past 30 years and local and community-based approaches and responses have become accepted as the most effective and most sustainable way to develop regions; in Australia and around the world. An acceptance demonstrated by the fact that most new businesses, new investment and new jobs in any region are generated by the existing community (and the supply chain connections of the existing community): Research in Australia suggests that the proportion is at least 70%. Conversely 'top down' initiated regional economic development programs are rarely sustained. They are shaped, funded and often concluded within just one term of government office, yet their successful implementation and maturation may have a "lead time" of more than a decade, unless they are embraced and driven at the local level. Flexible programs which support innovation and capitalise on emerging local opportunities are more likely to be successful.

The shift to local responsibility for steering economic development has inevitably been embraced as a function of Local Government authorities. More recent structures have seen the explicit acknowledgement of economic development as a local government function, with the formation of Council Economic Development Units. In some cases, the Economic Development function has been integrated with planning, development, community services and/or sustainability functions. In many regions, these Council Economic Development Units work in complement to separately incorporated Economic Development Organisations which are formally linked to one or more Councils (eg Wimmera Southern Mallee Development). These organisations tend to have Boards of Management which have both local government and industry participants, from private and public sectors: The public participants often represent public owned training providers, infrastructure companies (such as water and power providers), hospitals and sport and recreation bodies.

Council employs staff across community development, economic development and tourism functions. There are three members of the community, economic and tourism development staff team, with a total commitment of 1.6 FTE's on the economic development (including tourism) workload. This is considered to be inadequate resourcing to deliver on the 2024-28 strategies.



In Hindmarsh Shire Council to date there has not been an accepted multi-disciplinary approach to economic development activities, whereby staff who have responsibilities for other roles which have economic development implications (such as planning, building, and health staff and other operational roles) are engaged in helping to develop and to support specific projects. There has been a level of outsourcing to resource specific economic development projects such as masterplans, tourism infrastructure, and accommodation (usually when a small Council funding commitment can be leveraged by funds from a government program).

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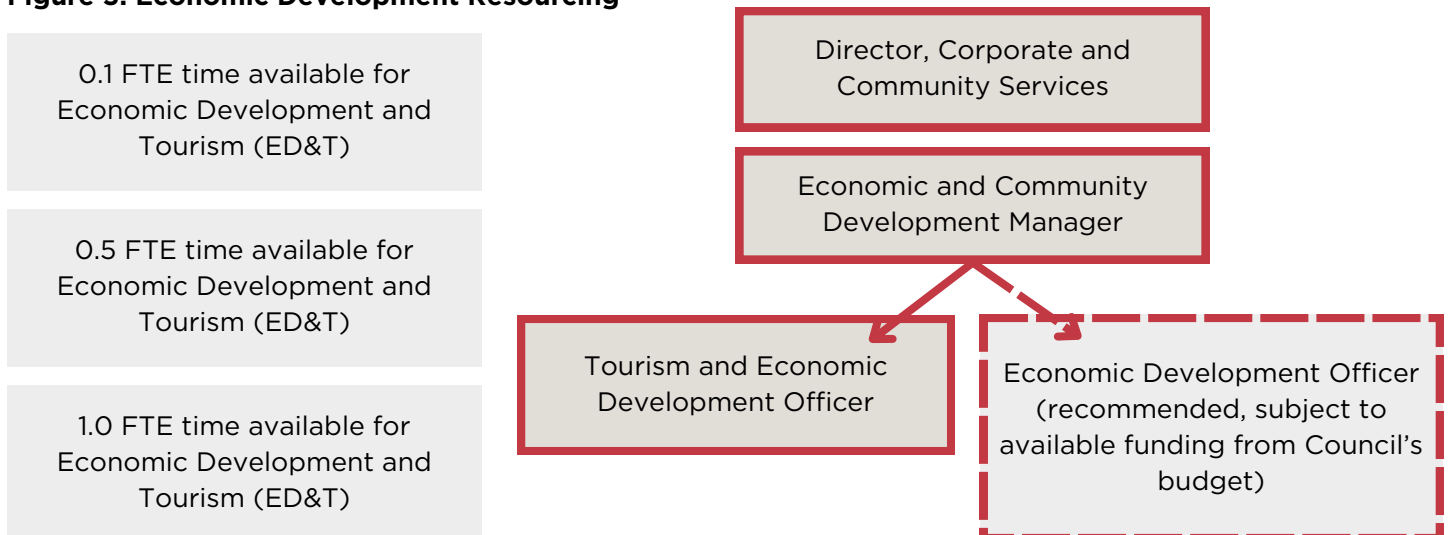
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ACTIONS | STRATEGY 1.4

Actions within this strategy account for many of day-to-day economic development activities of Council and consume 1.1 FTEs of the currently available 1.6 FTEs dedicated to economic development tasks, including tourism.

1.4.1	Provision of executive support to community committees (incorporating Asset Management Committees of Council, town or progress committees, sporting clubs) through attending meetings, correspondence, letters of support, Council briefing papers, etc. This action is currently resourced by 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing and is expected to be ongoing at this level throughout 2024-2028.
1.4.2	Representing Hindmarsh Shire on regional and State working parties and project working/steering groups. This action is currently resourced by 0.2 FTE staffing and is expected to be ongoing at this level throughout 2024-2028.
1.4.3	Responding to requests for business, economic development and tourism information. This action is currently resourced by 0.1 FTE staffing and is expected to be ongoing at this level throughout 2024-2028.
1.4.4	Drafting policy, responses and recommended directions on economic development matters where decisions are needed, for consideration by Council. This action is currently resourced by 0.2 FTE staffing and is expected to be ongoing at this level throughout 2024-2028.
1.4.5	Preparing advocacy and lobbying documents and representing the Shire to government and potential new investors and businesses. This action is currently resourced by 0.1 FTE staffing and is expected to need an increase to 0.2 FTE throughout 2024-2028.
1.4.6	Recruit an additional Economic Development Officer who will share some of the load in Actions 1.4.1 to 1.4.5 and will take prime responsibility for delivery of the Strategic Pillars 1 and 2 under direction of the Economic and Community Development Manager, while the Tourism and Economic Development Manager will have prime responsibility for Strategic Pillar 3.

Figure 5: Economic Development Resourcing





A landscape photograph featuring a vast, golden field in the foreground, likely a field of mature grain or a similar agricultural crop. In the middle ground, a large, well-developed tree with a dense canopy of green and brown leaves stands prominently. The background shows a flat horizon line with a few smaller trees scattered across it. The sky is a pale, clear blue, suggesting a bright, sunny day. The overall scene conveys a sense of rural tranquility and natural beauty.

Strategic Pillar 2

Reducing Barriers to
Investment and Innovation

STRATEGY 2.1

Initiate land use, infrastructure and industrial development projects to reinforce the Shire's competitive strengths in secondary industries.

Strategy Context

Manufacturing, construction, and utilities (electricity, gas, water and waste) are classified as secondary industries. Community forums in the four main Hindmarsh towns identified provision of serviced industrial estates as keys to future economic development. Industrial estates could accommodate:

- Manufacturing and processing businesses.
- Trades and construction operators.
- Wholesaling and warehousing operations.
- Distribution and logistics businesses.
- Other service activities.

Hindmarsh Shire has a long history as a centre for food and agricultural equipment manufacturing. But this competitive strength has eroded in the twenty-first century. Mergers and acquisitions have reduced the Shire's constituent businesses in these sectors; part of a global trend towards 2-3 major corporations controlling supply chains. Nhill in particular was a manufacturing hub of the twentieth-century, but mergers and acquisitions have reduced the commitment to the region and many of the businesses have been lost or have been affected by industry consolidations and mergers (in food manufacturing and commodity handling).

New value adding processes to grains, grain legumes and oilseeds have the potential to attract investment in the Shire to value add to products beyond the farmgate. This could occur through farming operations collaborating to value add, vertical integration by either family or corporate farms, or entirely new processing and value adding businesses establishing in the Shire.

The processing steps which are emerging in the twenty-first century often involve extraction of nutrient rich components from the base commodity and diversion of former waste-streams into valuable co-products (liquid, solid and dried). Undertaking these processes close to the product source, rather than close to the market is arguably more attractive, since the products after second stage processing may be divided between food for human consumption applications, specialty stockfeeds, food or nutraceutical ingredients, and even higher value biological fertilisers. The ability to access cost-competitive sources of renewable energy, biosecure and food safe premises, and investment security could all add to the competitiveness of a location at the centre of a broadacre farming district. Availability of suitable premises, and access to suitable staff, and housing shortages are the biggest offsets to these comparative advantages.





Hindmarsh Shire’s towns are under-represented in construction trade businesses and employment and need to adopt a contemporary approach to attracting and retaining trade apprentices, tradespeople and trades businesses. The percentage of the Shire’s employment in the construction industry in total is 5.8% and the main towns have construction industry employment ranging between 1.6% and 7.9% of the total employed workforce. By town, in 2021:

- Dimboola had 7.9% of its workforce employed in trades and construction.
- Nhill had 6.1% of its workforce employed in trades and construction.
- Jeparit had 3.9% of its workforce employed in trades and construction.
- Rainbow had 1.6% of its workforce employed in trades and construction.

There is a pressing need to implement mechanisms to retain tradespeople and trade businesses in the Shire.

ACTIONS | STRATEGY 2.1

2.1.1	Review planning scheme provisions for industrial land in Nhill, Rainbow and Dimboola and conduct initial demand and feasibility assessments for industrial estates in these towns.
2.1.2	Explore infrastructure and industrial development government support programs which could be accessed for detailed planning and provision of industrial estates.
2.1.3	Investigate microgrid or modular-grid renewable energy hubs to power select Hindmarsh Shire towns.
2.1.4	Establish the viability of at least one trades-hub (with modular factory units and shared services) to attract small trades businesses and local branches of trades businesses and to increase the number of local apprentices.

STRATEGY 2.2

Support land and affordable housing development initiatives for key workers and older residents.

Strategy Context

Shortages of housing for rent and sale have been widely acknowledged as the greatest barriers to filling job vacancies, attracting skilled workers and achieving population growth in towns right across the Wimmera Southern Mallee*. Housing shortages were evident well before the COVID pandemic but have been exacerbated by it. They occur at a time when the region has major economic development opportunities including those specified for Hindmarsh Shire.

In addition to job opportunities, lower residential market values have brought new households to several Hindmarsh towns, attracted by housing affordability and rural lifestyle. A proportion of these residents remain somewhat disenfranchised with few social connections and low disposable incomes, which has contributed to the Shire's relatively high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indices for Areas (SEIFA).

Household size has slowly decreased in the Shire for at least two decades. In 1991 the average household size was 2.5 persons per occupied dwelling, and by 2021 it had reduced to 2.2. This change is a key factor in creating demand for new housing, and the housing stock has risen even during periods when there is no population growth. The average price for houses sold in Hindmarsh Shire in 2022 was \$222,962, having risen at the average annual rate of 8.5% over the previous 10 years**.

* Wimmera Development Association (2020) Housing Review

** Victorian Valuer Generals records 1992 to 2022



Attracting either developers or housing associations (including those structured as community enterprises) to provide suitable properties for sale and rent to incoming households needs to demonstrate a reasonable return on investment. This is difficult in the Shire. The average value of new houses (measured by building approvals) in Hindmarsh in 2021-22 and 2022-23 was \$364,000, excluding land, which is 63% higher than the average market value of \$222,962. On this basis, and with 6.6% capital gain per annum, it would take around 7.5 years for an investment in housing to begin making a capital gain. Community driven initiatives, whereby local residents contribute to a housing fund, with lower expectations for commercial returns, can enable Hindmarsh communities to develop more housing to accommodate people moving to the area for employment opportunities.

The combined issues of limited affordable housing, insufficient rental accommodation, and residential land for future development have been widely agreed throughout the Wimmera Southern Mallee region by Councils, community organisations and industry stakeholders as major inhibitors to growth. Demand for lifestyle rural residential blocks has also been recognised in regional assessments and by Hindmarsh Shire communities.



ACTIONS | STRATEGY 2.2

Hindmarsh Shire Council can support land, key worker and older resident housing initiatives in several ways.

2.2.1	Participate in WSMD’s Wimmera Housing Innovation projects in the Shire. Initial towns and community groups involved in discussions with Wimmera Housing Innovations (WHIP) are Dimboola and Rainbow.
2.2.2	Directly making applications and/or supporting applications, to Victorian and Commonwealth government affordable housing program grants and loans or infrastructure to facilitate housing developments.
2.2.3	Provision of minor infrastructure, planning and building permits for housing developments on a case-by-case basis, and with consideration of concessional rates and charges.
2.2.4	Residential land subdivision support including infrastructure connections and statutory approvals, also on a case-by-case basis.
2.2.5	Develop a plan for provision of larger lot, rural residential estates in larger towns of the Shire.

STRATEGY 2.3

Encourage enhanced liveability services including childcare, health and aged care, and skills and training.

Strategy Context

The need to reduce barriers to growth and to the attraction of key workers and retirees is unparalleled. Although housing is widely considered as the most significant current inhibitor to growth in Hindmarsh Shire, other liveability factors, are also of critical importance, particularly when considered in combination or as an overall package. Ratings of liveability factors by employers* in Hindmarsh Shire are generally positive, especially in Nhill and Dimboola, while there is more dissatisfaction in Rainbow and Jeparit. Realistically, core liveability factors of childcare, health services, aged care and workforce skills and training are beyond the ability of local government and local communities to solve directly, since they are the consequence of State and Commonwealth Government policies and funding, and local provision must be equitable compared with metropolitan areas and other regional and rural locations. Private sector intervention is possible, but unlikely when the viability outlook is no better than marginal.

* Compiled from survey work by Wimmera Development Association in 2020.

Liveability strengths in Nhill are considered to include:

- General health care (with a hospital operated by West Wimmera Health Service, also providing some dental and specialist services).
- Primary and secondary school education (with one public and two private schools).
- A range of aged care options (West Wimmera Health Services, Avonlea, Iona and independent living units).
- Relatively good child-care services (with 3-4 years old kindergarten sessions and long-day care four days per week).
- Retail centre core services.
- Sport and recreation facilities.
- Cultural assets and facilities which include aviation heritage, other history, environmental assets (but not cultural assets for the increasing multicultural residents).
- Community groups and community support.



Liveability strengths in Dimboola are considered to include:

- General health care (through private practitioner services)
- Primary and secondary school education.
- Aged health support through the hospital (Grampians Health) but with no intensive care and very limited independent living aged units.
- Child-care services (with 3-4 years old kindergarten sessions and long-day care 4 days per week)
- An improving retail centre.
- Sport and recreation facilities.
- Cultural assets and facilities which include a new library, Sidney Nolan and Print Museum heritage, environmental assets (Wimmera River and access to the Little Desert) and the undeveloped Aboriginal heritage sites.
- Community groups and community support. There are around 40 community groups, most with a 'can do' attitude.



In Rainbow, secondary and further education, dental services, and specialist medical care are rated as weaknesses contributing to reduced attractiveness of the town to potential new residents. Liveability relative strengths in Rainbow are considered to include primary education facilities, child-care, aged-care, sport and recreation facilities, and cultural assets (including Yurunga, proximity to both Lakes Albacutya and Hindmarsh, and the Wyperfeld National Park). The town's retail centre and community support networks are rated as adequate.



The Jeparit community also rates secondary education (requiring a bus commute to either Nhill or Rainbow), further education, and specialist medical care services as weaknesses, contributing to reduced attractiveness of the town to potential new residents. Primary education facilities and general health care are rated as Jeparit's major strengths in attracting residents while child-care, aged-care, sport and recreation facilities, and cultural assets (including a pioneer museum, other historic features, the Wimmera river, proximity to Lake Hindmarsh and a new library) are all viewed as relative strengths of Jeparit. The town's community groups and support networks (of which there are around 30) are rated as adequate.



While the retention of The Overland rail service (operated by 'Journey Beyond') is one of the economic development successes of Hindmarsh Shire in recent years, the towns of Nhill and Dimboola (and indeed Horsham) should be better serviced with passenger rail than twice per week.

A regional approach is appropriate in addressing human service delivery affecting liveability, with Hindmarsh Shire supporting the actions and promoting them locally.

Access to early childcare is being addressed by the State Government. Victoria's early childhood reform program, to give three-year olds access to at least five hours per week of subsidised kindergarten in 2022 and increasing to 15 hours per week over the next decade, is being rolled out across parts of regional Victoria, including Hindmarsh, where this is a major inhibitor to access to jobs (especially among females). Three-year old kindergarten has been established across the Shire. Both services are provided by Emerge Early Years Services.

Regional Victorian children experiencing disadvantage will be the first to receive a roll-out of the 'Pre-Prep' program of 30 hours each week of teacher-led play-based learning, which will begin in six selected areas from 2025, before expanding across the state. Hindmarsh Shire is one of the six selected areas. Pre-Prep programs will be delivered through sessional kindergartens and long day-care centres giving 4-year-old children greater opportunities to socialise, learn and prepare for formal education.

The Victorian Skills Authority's (VSA) Wimmera Southern Mallee's Skills Profile argues that employers in the region will be seeking to employ an additional 1,700 to 2,400 workers to meet demand over the next 3 years. On top of new worker demand, 1,210 workers are required to replace retirements. However, the VSA profile warns that employers across all industries currently face challenges filling all types and levels of roles. This shortage is projected to continue, with data and estimates suggesting that the region will have a shortfall of 700 to over 2,000 workers in the next 3 years.



In order to address workforce shortages, the region will need to address “systemic and longstanding barriers.... Adjustments to immigration processing such as reducing long visa processing times (of more than 4 months for 50% of applications) and securing a designated area migration agreement (DAMA) for the region, would support import of labour to the region and make a major contribution to meeting demand for new workers in the next 3 years*.”


Labour market demand and skills mismatches are not confined to any specific occupational grouping; they extend across process worker, farm labour, professional, technical, and service occupational areas. This situation demands a regional skills and workforce capability development strategy across the region. The Wimmera Southern Mallee VSA Skills Taskforce recommended that a long-term regional workforce plan should be developed.

* VSA WSM Regional Profile 2023

ACTIONS | STRATEGY 2.3

The actions for this economic development strategy are predominantly geared to “advocacy” action for wider regional efforts to reduce long-term barriers which have progressively worsened in impact across local government areas in the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

2.3.1	Support regional efforts (by neighbouring Councils, training providers, WSMD and the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership) in advocating for and undertaking long term regional development planning, to identify and address critical infrastructure and service gaps that create barriers to workforce attraction and retention.
2.3.2	Advocate to State and Commonwealth governments for a systematic and flexible approach to regional development that includes infrastructure, amenity and planning solutions, and that consolidates existing funds and programs (with new local, or ‘place-based’, solutions and funding developed and implemented by local stakeholders and communities).
2.3.3	Advocate to the State Government to return regular return rail passenger services to the Shire, with connections from Ararat to Nhill, including Dimboola (and Horsham and Stawell) en route.
2.3.4	In collaboration with other WSM organisations, document the regional case for changes to the Australian immigration policy, demonstrating to the Australian Government the barriers to international immigrants working in the region and the justification for establishing a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA), or its equivalent, for the region. Hindmarsh Shire’s track record in attraction and retention of a sizable Karen community should be used in both quantitative and qualitative evidence of the potential for a targeted immigration approach tailored to the Shire and the Wimmera Southern Mallee.
2.3.5	Lobby the State Government and private sector providers to not only increase the availability of childcare in the region, but to reduce the cost to parents and guardians with young families of returning to work or increasing their hours of participation.
2.3.6	Participate in working groups with technical and further education, tertiary education, adult education, and registered training organisations (RTOs) to help in ensuring training is relevant and responsive to industry needs.



Strategic Pillar 3

Building the Shire's Reputation for Lifestyle, Tourism and Events

Regional Tourism Background

The form and structure of Hindmarsh Shire's regional tourism organisation, Wimmera Mallee Tourism, as an organisation beyond 2023 is not yet determined. However, the Victorian Government has made it clear, following a major review of regional tourism, that the existing arrangement of Regional Tourism Boards will be phased out to be replaced by negotiated 'Visitor Economy Partnerships' (VEPs). It is understood that a VEP must either:

- Contain a Regional City with a resident population greater than 50,000 people and at least three local government areas, or
- Contain a minimum of six participating local government areas.

Wimmera Mallee Tourism secured additional resourcing for 2022-23 and funding for several projects, many which stemmed from the development and rollout of the Silo Art Trail. Several of these are works-in-progress which will be ready for action in the next five years.

If, for example, a combined Grampians/Wimmera Mallee region became a designated Visitor Economy Partnership it would be likely to entail:

- Eight local government areas: The Rural Cities of Ararat and Horsham and the Shires of Buloke, Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians, Southern Grampians, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack.
- This would make the tourism region larger than any of the existing Regional Tourism Boards in the State (in terms of the number of local government authority members).
- A need for the region to recognise a Visitor Economy Partnership structure of "One region: Two distinct tourism product mixes". There should be potential for two sub-committees within the structure, with one dedicated to the Wimmera Mallee.
- At least one staff member of the new VEP being physically based in the Wimmera Mallee.

The State Government is also currently developing a destination management plan for the whole of Victoria. Key pillars of this plan are understood to be nature-based tourism and First Nations led tourism.

STRATEGY 3.1

Continue the transition of Hindmarsh's town retail areas into revitalised and vibrant town centres.

Strategy Context

Plans are needed for the central activity areas of each town in the Shire so that they look attractive, offer products and services that are responsive to residents and visitor needs, and that add value to travel experiences.

Retail strips in towns, and more significantly in suburbs of major metropolitan areas, have shifted focus from product retailing to personal services (dominated by food service and health and wellbeing). This has affected previously dedicated retail businesses whereby they have expanded their approach and adopted a product plus service range. Competition created by online sales and social media marketing has been part of the reason for this change, enabling retailers to provide a shopping experience that can only be delivered by physical visits to the store.

Apart from visits to supermarkets, town central activities areas are now destinations for these specific service outlets focused on health, wellbeing and lifestyle appointments and/or cafés and restaurants, rather than being destinations for traditional retailing. In Hindmarsh Shire, this trend is evident albeit that the transition of town centres has been much slower than in metropolitan suburbs, regional centres and even in coastal and commuter towns. Indeed, loss of town centre businesses in Hindmarsh Shire has often been a more concerning trend than the transition away from retailing in some Hindmarsh towns.

Many small businesses in the main streets of Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) towns have reported that they feel challenged by time and staffing pressures*. Encouraging additional capital investment to help revitalise retail centres more by making them attractive focal points for both community and visitors is likely to stimulate flow-on investment by the businesses themselves and lead to improved product/service offers by all businesses in the town. This stimulating investment can be in streetscapes, artwork, public amenities, new infrastructure (like charging stations, seating, shade, and landscaping).

* Tischler, McDonald, Reeves (2022). *Ground Truthing Jobs & Population Data in the Wimmera Southern Mallee: Background Research Report*. Federation University.



The feel and atmosphere of the central activities area, or retail strip, in towns can also be dramatically altered by the establishment of a “hero” business which is a source of pride and a business of choice for local residents, and a destination for visitors. Hero businesses are leaders in revitalising town centres. They attract people to the town in their own right, and often trade for extended hours to suit customer expectations. They are businesses which create an atmosphere of activity and enthusiasm. The Imaginarium in Dimboola and Mr Le Vietnamese Street Food in Nhill are examples of Hindmarsh Shire hero businesses.

In Hindmarsh, most of the larger towns have at least one popular and contemporary café or bakery and these are helping to make the towns attractive meeting places for residents and stopover points for travellers. Extending this relatively new feature of the towns to other food service, retail, accommodation and other services, and to extend the operating hours of the centres is the next step.

Dimboola is leading the way toward town centre revitalisation. Dimboola is increasingly attracting people who view it as a satellite or commuter town for Horsham, and the main street has seen the establishment of a number of new food service, art and collectibles, and opportunity shop businesses in the past few years.

Acknowledgement that the wider region is a legitimate tourism destination (based around the region’s silo art trail, waterbodies, and cultural and natural environment attractions) is leading to local residents understanding that a new service mentality is key to capturing the benefits of tourism.



It is considered there are genuine business gaps and prospects in Hindmarsh towns to create businesses or to diversify existing businesses in sectors which will stimulate town revitalisation. Potential business types are:

- Specialised art and craft products and galleries
- Bakeries, cafés and restaurants
- Hotels, pubs, wine bars, craft breweries, distilleries
- Combined/diversified functions (eg newsagency/bookshop with café, butchery with takeaway ready to eat foods)
- Businesses which combine products with do-it-yourself options; eg retail products with training, workshops, events, and other experiences.

ACTIONS | STRATEGY 3.1

<p>3.1.1</p>	<p>Continue Council support for the biennial Steampunk Festival in Dimboola, and encourage the articulation of the ‘reimagining concept’ implicit at Steampunk into year-round retailing and attractions.</p>
<p>3.1.2</p>	<p>Prioritise projects which have town centre revitalisation objectives in Council’s annual community and business grants assessment criteria and evaluation process over the next five years.</p>
<p>3.1.3</p>	<p>Identify and promote the establishment of hero businesses in town centres by working with town communities to research and determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type, style and range of suitable hero businesses. • Market potential and outlook for viable operations. • Sites/properties which have design features that maximise the business’ image. • Potential operators and investors.

STRATEGY 3.2

Further develop the range and quality of visitor accommodation.

Strategy Context

Prior to the onset of the COVID pandemic, tourism to the Wimmera Mallee region, including Hindmarsh Shire, was gaining momentum. Stimulated by the region's Silo Art Trail, the region has become a genuine destination for domestic travellers on camping and caravanning holidays, international visitors looking to enjoy, and capture on camera, the region's 'big skies' and the ever-changing colours of Wimmera Mallee country, or the "different light" referred to in the latest Wimmera Mallee Tourism campaign.

Domestic tourism has largely returned to pre-COVID levels, but the economic contribution to the Hindmarsh Shire economy is less than optimal through a lack of accommodation to suit all market segments. Camping and caravanning options are relatively well supplied, and there is some self-contained cabin accommodation at a range of sites.

The Shire's network of caravan parks has been the recipient of considerable recent investment with on-site cabins, powered sites and park infrastructure. But further development is needed to expand the market segment range and choice in quality commercial accommodation (potentially including community enterprises). The Shire has several hotel and motel properties but remains under-serviced in meeting the changing demand for up-market accommodation. The time is right to build on the range and capacity of accommodation services within Hindmarsh Shire towns. Visitor accommodation is a key deficiency which needs to be addressed to improve visitor experiences and to maximise the regional economic benefits from visitation. Existing accommodation is a combination of private sector owned and operated, local government owned and operated, committee of management operated, and community enterprises.



New delivery models need to be identified to enable new partnerships between Council, community organisations and private investors. Comprehensive accommodation options, particularly higher quality self-contained accommodation (such as hostels and lodges, art or themed hotels, and apartments) will greatly enhance the region's tourism industry diversification.

Hindmarsh Shire has many private and community owned buildings that could be repurposed for accommodation, residences or visitor attractions (or all three). Repurposing existing significant buildings has become an increasingly popular trend in recent years. “The trend of rehabilitating old buildings into accommodation facilities (apartments and hotels) remains one of the brightest spots in the hospitality industry, offering a unique and rewarding experience for travellers seeking modern-day accommodations linked to a bygone era.... Reusing old buildings can avoid the high costs associated with new construction and land purchases.... Adaptive reuse hotels and apartments are enticing a growing legion of youthful urban residents and out-of-towners attracted to the elegant charm and local character these older buildings possess. It also allows hotel properties to effectively differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive environment for tourism dollars*”.

** Clayton Daspit AIA, LEED AP (July 2019) ‘Revitalising Old Buildings Sets Growing Trend for Hotel Industry’.*



ACTIONS | STRATEGY 3.2

<p>3.2.1</p>	<p>Implement the findings, relevant to Hindmarsh Shire, of Wimmera Mallee Tourism’s feasibility project on redeveloping more eclectic accommodation.</p>
<p>3.2.2</p>	<p>Develop new projects, seeking financial support for their development from the Victorian Government, in Hindmarsh towns where it is acknowledged that accommodation is too limited to appeal to the full extent of existing tourist segments. This may include feasibilities and development work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the network of self-contained cabins. • Develop accommodation options which are visitor experiences in their own right. Examples are participative farm stays, guided/escorted tours with mobile camping and glamping, and group accommodation facilities which cater for special interest groups with meeting facilities and outside tours and activities.

STRATEGY 3.3

Drive distinctive themes for Hindmarsh Shire's towns.

Strategy Context

Now that Hindmarsh Shire has a range of accessible and engaging tourism products it is time to build the capacity and the motivation within the local communities to respond. Communities and towns around the Shire and region have been underprepared for the growth in tourism by offering accommodation, food services, retail and other suitable choices for visitors. This under-preparedness is also limiting the attraction of new residents who judge a potential hometown on many of the same factors that influence visitors.

Distinctive themes, to differentiate Hindmarsh towns within the Shire and broader region would enable practical, non-competitive residential and visitor attraction activities to be undertaken. These practical activities would embrace developing and supporting local events, accelerating niche and small business development, and transitioning volunteer community ventures into sustainable operations. Themes which build on unique economic development (including tourism) features of each town should be developed, in consultation with each community.

Themes could build on the image that each community wants to project and sustain. The following examples are intended to simply set the scene, with community input and agreement needed before moving on to branding and promotional activities:

- **Nhill:** Agribusiness and service centre.
- **Dimboola:** Events, arts and collectibles centre.
- **Jeparit:** Pioneer heritage and river town.
- **Rainbow:** Colour town on the desert edge.

ACTIONS | STRATEGY 3.3

3.3.1	Provide a small level of seed funding to help approved and representative town community groups to set themes for their town which will help to position economic development (including tourism) focuses for the town.
3.3.2	Support the efforts of town community groups to instigate and run local events, accelerate niche and small business development, and to transition volunteer community ventures into sustainable operations.
3.3.3	Establish volunteer support mechanisms for each town or shared across towns (volunteer hubs, virtual support, more structured training and induction).



Work Plan



Strategic Pillar	Strategies	Actions	Timing	Council Role	Resourcing	Budget (additional to staff)
Proactive Council Economic Development Facilitation	1.1 Actively facilitate the Shire's significant new economic development opportunities, which build on local supply chains, to achieve investment readiness and support their implementation.	1.1.1 Meet with relevant community stakeholders and selected local businesses in each supply chain to shortlist those opportunities which are ready to be progressed to facilitation support.	2024-2028	Facilitation	ECDM, EDO	-
		1.1.2 Decide how the facilitation will be resourced (in-house staff time, outsourcing, applications for financial support from grants, or fee-for-service).	2024-2028	Management	DCCS, ECDM	-
		1.1.3 Develop a program of support activities.	2024	Management	ECDM, EDO	-
		1.1.4 Implement the facilitation activities for 1-2 agreed opportunities each year.	2024-2028	Delivery	ECDM, EDO	\$10,000 p.a.
	1.2 Collaborate with Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSMD) and Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) to progress opportunities and initiatives of regional importance.	1.2.1 Participate in committees/working groups on renewable energies, mining, and tourism with WSMD/WMT.	2024-2028	Representation	DCCS, ECDM, TEDO, REG	-
		1.2.2 Contribute local information and advocacy for WSMD business cases and information memoranda for new suitable renewable energies investments in the region.	2024-2028	Facilitation	EDO, REG	-
		1.2.3 Communicate with local Hindmarsh contractors and suppliers on individual and consortium work opportunities, as and when they arise, during both construction and operational phases of mineral sands mining and renewable energies projects in the region.	2024-2028	Facilitation	EDO	-
		1.2.4 Assist WMT to further build on the successful silo art trail and develop new regional recreational waterbody trails, incorporating the Wimmera River at Dimboola and Jeparit, Nhill Lake, Rainbow Lake and Lake Hindmarsh.	2024-2027	Facilitation	TEDO, REG	-
		1.2.5 Lead regional efforts (in partnership with Yarriambiack Shire Council, WMT and WSMD) to upgrade the displays and sustainability of the region's museums and historic attractions (incorporating Hindmarsh's Wimmera-Mallee Pioneer Museum, Nhill Aviation Museum, Pinball Museum and Dimboola' Print Museum as a minimum) by introducing shared curatorial expertise and offering interactive displays and exhibitions which change throughout the year (for example 2-4 themed exhibitions per year).	2024-2026	Management	ECDM, TEDO, REG	-

Strategic Pillar	Strategies	Actions	Timing	Council Role	Resourcing	Budget (additional to staff)
Proactive Council Economic Development Facilitation (continued)	1.3 Provide supportive services for new, expanding and sustainable existing businesses and community enterprises (including support for Aboriginal owned and controlled enterprises).	1.3.1 Design a new enterprise investment guide for Hindmarsh Shire identifying generic features of relevance (town characteristics, infrastructure, social and recreational assets, etc) and, for each of the selected business opportunities, why the opportunity exists and an outline of the competitive strengths of a Hindmarsh Shire location.	2024	Delivery	DCCS, ECDM, EDO	\$20,000
		1.3.2 Maintain a register of appropriate legal, financial and business advisory professionals to recommend to Hindmarsh Shire community groups and business proponents on options for structuring community enterprises.	2024-2028	Facilitation	ECDM, EDO, TEDO	-
		1.3.3 Support Barengi Gadjin Land Council to build and enhance First Nations visitor experiences in the region, and other Aboriginal owned and controlled enterprises (eg in nursery, landscaping, and food production).	2025-2028	Facilitation	DCCS, ECDM, EDO, TEDO, REG	-
	1.4 Scale up Council's cost-effective approach to resourcing economic development functions.	1.4.1 Provision of executive support to community committees (incorporating Asset Management Committees of Council, town or progress committees, sporting clubs) through attending meetings, correspondence, letters of support, Council briefing papers, etc.	2024-2028	Facilitation	ECDM, EDO, TEDO	-
		1.4.2 Representing Hindmarsh Shire on regional and State working parties and project working/steering groups.	2024-2028	Representation	DCCS, ECDM, EDO, TEDO	-
		1.4.3 Responding to requests for business, economic development and tourism information.	2024-2028	Facilitation	ECDM, EDO, TEDO	-
		1.4.4 Drafting policy, responses and recommended directions on economic development matters where decisions are needed, for consideration by Council.	2024-2028	Management	DCCS, ECDM, EDO, TEDO	-
		1.4.5 Preparing advocacy and lobbying documents and representing the Shire to government and potential new investors and businesses.	2024-2028	Advocacy	DCCS, ECDM, EDO, TEDO	-

Strategic Pillar	Strategies	Actions	Timing	Council Role	Resourcing	Budget (additional to staff)
Proactive Council Economic Development Facilitation (continued)	1.4 Scale up Council's cost-effective approach to resourcing economic development functions (continued).	1.4.6 Recruit an additional Economic Development Officer who will share some of the load in Actions 1.4.1 to 1.4.5 and will take prime responsibility for delivery of the Strategic Pillars 1 and 2 under direction of the Economic and Community Development Manager, while the Tourism and Economic Development Manager will have prime responsibility for Strategic Pillar 3.	2024	Delivery	DCCS, ECDM	-
Reducing Barriers to Investment and Innovation	2.1 Initiate land use, infrastructure and industrial development projects to reinforce the Shire's competitive strengths in secondary industries.	2.1.1 Review planning scheme provisions for industrial land in Nhill, Rainbow and Dimboola and conduct initial demand and feasibility assessments for industrial estates in these towns.	2024	Delivery	ECDM, EDO, SP	-
		2.1.2 Explore infrastructure and industrial development government support programs which could be accessed for detailed planning and provision of industrial estates.	2025	Management	ECDM, EDO	-
		2.1.3 Investigate microgrid or modular-grid renewable energy hubs to power select Hindmarsh Shire towns.	2025-2026	Facilitation	EDO	-
		2.1.4 Establish the viability of at least one trades-hub (with modular factory units and shared services) to attract small trades businesses and local branches of trades businesses and to increase the number of local apprentices.	2025	Facilitation	EDO	\$10,000
	2.2 Support land and affordable housing development initiatives for key workers and older residents.	2.2.1 Participate in WSMD's Wimmera Housing Innovation projects in the Shire. Initial towns and community groups involved in discussions with Wimmera Housing Innovations (WHIP) are Dimboola and Rainbow.	2024-2027	Representation	EDO, REG	-
		2.2.2 Directly making applications and/or supporting applications, to Victorian and Commonwealth government affordable housing program grants and loans or infrastructure to facilitate housing developments.	2024-2028	Management	EDO	-
		2.2.3 Provision of minor infrastructure, planning and building permits for housing developments on a case-by-case basis, and with consideration of concessional rates and charges.	2024-2028	Delivery	EDO, Operations Team	TBD

Strategic Pillar	Strategies	Actions	Timing	Council Role	Resourcing	Budget (additional to staff)
Reducing Barriers to Investment and Innovation (continued)	2.2 Support land and affordable housing development initiatives for key workers and older residents (continued).	2.2.4 Residential land subdivision support including infrastructure connections and statutory approvals, also on a case-by-case basis.	2024-2028	Delivery	EDO, Operations Team	TBD
		2.2.5 Develop a plan for provision of larger lot, rural residential estates in larger towns of the Shire.	2025	Delivery	EDO, SP	-
	2.3 Encourage enhanced liveability services including childcare, health and aged care, and skills and training.	2.3.1 Support regional efforts (by neighbouring Councils, training providers, WSMD and the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership) in advocating for and undertaking long term regional development planning.	2025	Management	ECDM, EDO, REG	-
		2.3.2 Advocate to State and Commonwealth governments for a systematic and flexible approach to regional development that includes infrastructure, amenity and planning solutions, and that consolidates existing funds and programs.	2024-2027	Representation	DCCS, ECDM	-
		2.3.3 Advocate to the State Government to return regular return rail passenger services to the Shire, with connections from Ararat to Nhill, including Dimboola (and Horsham and Stawell) en route.	2024-25	Advocacy	CEO, DCCS, EDO	-
		2.3.4 In collaboration with other WSM organisations, document the regional case for changes to the Australian immigration policy, demonstrating to the Australian Government the barriers to international immigrants working in the region and the justification for establishing a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA), or its equivalent, for the region.	2024	Advocacy	DCCS, ECDM, EDO	-
		2.3.5 Lobby the State Government and private sector providers to not only increase the availability of childcare in the region, but to reduce the cost to parents and guardians with young families of returning to work or increasing their hours of participation.	2024-2026	Advocacy	DCCS, ECDM, EDO	-
		2.3.6 Participate in working groups with technical and further education, tertiary education, adult education, and registered training organisations (RTOs) to help in ensuring training is relevant and responsive to industry needs.	2024-2028	Representation	DCCS, ECDM, TEDO, EDO	-

Strategic Pillar	Strategies	Actions	Timing	Council Role	Resourcing	Budget (additional to staff)
Building the Shire's Reputation for Lifestyle, Tourism and Events	3.1 Continue the transition of Hindmarsh's town retail areas into revitalised and vibrant town centres.	3.1.1 Continue Council support for the biennial Steampunk Festival in Dimboola and encourage the articulation of the 'reimagining concept' implicit at Steampunk into year-round retailing and attractions.	2023-2026	Facilitation	ECDM, TEDO	-
		3.1.2 Prioritise projects which have town centre revitalisation objectives in Council's annual community and business grants assessment criteria and evaluation process over the next five years.	2024	Management	ECDM, TEDO, EDO	-
		3.1.3 Identify and promote the establishment of hero businesses in town centres by working with town communities to research and determine, type, style and range of suitable hero businesses, market potential and outlook for viable operations, sites/properties which have design features that maximise the business' image, and potential operators and investors.	2024-2027	Facilitation	TEDO, EDO	-
	3.2: Further develop the range and quality of visitor accommodation.	3.2.1 Implement the findings, relevant to Hindmarsh Shire, of Wimmera Mallee Tourism's feasibility project on redeveloping more eclectic accommodation.	2025-2028	Management	TEDO, REG	TBD
		3.2.2 Develop new projects, seeking financial support for their development from the Victorian Government, in Hindmarsh towns where it is acknowledged that accommodation is too limited to appeal to the full extent of existing tourist segments. This may include feasibilities and development work to extend the network of self-contained cabins and develop accommodation options which are visitor experiences in their own right.	2024-2026	Facilitation	TEDO	\$20,000
	3.3: Drive distinctive themes for Hindmarsh Shire's towns.	3.3.1 Provide a small level of seed funding to help approved and representative town community groups to set themes for their town which will help to position economic development (including tourism) focuses for the town.	2024-2025	Facilitation	TEDO, EDO	\$10,000 p.a.
		3.3.2 Support the efforts of town community groups to instigate and run local events, accelerate niche and small business development, and to transition volunteer community ventures into sustainable operations.	2025-2028	Facilitation	TEDO, EDO	-

Strategic Pillar	Strategies	Actions	Timing	Council Role	Resourcing	Budget (additional to staff)
Building the Shire's Reputation for Lifestyle, Tourism and Events (continued)	3.3: Drive distinctive themes for Hindmarsh Shire's towns (continued).	3.3.3 Establish volunteer support mechanisms for each town or shared across towns (volunteer hubs, virtual support, more structured training and induction).	2024-2028	Management	ECDM, TEDO, EDO	\$20,000

Key to Council Roles

Role	Examples of Activities
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal and written lobbying Letters of support Provision of supporting information
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in reference groups, steering committees, regional/State/Commonwealth organisations
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convening meetings. Establishing, supporting and overseeing advisory committees and working groups. Providing referrals and introductions. Assisting in project development through terms of reference, briefs or calls for quotations.
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying for grants and loans and entering into associated agreements. Commissioning consultants, contractors and other suppliers. Managing project reference groups and steering committees. Project reporting.
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking capital works and/or operational projects using in-house Council resources.

Key to Resourcing

DCCS	Director Corporate and Community Services
ECDM	Economic and Community Development Manager
TEDO	Tourism and Economic Development Manager
EDO	Economic Development Officer (proposed position)
SP	Statutory Planner
REG	REG - Partner regional organisations (eg WSMD, WMT, WHIP, BGLC)
TBD	To be determined



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