



## Regional Context Analysis





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We proudly acknowledge the Taungurung and Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land we now call Murrindindi Shire. We pay our respects to First Nations leaders and elders, past present and emerging, who are the keepers of history, traditions, knowledge and culture of this land. We commit to working in collaboration with traditional owners of this land in a spirit of reconciliation and partnership.





# **CONTENTS**

<b>Managing Transition</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Smart Specialisation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>The Corridor – Alexandra, Taggerty, Buxton, Marysville</i>	
<b>3 Horizon Community Workshop</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Place</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The People</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Economy</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Key Propulsive Sectors</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Community Interviews – The Place</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Community Interviews – The People</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Community Interviews - The Economy</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Innovation and Opportunity</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Farm Forestry</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Sustainable Agriculture and Horticulture</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Advanced Manufacturing</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Health, Aged Care and Social Assistance</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Renewable Economy</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Tourism</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>36</b>



# Managing Transition

In 2019, the Victorian Government announced the Victorian Forestry Transition Plan. Under this Plan, all harvesting of native forests will cease in January 2024. Local Development Strategy grants have been made available to eleven communities across Victoria to provide support in future planning which include creating diverse industries and sustainable jobs. Using previous learnings with energy transition in the Latrobe Valley, these communities were identified as being able to benefit from the Smart Specialisation methodology to facilitate this transition.

Murrindindi Shire, in particular the towns of Alexandra, Marysville, Buxton and Taggerty were identified among those eleven communities resulting in the creation of Shaping Murrindindi's Future project. The project is funded through the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and is supported locally by Murrindindi Shire Council with research support from Latrobe Valley Authority and RMIT University.

The Victorian Forestry Transition Plan helps communities to undertake long-term planning and identify opportunities for innovation and economic diversification which will:

- Support the local economy to grow and adapt to changing industry trends;
- Create new job opportunities;
- Develop a district innovation ecosystem; and
- Provide long-term economic and social benefits to the area.

The Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project Manager, Allisha Milestone, will be working with the community over the next 2 years to identify areas of strengths, assets, challenges, and to further develop the region's unique opportunities for innovation and the ensuing social and economic development.



# Smart Specialisation

What is Smart Specialisation? Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) is a collaborative policy approach that promotes regional innovation, economic transformation, and sustainability by focusing on a region's existing strengths. It is underpinned by a belief that the greatest knowledge of a region and commitment to its prosperity, are possessed by the people and organisations that are based there (Foray et al 2012, p.35).

S3 uses a so-called quadruple helix model to ensure that all those necessary in the region for successful adoption of initiatives are actively involved. This model involves representation from community, industry/business, government, and academic/research.

**Add diagram and graphics**





# Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project

## Local Development Strategy

Shaping Murrindindi's Future project focuses on long-term goals of the community and encourages open discussions around community support for the future, and diversification of sustainable industries.

The project will be locally led and undertaken in partnership with key stakeholders. The project has collated information through community consultation and desktop analysis to identify evidence-based innovation opportunities well supported by stakeholders to be developed further. These aim to deliver economic and social benefits that contribute to a thriving and positive future for the local community.

The process is broken down into four distinct stages.

<b>Stage 1: Regional Context Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Desktop Analysis</li><li>• Community Interviews and analysis</li><li>• Innovation Opportunities identified and defined</li></ul>	<b>Stage 3: Innovation Working Groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Innovation Working Groups test the resulting EDP propositions</li><li>• Technical and specialist advice sought</li><li>• Preparation and implementation of project scope</li></ul>
<b>Stage 2: Entrepreneurial Discovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) workshops to assess the viability of the innovation opportunities identified</li><li>• Innovation Working Groups formed</li><li>• Project Leadership Group established</li></ul>	<b>Stage 4: Local Development Strategy (LDS) Complete</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ongoing governance arrangements established</li><li>• Potential sources of government and private investment identified</li></ul>



### 3 Horizon Community Workshops

Led by Dr Paul Ryan, the founding director of the Australian Resilience Centre, the 3 Horizon approach aims to increase the capacity of individuals, communities and organisations to meet future challenges. These workshops started the thinking and planning for future growth that aligns with the S3 process to identify strengths and competitive advantages in the region that can be leveraged. The following tables show the top responses using the H1, H2, and H3 model.

<p><b>Values to keep in the community – H1</b></p> <p>Top Responses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain and preserve the natural environment - fire management, forest and land management, access tracks and use of forest, farm forestry, natural beauty, natural resources.</li> <li>2. Sense of community, country and rural lifestyle, connected and caring community, conversations about the future and working together.</li> <li>3. Education, health services, and local sporting clubs and associations</li> <li>4. Outdoor recreation and activities</li> <li>5. Support for local businesses, and buying local</li> </ol>	<p><b>What is currently lacking H1</b></p> <p>Top responses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of education opportunities meaning students and families are leaving the area- decrease in skilled staff available, older population, disengagement, closure of local sporting clubs due to lack of numbers</li> <li>2. Lack of local support services – health, aged care, childcare, banking, transport</li> <li>3. Lack of housing, affordability of rentals and availability</li> <li>4. Volunteering – same people getting involved- want to encourage younger generations</li> <li>5. Lack of growth and direction for the community – some disconnect</li> </ol>
<p><b>Ideas for change H2</b></p> <p>Top responses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear future sustainable management for the forest and the natural environment</li> <li>2. Thoughtful planning towards housing, employment and education</li> <li>3. Agriculture and aquaculture- innovative change to improve productivity and support young and new generations to move into farming</li> <li>4. New business start-ups, small business incubator</li> <li>5. Innovation opportunities in ecotourism</li> </ol>	<p><b>Future state H3</b></p> <p>Top responses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sustainable economy and livelihoods- access to adequate services in education and health, increase in employment and long-term opportunities, thriving community encouraging others to move and live here</li> <li>2. Sustainable business and agriculture- shops in main street open for trade, farm-to-plate concepts, circular economy, diverse industries, buying local, business support and efficiency.</li> <li>3. Affordable housing</li> <li>4. Innovative education opportunities- students stay in the region and have opportunities after school</li> <li>5. Range of key attractions to the area, sustainable tourism without losing the rural community feel</li> </ol>



# The Place

## ***The Corridor – Alexandra, Taggerty, Buxton, Marysville***

Just a short drive to the northeast of Melbourne, the Shire of Murrindindi in Victoria's High Country is an area of stunning natural beauty - from the Goulburn River flats to the rugged peaks and cool temperate rainforests of the Great Dividing Range.

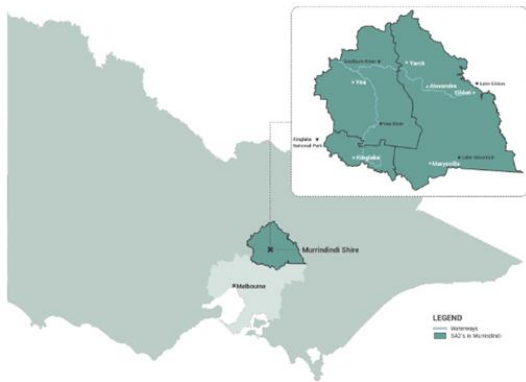
The communities within the project corridor include Alexandra, Taggerty, Marysville and Buxton. Each of these towns has its own identity and characteristics. This corridor was identified as having the most direct impact from the transition away from native timber harvesting, and as such are supported through the Victorian Forestry Transition Plan.

Alexandra is the largest of the four towns in the corridor. It has traditionally been a service town and is made up of a diverse range of industries and businesses that cater to local needs and tourists. The township provides most basic services, with a hospital, primary schools, high school, supermarket, petrol stations, hardware store, post office, library, doctors, several pubs, cafes and a variety of other retail options within the main shopping precinct. There are several zoned industrial areas within the town which foster a range of commercial businesses in manufacturing, processing, and service provision. The town plays host to several key events annually including the Beanie Festival, Christmas Tree Festival, Open Gardens, Community Christmas Carols, Rodeo, and Truck, Rod & Ute show. The latter being the biggest single community event in the whole Murrindindi Shire, attracting over 10,000 people during the King's Birthday weekend.

Taggerty and Buxton are smaller in population. There is less commercial infrastructure in these towns. Taggerty houses a general store (including post office), community hub, local hall, CFA, and tourist accommodation options including B&Bs and Big4 caravan park. Taggerty hosts the four seasons' markets during key long weekends across the year and provides an annual community Christmas celebration. Buxton also remains a small township with a roadhouse, petrol station (including post office), pub, primary school, local hall, CFA, Salmon and Trout Farm and Buxton Mountain Bike Park. The surrounding areas are predominately farming or forested land with some noteworthy agricultural businesses that leverage the unique environmental conditions to produce trout, caviar, beef, truffles, cherries, boutique wineries, tea and turf lawns. HVP Plantations manage an area of plantation timber in the Buxton area.

Marysville is a well-known destination town and relies heavily on the visitor economy and tourism. It is surrounded by a wealth of natural resources and offers a diverse range of outdoor activities. Lake Mountain is the closest alpine ski resort to Melbourne. Other key tourist attractions in the local area include Steavenson Falls, one of Victoria's highest waterfalls, Lady Talbot Drive, as scenic drive through rainforest, Keppel Falls lookout and the Beeches. Marysville has an abundance of tourist accommodation options from small B&Bs, cottages, a motel, hotel and conference centre. Other services and businesses include several cafes, bakery, take away shops, boutique shops, pub, ski hire and supermarket. There is a kindergarten and primary school. The MiRA centre functions as a tourist information centre and regional arts and community space. Marysville was significantly impacted by the 2009 Black Saturday fires. Around 90% of the town's buildings were destroyed and the official death toll from the disaster was 45. Since 2009 the recovery effort to rebuild the town has been ongoing.





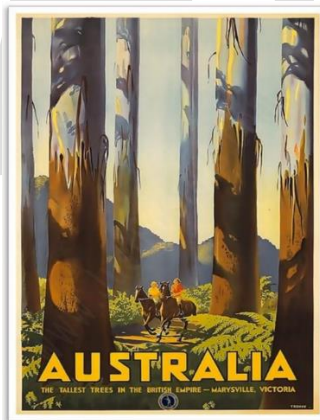
The region has a strong history and connection to forestry and logging, and European settlement in the 1830s had a profound impact on the natural landscape. With extensive clearing of vegetation to make way for timber milling, logging quickly became a major industry, followed by gold mining, trout farming, and dairy/agriculture. Many of the region's local towns were established during the 1850s and 1860s.

The Murrindindi Forest was one of the largest timber production areas in Victoria with the peak being reached by 1948-1949. By then, the forest had been meeting the bulk of Victoria's sawn timber requirements for more than half a century (Murrindindi Forest, Victoria's Forestry Heritage). Since then, with the exhaustion of saw logs and pulp logs, the area's milling industry declined gradually at first, but more rapidly by 1955, with the 1960s seeing the virtual cessation of supplies from the region (Timber Mountain- Houghton, N 1986).



Alexandra, 1867: Grant Street from U.I. Creek

Illustrated Australian News, December 27, 1867



Illustrated Australian News, December 27, 1867 Poster: *The Tallest Trees in the British Empire. Marysville, Victoria. By Percy Trompf (1936). Australian National Travel Association. National Library of Australia.*

### **“The story of the Leadbeater’s Possum is a remarkable one” Museums Victoria**

The Leadbeater Possum was first described in 1867 and was thought to be extinct by the early 1900s. However, it was later rediscovered in Marysville in 1961 and became Victoria's state faunal emblem in 1971. Its status is endangered, both under Commonwealth and State legislation. This possum is unique to Victoria, and lives mainly in mountain ash, or sub-alpine woodland in Victoria's Central Highlands (Museums Victoria). The biggest threat to the Leadbeater Possum is the lack of suitable forest habitat. Bushfires have been a constant threat to the Shire with significant fires in 1939, 2006, and 2009.



## The People

The Alexandra-Marysville corridor has a usual resident population of 4,298 (census 2021) with almost equal distribution of male and female. During 2016- 2021 the corridor saw an annualised population growth rate of 1.7%, however this changed in 2021- 2022 with only 0.48% growth.

### Population

Year	Alexandra	Taggerty	Buxton	Marysville
2001	2080	NA	204	592
2006	2141	612	236	519
2011	2656	330	257	223
2016	2695	328	492	394
2021	2801	405	591	501

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023)

Median age for this corridor is 53 years (CENSUS 2021), which is high compared to the states 38 years. Marysville has the highest median age at 59 years, while Alexandra has the lowest at 51 years.

### MEDIAN AGE

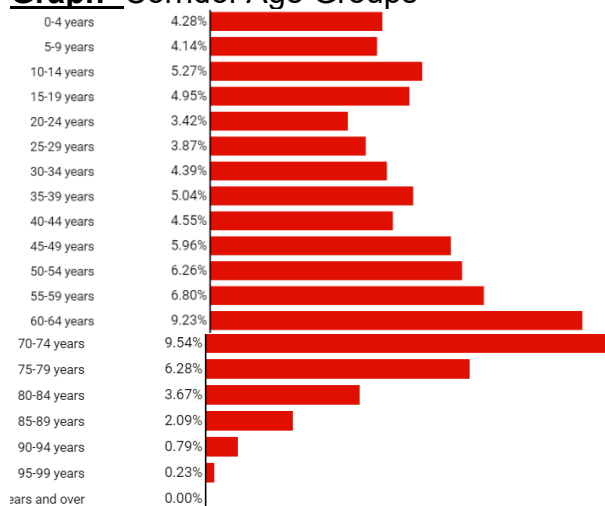
Alexandra	51
Taggerty	52
Buxton	53
Marysville	59
Murrindindi Shire	50
Victoria	38

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021)

The largest lifestyle age group is 'Retirement' (65-79 years) representing 25.2% of the overall population. The single largest age cohort is 70-74 years, with 424 people representing 9.19% of the population.



### **Graph- Corridor Age Groups**



**Graphics 6% of the corridor population requires assistance with core activities**  
**Graphics 80% of residents in the corridor own their own home either with or without a mortgage.**

Socio Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) have been created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) from social and economic Census information. Each index ranks geographic areas across Australia in terms of their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The minimum (disadvantaged) score possible is 143 the maximum (advantaged) score is 1,207.

The SEIFA score for Alexandra – Marysville corridor is 991. Individual towns differ slightly with Taggerty having a score of 1,028 and Alexandra having a lower score of 976, and a higher disadvantage score. A lower score indicates that an area is relatively disadvantaged compared to an area with a higher score.

**Graphics- Alexandra with the lowest score in the corridor (976) is ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 40 towns in the Hume region identified as being disadvantaged.**

**Graphics- 25% or 924 people in the corridor currently volunteer in the community**

Murrindindi Shire has a total of eight (8) local Primary Schools with four (4) of those situated in the corridor including Alexandra Primary, Saint Mary's, Buxton Primary, and Marysville Primary. Of these eight (8) schools, two (2) are private primary education providers, one in Alexandra and the other in Yea. There are two (2) public High Schools in the Shire located in Alexandra and Yea. There are no private secondary education providers in Murrindindi Shire.

There are no Universities or TAFE providers locally in Murrindindi with the closest provider GOTAFE located in Seymour. GOTAFE is the largest vocational education provider in regional Victoria with eleven (11) campuses.

Nearly half the population (41%) has completed Year 12, with a further 35% who have completed Year 10 or 11 (REMPAN). Of the overall highest level of educational attainment 21.8% listed Certificate III or IV, 10% listed an Advanced Diploma and Diploma level, and 20% listed Bachelor level degree (Census 2021). With the support from *Headstart* and



*CRLLEN*, students are able to transition into apprenticeships and gain certificate level qualifications while completing high school.

**Graphics- Top field for study 2021 Census is engineering and related technologies (14%)**

The total labour force participation rate within the corridor is 50.83%. Of those employed 17.5% are Community and personal service workers, followed by Managers (16%), Technical and trades (15.5%), Professionals (15%), and Labourers (12%). (REMPPLAN).

Labour Force Status	Alexandra - Marysville Corridor (2021) zones	
	Persons	%
Not in the labour force	1,666	43.31%
Employed, worked full-time	963	25.03%
Employed, worked part-time	746	19.39%
Employed, away from work	185	4.81%
Unemployed, looking for full-time work	35	0.91%
Unemployed, looking for part-time work	26	0.68%
Not stated	225	5.85%
Total	3,847	100.00%

**Graphics- The highest age group for employment at 20.5% is 45- 54 years.**

**Graphics**

The corridor provides a total of 2,158 jobs over a variety of industries, with the highest employer industries being;

1. Education and Training\* with 301 jobs (13.9%)
2. Health Care and Social Assistance with 282 jobs (13.1%)
3. Retail Trade with 251 jobs (11.6%)
4. Construction with 245 jobs (11.4%)

\*Pre school, Primary, Secondary and Special Education 7.6%, Art, Sports, Adult, Community and other Education 6.1%, Tech, Vocational and Tertiary Education 0.2%

Tourism creates 295 of these jobs covering all industries (REMPPLAN).

Of the above jobs 1,110 workers live and work in the corridor, 1,048 work within the corridor but live outside the area, and 506 workers live in the corridor but work outside the area.

**Top 3 Industry of Employment by township**

Town	1.	2.	3.
Alexandra	Health care and social assistance	Retail trade	Public Administration and Safety
Taggerty	Construction	Accommodation and Food services	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
Buxton	Accommodation and Food Services	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	Construction



Marysville	Accommodation and Food services	Education and Training	Public Administration and Safety
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(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023)

On average, the individual weekly wage is \$625, which is lower than the state average of \$803. This could be due to the lower paid local industries, lifecycle of the population and other factors such as higher percentage of part-time workers. More investigation may be needed to fully understand this.

#### Median Weekly Income

	Personal	Household
Alexandra – Marysville Corridor	\$625	\$1187
Murrindindi Shire	\$673	\$1287
Victoria	\$803	\$1759

(Census 2021)

The total wages and salaries paid to employees who work in the corridor totalled \$154.79 million. Public Administration and Safety had the highest wages paid at \$27.74 million (17.9%), followed by Health Care and Social Assistance \$22.98 million (14.8%), Education and Training \$19.1 million (12.3%), and Construction \$18.3 million (11.8%).



# ALEXANDRA

## DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA

# 7,943

HECTARES



### POPULATION

## 2,480

48.6% MALE 51.4% FEMALE



### MEDIAN AGE

## 52

ALEXANDRA

38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

### MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME

## \$616

ALEXANDRA

\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

### WORKFORCE

## 50.2%

ALEXANDRA

62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

### VOLUNTEERING

## 22.9%

ALEXANDRA

13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

### HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL

COMPLETED YEAR 12  
CERTIFICATE LEVEL  
DIPLOMA & BEYOND



ALEXANDRA

11%

19.2%

24.6%

VICTORIA

14.9%

14.3%

39%

### TOP 5 JOBS



## 19.1%

HEALTH CARE &  
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE



## 15.1%

RETAIL TRADE



## 12.8%

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
& SAFETY



## 11.9%

CONSTRUCTION



## 10.5%

EDUCATION &  
TRAINING

### TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



## 22.1%

CONSTRUCTION



## 12.8%

MANUFACTURING



## 12.5%

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
& SAFETY



## 9.2%

HEALTH CARE &  
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE



## 8.1%

RENTAL, HIRING &  
REAL ESTATE



# TAGGERTY

## DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA

# 12,257

HECTARES



POPULATION

## 405

50.5% MALE 49.5% FEMALE



MEDIAN AGE

## 52

TAGGERTY

38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME

## \$616

TAGGERTY

\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

WORKFORCE

## 52.7%

TAGGERTY

62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

VOLUNTEERING

## 27.5%

TAGGERTY

13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL

COMPLETED YEAR 12  
CERTIFICATE LEVEL  
DIPLOMA & BEYOND



TAGGERTY

9.9%  
22.2%  
31%

VICTORIA

14.9%  
14.3%  
39%

## TOP 5 JOBS



### 26.8%

CONSTRUCTION



### 26.8%

ACCOMMODATION &  
FOOD SERVICE



### 17.1%

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY  
& FISHING



### 7.3%

TRANSPORT, POSTAL  
& WAREHOUSING



### 7.3%

OTHER SERVICES

## TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



### 31%

CONSTRUCTION



### 17.7%

RENTAL, HIRING  
& REAL ESTATE



### 16%

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY  
& FISHING



### 14%

ACCOMMODATION  
& FOOD SERVICES



### 5%

TRANSPORT, POSTAL  
& WAREHOUSING



# BUXTON

## DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA

# 6,136

HECTARES



### POPULATION

## 591

50.9% MALE 49.1% FEMALE



### MEDIAN AGE

## 53

BUXTON

38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

### MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME

## \$698

BUXTON

\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

### WORKFORCE

## 58.3%

BUXTON

62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

### VOLUNTEERING

## 22%

BUXTON

13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

### HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL

COMPLETED YEAR 12  
CERTIFICATE LEVEL  
DIPLOMA & BEYOND



BUXTON

9.4%  
25.4%  
28.8%

VICTORIA

14.9%  
14.3%  
39%

### TOP 5 JOBS



## 22.6%

ACCOMMODATION &  
FOOD SERVICE



## 17%

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY  
& FISHING



## 13.2%

CONSTRUCTION



## 10.4%

RETAIL TRADE



## 8.5%

EDUCATION &  
TRAINING

### TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



## 21.9%

CONSTRUCTION



## 20.3%

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY  
& FISHING



## 20%

RENTAL, HIRING  
& REAL ESTATE



## 12.6%

ACCOMMODATION &  
FOOD SERVICES



## 5.5%

PROFESSIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL



# MARYSVILLE

## DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA

# 19,627

HECTARES



POPULATION

## 501

52.3% MALE 47.7% FEMALE



MEDIAN AGE

## 59

MARYSVILLE

38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME

## \$597

MARYSVILLE

\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

WORKFORCE

## 45.5%

MARYSVILLE

62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

VOLUNTEERING

## 30.2%

MARYSVILLE

13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL

COMPLETED YEAR 12  
CERTIFICATE LEVEL  
DIPLOMA & BEYOND



MARYSVILLE

10.8%  
22.5%  
34%

VICTORIA

14.9%  
14.3%  
39%

## TOP 5 JOBS



### 32.8%

ACCOMMODATION &  
FOOD SERVICE



### 14.7%

EDUCATION &  
TRAINING



### 13.9%

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
& SAFETY



### 6.7%

RETAIL TRADE



### 6.3%

ADMINISTRATIVE &  
SUPPORT SERVICES

## TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



### 22.6%

ACCOMMODATION &  
FOOD SERVICE



### 14.6%

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
& SAFETY



### 13.2%

RENTAL, HIRING  
& REAL ESTATE



### 11.7%

CONSTRUCTION



### 8%

EDUCATION &  
TRAINING



# The Economy

REMPLAN (demographics) data for 2022 shows that the gross revenue generated for the Alexandra- Marysville corridor was \$607.4 million. Construction dominated the area's economic output with 21% contributing over \$128 million. Of that total, \$61 million is in residential building construction, \$48 million in construction services, and \$15 million in heavy and civil engineering construction. It is the second largest industry behind Agriculture in regional exports, contributing 19.8% or \$45 million.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing has the second largest industry output with 11.7% contributing over \$71 million. Of that total \$46 million (7.6%) is in livestock, grains and other agriculture, \$11.8 million (2%) in forestry and logging, and \$11.3 million (1.9%) in aquaculture. Agriculture is the highest industry for regional exports, contributing 25% of the regions total or \$57.6 million.

Public Administration and Safety contribute 9.7% or \$58.7 million to the regions output, with a number of federal, state and local government agencies in Alexandra including Murrindindi Shire Council, VicForests, Parks Vic, and Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action. Manufacturing has the fourth highest industry output at 9.6% contributing \$58.3 million, and fifth highest regional export of \$24.4 million (10.6%).

## Graphics -The top 5 industries generating gross revenue are:

1. Construction \$128 million (21%)
2. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing \$71 million (11.7%)
3. Public Administration and Safety \$58 million (9.7%)
4. Manufacturing \$58 million (9.6%)
5. Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services (9.1%)

## Graphics The top 5 industries generating added value are:

1. Rental, Hiring and real estate services \$40.8 million (14%)
2. Construction \$36.3 million (12.7%)
3. Public Administration and Safety \$33.1 million (11.6%)
4. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing \$30.8 million (10.8%)
5. Health Care and Social Assistance \$26.4 million (9.2%)

## Graphics The top 5 industries generating regional exports are:

1. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing \$57.6 million (25.1%)
2. Construction \$45.5 million (19.8%)
3. Public Administration and Safety \$32.4 million (14.1%)
4. Accommodation and Food Services \$26.3 million (11.5%)
5. Manufacturing \$24.4 million (10.6%)

**Graphics** - Tourism contributes over \$94 million and 493 jobs to the Murrindindi economy attracting on average 1.2 million visitors each year (Tourism Research Australia)

**Graphics**- Day visitation to Murrindindi Shire in 2022 contributed 70% of total visitations

**Graphics**- Alexandra, Marysville, Lake Mountain and Eildon contribute 61% of total visitation.



**Graphics** - The industry sector most supporting visitor demand is Accommodation and Food Services with 91.4% of this industry's output supported by tourism.

**Graphics** -Marysville has the highest employment in Accommodation and Food Services (32.8%), and the highest industry output in Accommodation and Food Services (22.6%).

DRAFT



# Key Propulsive Industries

REMPPLAN has ranked the industry sectors and given a point to each amongst the top 5 (of 45 sectors) that contribute to economic activity in the corridor in relation to backward linkages, exports, employment, and value added.

## Definitions

**Value Added** - represents the marginal economic value that is added by each industry sector in a defined region. Value Added is calculated by subtracting local expenditure and expenditure on regional imports from the output generated by an industry sector. Value Added by industry sector is the major element in the calculation of Gross Regional Product.

**Employment** – the key social outcome of economy development; employment data represents the number of people employed by business/ organisations in each of the industry sectors in the corridor.

**Regional Exports** - represents the value of goods and services exported outside the corridor that have been generated by local businesses/ organisations. Another way of defining exports is an inflow of money into the region ie Motels have an inflow of money from people who live outside the regions boundaries thus they are earning export equivalent dollars.

**Backward Linkages** – details the industry sectors which spend the most on locally sourced intermediate goods or services per dollar of output. The industry sectors may not necessarily make the largest contributions to the corridor's economy at present, however, due to well-developed local supply chains, these sectors have a significant capacity to deliver broad-based economic benefits to the region.

## Graphics

**The highest performing industries in terms of economic activity are:**

- \* Construction (4)
- \* Health and social assistance (2)
- \* Public admin and safety (2)
- \* Accommodation and food services (2)
- \* Agriculture, fishing and forestry (2)



# Community Interviews- The Place

**110 + INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED TO PROVIDE A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE CORRIDOR FROM COMMUNITY'S KNOWLEDGE, VISION AND VALUES. INTERVIEWS WITH REPRESENTATION FROM COMMUNITY (39%), BUSINESS (41%), GOVERNMENT (15%) AND EDUCATION (5%).**

Without exception, people commented on the natural environment as being the key asset to the region. The Murrindindi Forest is bounded by the Acheron River in the east, the Yea River in the west and the Goulburn River in the north with the Great Dividing Range and the Black Range forming its backbone. The tall and dense mountain forest grow at higher elevations, where the temperature is cool and wet. These comprise mainly of regrowth of mountain ash with shining gum, mountain grey gum and messmate (The Murrindindi Forest, Mal McKinty 2021). A variety of other species grow in the foothills including manna gum, while drier locations support red/brown stringy barks and broadleaf peppermint.

Although the environment has been acknowledged as the greatest asset, the future management of the forest is a contentious topic. There is sympathy from all the community towards those whose livelihood has been negatively and dramatically impacted by the transition away from native timber harvesting. There is a strong divide of opinion regarding the sustainability of forestry, the future fire mitigation and management, and the impact this will have on the community.

There is a strong active community network and expertise in farm forestry with research and trial plot plantations established on several private properties to test growth rates for high quality timber products, create biodiversity on farming land, and increase revenue on return. While farm forestry is not currently a strong financial economic investment, it has potential to contribute positively to the region in the future and there is state government funding to assist with the initial investment.

There are currently seventeen private timber plantations already established in the Shire ranging in size from two hectares to fifty hectares. This number is increasing as property owners discover the benefits of planting small scale mixed hardwood timber forests to improve soil and pasture, grow a future investment and timber source, and diversify the landscape with multiple use biodiversity. One site in Taggerty has trialled over 130 different tree species over the last forty years and is now used as a demonstration and training site. The founders of the Master Tree Growers Association are well connected in agroforestry internationally, researching and comparing Australian agroforestry methods and networks with those in the United Kingdom and Germany with a particular interest in sourcing and processing peeler logs. The group recently hosted a field day on their property in Kanumbra with and nearly 80 participants attending.

The interview data reveals limitations with available small harvesting equipment that can work on such small plots and allow the selective removal of trees in small spaces or in harder to reach terrain. Tree growers have expressed frustration with how hard it is currently to make farm forestry a viable investment, with limitations on felling and processing equipment locally. Growers have expressed it is cheaper to import timber from New Zealand than it is to send their own logs to Benalla for processing. There is great support and potential for this type of machinery to be smaller scale, mobile and be able to process the timber on site. This would increase the likelihood of return on the investment.



***“We recognise forestry is a long-term sustainable business. We believe good management of the forest estate, including effective planning, implementation, monitoring and review of our activities, will enable us to safely and sustainably provide a range of forest products and values” HVP Plantations***

The natural environment is a strong drawcard for visitors to the area who can participate in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities and take in breath-taking views, uncrowded places and enjoy the rural serenity. Visitors can experience state and national parks, discover waterfalls, scenic lookouts, pristine waterways, historic bridges, fern gullies and magnificent mountain ash and eucalypt forest all within two hours from Melbourne.

Top responses for attractions in the area include Lake Eildon, Lake Mountain, Marysville, Rubicon, Snobs Creek, Black Spur, Cathedral Ranges, national horse trail, rail trail, and Buxton MTB. These cater for a range of outdoor recreation activities such as walking, cycling, boating, rafting, fishing, snow activities, camping and four-wheel driving.

Several biking enthusiasts believe Marysville is ripe for development as a mountain bike destination, particularly for families. DIRTART has recently been engaged by a community group affiliated with Marysville Cycle Club to conduct a Trail Master Plan (with state government funding), to advocate for National and International standard mountain bike tracks with an aim to further link Marysville to Buxton and Eildon. There are a range of Mountain Bike Parks and tracks located in Buxton, Lake Mountain, and Eildon.

***“The natural assets of the region support a range of popular visitor attractions which draw varying levels of visitation across the year, however there is further opportunity to better develop and promote the region’s nature based outdoor recreation options such as walking tracks and camping” Murrindindi Shire Tourism and Events Strategy***

***“From a local community perspective, trails are important infrastructure that support recreational and fitness activities, such as walking, cycling and running” Murrindindi Shire Tourism and Events Strategy***



# Community Interviews- The People

***Over 50% of interviewees identified the community spirit is a key asset to the area.***

We heard that it is the people who are at the heart of small regional towns making them tick and creating a sense of community. This fosters a strong sense of belonging within the communities. These are towns where people know each other, look out for each other and support each other. During the interviews, people commonly described their towns as being friendly, welcoming, caring, and supportive. People acknowledged the value of the great community spirit in the corridor with a can-do attitude and willingness to help out where possible. There is a wide variety of community groups, social groups, sporting groups and other interest groups along with a varied range of local community led events which adds to the positive community vibrancy within the corridor.

As with many small rural towns, there is a high reliance on volunteering, not just for social and sporting activities and events, but also for emergency services like CFA and SES and the delivery of valued community services like the local UGFM radio. Within the corridor, ABS data shows that our rate of volunteering is higher than the state average. Whilst there is currently a strong volunteer base, it was identified that there are also challenges with volunteer management, succession planning, recruitment and burnout.

***“The people are the biggest asset within our community” Local Resident***

Interviews have shown that families would more infrastructure in the corridor that supports wellbeing, social networking, and connectiveness, and more activities that better support children who are not wanting to participate in sport.

***“There needs to be more support for new volunteers to ensure these communities have capacity in the future” Local Resident***

Population growth has been relatively slow in Murrindindi compared to that of neighbouring municipalities Mitchell and Mansfield, and the devastation of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires is at the fore-front of everyone’s mind, which destroyed lives, properties, homes, and entire communities. It has been and will continue to be a long road to recovery and rebuilding. The threat of future bush fire has been raised as a major concern for people living in this region. The community are quite supportive of growth in tourism and encouraging professionals and families to move to the area, however, still wants to preserve the rural lifestyle and community feel.

Across the corridor there are mostly small businesses, family owned and operated with limited staff. As such, many may not have the capacity or desire to innovate from their current business model.

***“Businesses with 20 or more employees are the most likely to collaborate for innovation opportunities compared to those with zero to 4 employees who are the least likely” Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021.***

While there is no training facility in Murrindindi, education providers such as GOTAFE are working closely with local communities and businesses to offer a range of short courses and subsidised certificate courses to better support job seekers and businesses looking for skilled or qualified staff. They currently offer a mobile service to Alexandra twice yearly working with the Alexandra hub to run courses. GOTAFE and CRLLEN (Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network) are working collaboratively with the high schools to provide VET courses and assist students wanting to commence school-based



apprenticeships. CRLLEN helps local young people stay in school, continue their education, enrol in training, or find employment. Headstart is a program funded by the education department to help support students working with businesses in school-based apprenticeship programs with aims to make this process as easy as possible for employers.

***A top response by community was the lack of education opportunities and young people leaving the area and not returning.***

Families are quite supportive of the local schools and offerings and acknowledge how hard the educators work in this space. However, parents have shown concern for future opportunities as their child enters high school. Several families have chosen or will likely chose to send their child outside the region to attend a private high school or a school offering a larger range of elective subjects.

***“Young people are leaving the area - how can we keep them here with training opportunities and employment?” Alexandra Resident***

***“There is support and demand for a private high school in the region. It is estimated at least 50 high school students are leaving the area to attend Billanook in Lilydale.” Local Resident***

***“The local high schools could further support growth of life skills and training that encourage youth to stay and work in the area” Local Resident***

***“We have recognised this as a significant challenge and are currently exploring the development of a local Tertiary Education Hub to be based in the Shire. This will address and support critical skills training and development, remove the distance barriers, and improve accessibility to Education. A skills-based represented steering committee has been formed, and early discussions have already commenced with GOTAFE, CRLLEN and other education providers” Murrindindi Shire Council***

***“Headstart, CRLLEN, Council, GOTAFE, and schools need to work together better to be able to provide more learning opportunities for students” CEO, CRLLEN***

Yea High School will be partnering with GOTAFE and offering VET Certificate II level course in Agriculture commencing in 2024. There is the potential to offer an Early Childhood Certificate course pending the availability of placement in centres and this will be explored further.

Businesses from all over the Shire have expressed the extensive challenges in finding and retaining suitable, or suitably skilled staff. This pressure is being felt throughout all industries across the Shire in hospitality, trades and manufacturing, health and aged care, transport services, farming, and retail services. Parents wanting to return to the workforce are faced with limited childcare services locally, and although they are ready and willing to return to the workforce, they have been unable to.

In Marysville businesses struggle to fill junior roles in hospitality and are paying higher wages for jobs that could be filled with a trainee or junior. In Alexandra, businesses are now seeking to fill positions with international employees as they have been unsuccessful finding or attracting staff locally. This comes with a number of other challenges including financial costs and finding suitable housing for these families now looking to relocate to Australia.

***“We have converted one of our units into accommodation for international workers due to shortage of housing” Local Business***



***“We simply cannot get the workforce needed by the business” Local Business***

***“The local businesses need support and assistance in finding suitably trained staff both locally and overseas” Local Business***

***Over 70% of interviewees stated there is a housing crisis in the region, and this is having a crippling impact on businesses and the workforce.***

Employers in the corridor have stated the housing shortage is the number one reason they have been unable to fill staffing positions. Insufficient housing options and suitability in all areas of the Shire could be limiting growth potential and opportunities to encourage new residents, families, and skilled professional employees.

***“Affordable housing for both businesses and new residents is a big issue. The cost of properties is high, and there are limited rentals available” Local Resident***

***“We are facing a critical shortage of housing to accommodate the existing and growing demand in the Shire. This is having a significant impact on being able to attract key workers to the region to support many sectors of the community including health, aged care, education, agriculture, hospitality and manufacturing. There are many areas of land that could be developed and currently land-banked by individuals or organisations, whilst many other houses are being used as second homes or for holiday rentals, further exacerbating the supply concern. The Council is currently undertaking planning to unlock the potential of some areas with tangible and deliverable projects. Support to unlock and address critical shortage of housing will require support from the State” Murrindindi Shire Council***

While only 2.5% of the population stated they did not have a motor vehicle (Census), transport and accessibility have been raised as a big challenge for locals, especially for those requiring access to medical services, or youth needing to travel to TAFE or University that may not own a vehicle or have the capacity to drive. There is a daily bus service from Alexandra, however, it does not service Eildon or Marysville and therefore makes it difficult for those that are unable to drive to Alexandra.

***“A daily bus service from Alexandra does not provide adequate public transport for the region” Local Resident***

***“A community owned and managed bus service that could operate on demand would be so beneficial” Local Resident***

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*Three key enablers that have been clearly identified throughout this process include critical worker housing, childcare, and available/suitable industrial land. Although these have not been identified as opportunities it will be important to find innovating ways of addressing these shortages to ensure the success of future economic development.*

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## Community Interviews – The Economy

Murrindindi Shire and the corridor share a strong history of agriculture and farming, utilising the region's expertise and knowledge in farming, consistent water supply, rainfall, natural landscape, fertile soils, and weather patterns.

The bulk of agriculture output is predominately beef and sheep, with other large enterprises in trout, turf lawns and cherry farming. Businesses are looking at ways to shift their focus to tourism and diversify their income stream by providing an experience rather than just a product. Some beef and sheep producers are selling 100% of their meat locally despite having high transport costs incurred due to no local processing facilities. The closest facility is in Shepparton, and meat is transported back to the region to be sold locally. This is increasing the price of the product to the consumer and could impact the future market and demand. Other large farming enterprises that have national and international markets are selling high quality and quantities of beef, turf, and cherries.

***“100% of our grown beef and lamb is sold locally”- Local Farmer***

A strong and expanding agriculture and horticulture sector also brings its challenges with energy, sewerage, and waste and businesses are looking for innovative sustainable circular economy models to assist. Small scale renewable energy is being utilised successfully by businesses in the Shire, with many taking up financial incentives offered by government agencies such as Sustainability Victoria.

Community and businesses are proactively exploring programs to reduce and repurpose food waste throughout the Shire. Year 11 and 12 students at Alexandra high school have been actively involved in a joint program with Grant Street Grocer to repurpose food waste using a food dehydrator funded by Sustainability Victoria grants. Food waste going into the machine is heated and converted to a dry powder less than 25% of the original volume. The students have been collecting the food waste from businesses and using the dehydrator twice a week. While this is a volunteer run program, there is commitment to expand on this concept and utilise the dehydrator more frequently. In the first year, this program saved 6 tonne of food waste.

***“The closest processing for organic waste is Dandenong. There is opportunity to have a facility in the Shire that can deal with its own FOGO (organic waste) rather than transport out of the shire at great cost” Local Resident***

***“We could encourage more sustainability programs within the local schools if we had the support to write the learnings into curriculum” Landcare***

It is estimated there will be more than 1,000 tonne of waste produced in the Shire each year from the cherry season alone. Cherry waste is comprised of any fruit that does not meet the size and specifications required by the market and can make up thirty percent of the total production. Currently, cherry waste is made available to farmers and fed in bulk to cattle and sheep. Short shelf life means the product needs to be snap frozen as early as possible if repurposing. One innovative business in Taggerty, in collaboration with a Melbourne University scientist, is researching and testing a range of new products using waste cherries.

***“The world is changing, and people are wanting the convenience of frozen and longer life fruits. The Australian market is highly competitive and could be with frozen fruit too” Local Producer***



Alexandra is a hub for newly advanced manufacturing businesses. There are a few examples of businesses that were created from scratch in a home garage (for example Hunted Engineering and Dindi Naturals) and in less than ten years have turned that concept into a booming unique and professional business employing over twenty staff. There are manufacturing businesses ready for expansion of services and staff, including Snow Composites, Hunted Engineering, Helico, and Dindi Naturals. These types of businesses are recognised in the community as being innovative, daring and creative. Their brand and service is highly sought after in both national and international markets.

The boat building industry has also expanded in the Shire, with 6 businesses now working out of Eildon. The houseboat industry at Lake Eildon plays a vital role in supporting local jobs and regional economies and has the potential to provide substantial new jobs. According to industry estimates, 20 houseboats per year will be built in the next 5 years. Many of these will be bigger houseboats and there is potential for new jobs in the industry over the next 20 years.

With expansion on the horizon, these businesses are looking for innovative ways to improve their day-to-day operation and ensure they are supporting local and employing local. Essential trades in sheet fabrication, powder coating, and laser cutting are not available in the Shire, and businesses have the additional costs of importing these from outside the region on a daily basis, impacting profitability. Finding qualified and skilled staff can be difficult, and often these businesses are remodelling their design to cater for staff without these skills. Often, training is conducted on site by the employers and often at a high cost. A key concern for these businesses ready to expand is finding suitable and available industrial land in the corridor. There is concern they will be forced to move to other areas that can support their growth if options are not readily available locally.

***“Murrindindi Shire Council through its network of towns has many bespoke industrial and manufacturing businesses. Some towns have a supply of zoned industrial land which is mostly serviced (water and sewer), whilst other towns have limited capacity to expand and grow manufacturing in appropriately zoned land. There is significant opportunity to grow the value adding of agricultural products, further grow specialised manufacturing including premium house boats and the broader commercial and industrial activities in the region. Support to unlock this potential is being sought from the state”. Murrindindi Shire Council***

Having such a large and growing ‘Retirement’ age cohort will put additional pressure on current Health and Aged Care Services which will need to be able to expand and grow to suit the demand. As with most regional areas, expansion of these services comes with its challenges too. The COVID pandemic impacted these services dramatically especially in aged care where there needed to be more qualified nurses on site. Given the already limited availability of skilled and qualified nurses in the area, this meant that these specialist aged care providers have had to reduce their services and capacity further.

***“In 5 to 10 years the corridor will not have sufficient staff to cater for this age group”***  
*Local Health Care Provider*

The hospitals have faced similar challenges, and where there was once a broad range of surgeries offered, it has now been reduced from a risk management perspective impacting and removing majority of surgical procedures in the region. While endoscopy and eye surgery can be conducted locally, all other speciality surgeries have been removed. Employers are concerned staff will continue to leave because of limited services and no opportunities to further training and development and are unsure how to attract new professionals to the area.



***Over 50% of community interviews recognised the need for better and more efficient health and aged care and mental health services.***

As a way of combating the staff shortages and to help rebuild regional capacity, Menzies Support Services, Kellock Lodge, both Alexandra and Yea Hospital, and GOTAFE are working together to receive government funding to research new innovative working models that will better connect these services and help diversify, expand the workforce and create new pathways to support their staffing needs. These providers are willing and ready to diversify, grow their business models, and provide better and more effective services to the community. Menzies have available industrial land and infrastructure that could be better utilised to support such expansion and growth.

***“We need to find ways to attract qualified professional health care workers to regional areas”*** Local Health Care Provider

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# Innovation Opportunities

The data from the desktop analysis, in conjunction with community interview data, identified the following innovation opportunities which have been recommended for further investigation. The innovation opportunities will be reviewed in Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) workshops where the idea will be examined, and initial viability assessed based on evidence. The ideas recommended for further investigation will progress to Innovation Working Groups.

<b>Farm Forestry</b>	Farm forestry presents a promising opportunity to revitalize the local forestry sector while providing economic, social, and environmental benefits. Small and medium-scale plantations on farming land can diversify income sources for farmers by producing timber, firewood, eucalyptus oils, and native foods, while also supporting the manufacturing of harvesting equipment.
<b>Sustainable Agriculture and Horticulture</b>	Sustainable agriculture and horticulture have significant potential for growth and innovation. Initiatives focusing on farm-to-plate and buy-local, local product utilisation, and environmental sustainability are gaining traction.
<b>Advanced Manufacturing</b>	There is a significant opportunity to foster specialised manufacturing growth within existing networks. The core proposition is to leverage existing expertise in applied engineering and manufacturing by clustering specialized industries, combining skills and trades to serve both existing and potential businesses. This approach will lead to the emergence of new industries.
<b>Health, Aged Care and Social Assistance</b>	The health, aged care, and social assistance sector faces challenges due to an aging population, limited access to specialist services, and a shortage of qualified nurses. Local service providers are collaborating to find innovative new working models to meet and exceed these challenges.
<b>Renewable Economy</b>	Buxton is identified as a prime location for pumped hydro power due to its favourable geographical features, including hills, valleys, and proximity to the Goulburn River. The proposition is to leverage existing hydro power stations and explore opportunities in waste-to-energy conversion to stimulate economic growth and job creation in the region, fostering a strong circular economy.
<b>Tourism</b>	Tourism is driven by our natural assets, attracting varying levels of visitors throughout the year. The proposition is to further capitalise on prime locations, particularly Marysville, by extending visitor stays and increasing opportunities for investment in the local economy.



## **Farm Forestry**

***"We believe that in marginal hill county - the type of agricultural land prevailing in the Murrindindi Shire area - farm forestry could play an important role in assisting a successful transition for the local forestry sector"*** – Master Tree Growers

### **Basic Proposition**

There is a unique opportunity to bring together small and medium scale plantations on farming land with multiple economic, social and environmental benefits. Economic benefits could diversify income streams for farmers to multiple sources including high quality valued timber products, firewood, eucalyptus oils, other food products and native foods like wattle seeds. This could also support manufacturing of small harvest equipment. Social benefits could improve the range and quality of jobs available to community and support the existing knowledge and expertise in this field. Environment benefits could improve the soil structure, stability and biodiversity.

### **Key Assets**

The district has extensive local forestry expertise and farmers interested in mixed hardwood plantations for the multiple benefits. A key asset is the abundance of available farming land and a willingness within the community to diversify their farming enterprises to include trees, livestock, food production, soil nutrition and improve biodiversity values. Education and research is already happening in the corridor and other local areas such as Benalla, trialling various mixed hardwood plantations assessing growth rates, viability, and improvements to the timber quality. The current climate, rainfall, soil type and location all contribute to the key assets.

### **Strategic Competitive Advantages**

There is a strong network of researchers and scientists in this field, with farm forestry groups focused on addressing the current hardwood timber shortages while planning for future sustainability. Work is already being done by Murrindindi Climate Network who have hosted multiple educative farm forestry field days with good attendance. Access to small scale harvesting equipment and machinery across the state to selectively fell trees on small plantations is limited and there is potential to manufacture and sell / hire this equipment locally. There is a strong future competitive market for high quality hardwood timber and firewood and a large hardwood manufacturing business (Ryan McNulty) within 120km of Alexandra.

### **Key Challenges**

A critical key challenge will be the increased fire risk to community and challenges associated with clearing and felling of plantations that have become habitat areas. Future climate change projections estimate that extreme rainfall events will be more intense and more variable and will decrease in the average yearly rainfall. Maximum and minimum daily temperatures will continue to increase over this century (Goulburn Climate Projections 2019). Loss of prime farming land used for sheep and cattle will need to be considered. The high cost of initial investment and ongoing maintenance paired with slow plantation growth rates and return on investment are further challenges to be considered.

### **Workshop Design Principles**

The EDP workshop would start with an overview of the current research and existing trial plantation sites to determine what will work best and align with community values. It will also likely involve analysis of other towns in the Murray Goulburn region.



# Sustainable Agriculture and Horticulture

*"I would like to see a centre for agriculture innovation linking education to leverage our large agriculture base and increase agriculture tourism by creating experiences around local food"* Alexandra Resident

## **Basic Proposition**

There are several examples of high value add or specialist agricultural opportunities focusing on farm to plate and *buy-local* initiatives. These initiatives also support environmental sustainability and the benefits of reutilising agricultural biproducts.

## **Key Assets**

Economic data as well as stakeholder input demonstrates the significance of agriculture in the corridor with many farmers identifying new products and exploring potential markets. Education providers have recognised the importance of agriculture in the region and now offer VET certified courses through Yea High School. The demand by the local community to purchase local produce supports the Shire's large agriculture industry in fresh meats, fruit and other produce. Produce grown in the area is highly sought after in both national and international markets. A key asset to the corridor is the abundance of farming land available, linked with rainfall patterns, climate and soil types.

## **Strategic Competitive Advantages**

The growing conditions, soils, agriculture, expertise, provenance and access to local, regional and international markets all point to competitive advantage in high value add products. There is high demand by the community to buy and support local farmers and growers. Innovative businesses already involved in research, product testing and sustainability are ready to expand.

## **Key Challenges**

Climate change and the impacts this will have on water supply and potential future water usage will be a key challenge. The costs of logistics and transport will also need consideration. What are the opportunities around circular economy and utilisation of waste products. What will the final product look like and is there a market for it. Businesses will need to consider energy efficiency and how best to manage the future expansion and electricity needs. Finding and retaining skilled staff will be an ongoing and important issue.

## **Workshop design Principals**

The EDP workshop will start with an overview of current high value products and the possibilities for enhancing production to scale. The workshop sessions will develop scenarios for the future development of the sector, the kinds of resources that would enhance the likelihood of successful innovation, and the barriers that would need to be addressed.



# Advanced Manufacturing

***"Murrindindi Shire Council through its network of towns has many bespoke industrial and manufacturing businesses and there is significant opportunity to grow and expand specialised manufacturing" Murrindindi Shire Council***

## **Basic Proposition**

There is a unique opportunity to build on existing expertise in applied engineering and manufacturing. Clustering of specialised industries by combining skills and trades to support existing and new businesses. This could lead to the development of new industries or new products for example manufacturing small harvesting equipment, powder coating or laser cutting factories.

## **Key Assets**

Alexandra is continuing to grow as a service town. Several industrial businesses are already producing at capacity and wanting to expand to national and international markets. Industry expertise in manufacturing and production, and key skilled trade qualified workers are a key asset to this opportunity.

## **Strategic Competitive Advantages**

Several innovative businesses in the Shire are already exporting to national and international markets and have further capacity to diversify and expand. Proximity to Melbourne contributes to this growth. There are opportunities and sufficient scale to form collaborative networks combining skills and expertise to design new production models.

## **Key Challenges**

Land use and limited ready/serviced industrial land will be a key challenge to this opportunity and further discussions with government agencies and Murrindindi Shire Council is essential.

Finding and retaining skilled or qualified staff is a challenge for all industries and employers across the Shire. This could be better supported with local access to education and training, and Council are currently exploring the development of a local Tertiary Education hub.

Available, affordable and suitable housing has been raised multiple times by interviewees as a major barrier to encouraging professionals to live and work in the region.

## **Workshop Design Principles**

The EDP workshop will start by bringing together expertise to commence building strong and supportive industry networks. Through discussions, we may be able to identify potential growth areas and new opportunities that will bring economic diversification and add value to the regions manufacturing businesses.



# Health, Aged Care and Social Assistance

"We need to find ways to attract qualified professional health care workers to regional areas". Local Health Care Worker

## ***Basic Proposition***

With an aging population, the importance of the workforce, limited access locally to specialist services, and an undersupply of aged care facilities, there is potential for innovative facilities and service model development which may include improved access to training.

## ***Key Assets***

Local aged and health care service providers including Kellocks Lodge, Menzies Support Services, and both Alexandra and Yea Hospital are working together to find new innovative ways to provide this key and important service to the community.

## ***Strategic Competitive Advantages***

The existing aged care providers are thinking creatively about how to address the needs of the local aging population and staff shortages, while enhancing their options as that population continues to grow. There are opportunities and sufficient scale to form partnerships with expertise from outside the corridor to help design new service models and test new processes.

## ***Key Challenges***

From community conversations, several aged care providers are struggling to find qualified registered nurses. Which has forced organisations like Kellock Lodge to look outside Australia to fulfill their employment requirements. Sponsoring an employee (and often associated family members), also comes at significant financial and administrative costs to the organisation.

The data clearly shows that the area is an aging population, and this demographic is projected to increase over time. As such the demand for quality service provision will also increase. In 5 to 10 years the corridor will not have sufficient staff to cater for this age group. Available, affordable and suitable housing has been raised multiple times by interviewees as a major barrier to encouraging professionals to live and work in the region.

## ***Workshop Design Principles***

An EDP workshop would start with an overview of current service provision, and of the possibilities for new service models as the local aged population expands. The workshop sessions would develop scenarios for future development of services, the kinds of resources that would enhance the likelihood of successful innovation, and the barriers which would need to be addressed.



# Renewable Economy

*“Buxton enjoys a position as a top potential site for pumped hydro with the hills, the valleys, and the Goulburn River providing geographical opportunity” Melbourne University*

## **Basic Proposition**

Murrindindi Shire has two hydro power stations already established at the Eildon Weir (two turbines) and in Rubicon (AGL). There is interest in the community to explore converting waste into an energy or power supply and supporting further expansion and growth of the region. The corridor could position itself as a focus to benefit from new technology, creation of jobs, and a strong circular economy.

## **Key Assets**

Murrindindi Shire falls within a priority zone for hydro power development under the Victorian Governments new entity called Vic Grid. This project is planning improvements to the electricity distribution network with six renewable energy zones developed. Melbourne University have identified potential sites for pumped hydro, with Buxton rated highest in the State because of the topography and proximity to the three hydro distribution lines. Small scale renewable energy is being utilised successfully by businesses through financial incentives offered by government agencies such as Sustainability Victoria.

## **Strategic Competitive Advantages**

Murrindindi Shire enjoys a position as a top potential site for pumped hydro with the hills, the valleys, and the Goulburn River providing geographical opportunity for establishment of a local renewable energy facility. Researchers have identified Buxton as being the top site in the State with ongoing testing and trialling of various prototype pumped hydro equipment. The main distribution feed from the Snowy Mountains Scheme also runs through MSC to Melbourne (Merton – Kinglake).

## **Key Challenges**

The area experiences inclement weather with high fire and storm damage risks which currently impact on power connectivity. A large concern for the corridor with the creation of new jobs is the suitability of available housing and finding skilled and suitable staff.

## **Workshop Design Principles**

The EDP workshop would need to investigate the capability of Murrindindi in numerous areas to attract workers, supply manufacturing, and support in the form of housing and services. The workshop would also need to investigate the different sources of renewable energy that may be appropriate to the area, funding opportunities that exist for their development, in addition to models of financial viability for the community.



# Tourism

*“The natural assets of the region support a range of popular visitor attractions which draw varying levels of visitation across the year”. Murrindindi Shire Council*

## **Basic Proposition**

This prime location, in particular Marysville is already attracting visitors. Currently though, there are limited opportunities for visitor investment with limited leveraging off the existing assets. There is potential to encourage visitors to stay longer in the region and improve the opportunities for visitor investment in the local economy.

## **Key Assets**

The surrounding natural environment is regularly mentioned as a prime asset for the corridor. Marysville is a well-established tourism destination with links to Lake Mountain, Alexandra, and Lake Eildon. It is surrounded by a wealth of natural resources and offers a diverse range of outdoor activities.

## **Strategic Competitive Advantages**

The location and proximity to Melbourne is a key advantage, as well as already being an established tourist destination with high visitation. Work has already been done to assist the towns recovery since the 2009 Black Saturday fires, in particular the Marysville and Triangle Economic Development Strategy. Lake Mountain is the closest alpine ski resort to Melbourne. Other key tourist attractions in the local area include Steavenson Falls, one of Victoria's highest waterfalls, Lady Talbot Drive, as a scenic drive through rainforest, Keppel Falls lookout and the Beeches. Marysville has an abundance of tourist accommodation options from small B&B's, cottages, a motel, hotel and conference centre. Other services and businesses include several cafes, bakery, take away shops, boutique shops, pub, ski hire and supermarket.

## **Key Challenges**

Challenges to tourism in the corridor include seasonal and extreme weather impacts on tourism, the high threat of fire in the summer, land access and lack of infrastructure to support longer stays in the region. Availability of housing and accommodation for both visitors and staff. Finding suitable staff is also a big concern for majority of local businesses.

## **Workshop Design Principles**

The EDP would start by identifying which unique tourism experiences, with no nearby competition, would best suit the area and provide long-term investment by visitors. Identifying suitable sites and land management arrangements would then need to be considered. Training opportunities to assist businesses in finding and retaining staff would also need to be explored for the community.



# References

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Murrindindi Shire Housing and Settlement Strategy 2022- Navy Blue Printing 2022

Murrindindi Shire Council

Central Ranges LLEN

Marysville Triangle Economic Strategy 2020

HVP plantations

Taunurung Land and Waters Council

Murrindindi Shire Tourism and Economic Strategy 2019-2023

Tourism Research Australia



# Appendix

Murrindindi Shire Council Plan 2021-2025

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

Murrindindi Shire Council Tourism and Events Strategy 2019-2025

Murrindindi Shire Council Waste and Recovery Strategy 2030

Murrindindi Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016

COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan - 2020

COVID-19 Business Recovery Plan – 2020

Boston Consulting Group – Marysville and Triangle Economic Strategy – 2020

Taggerty Urban Design Framework

Buxton Urban Design Framework

Buxton Progress Association - Buxton Community Vision 2030

Marysville Community Plan 2020-2022

Goulburn Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) 2022

Lower Hume Sub Regional Plan 2010- 2020

Murray Primary Health Network Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Regional Economic Development Strategy- Goulburn region

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Goulburn Regional Skills Demand Profile 2023

Murrindindi Cycle Club – Trail Master Plan 2022

Victorian Fisheries Authority Final Report- 2020

Experimental Ecosystem Accounts for Central Highlands Victoria – Summary Report  
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Lake Eildon Recreational Boating Facilities Improvement Plan

Goulburn Murray Water Strategic Plan- 2017

Lake Eildon Masterplan- 2020



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