



# Workforce Development and Training Needs

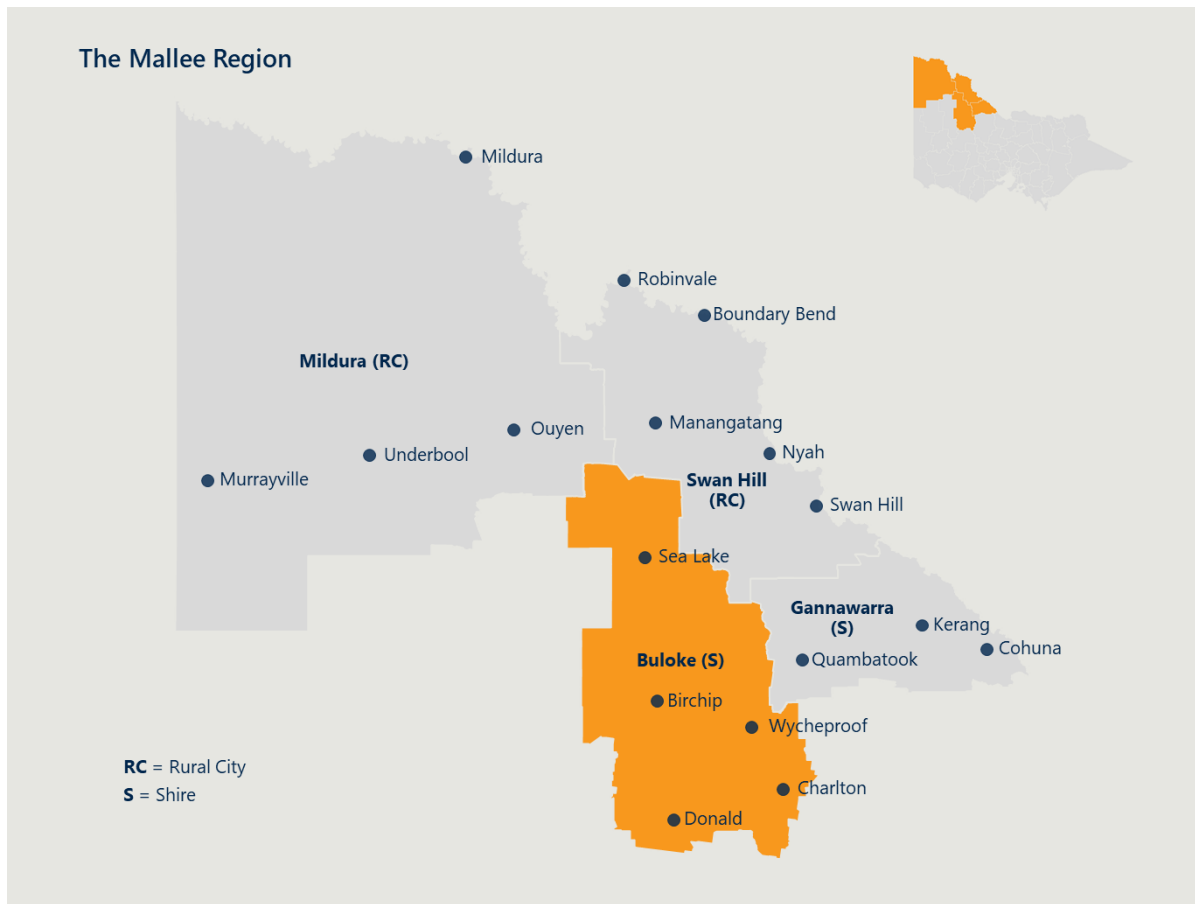
Buloke Shire

21 June 2019

# Executive summary

Nous Group (Nous) was engaged by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) and the Buloke Shire to support a collaborative effort to generate sustainable and systemic solutions that address training access and workforce challenges in the shire. Previous work with the Victorian Skills Commissioner to develop the Mallee Regional Skills Demand Profile to understand the nature of challenges faced by employers in the region had a strong focus on Mildura, Robinvale and Swan Hill. This project presents an opportunity to develop a richer understanding of the specific needs of the Buloke Shire.

Figure 1 | Buloke Shire within the broader Mallee region



## Labour shortages hold the Shire back from reaching its full potential

There is established demand for workers in the Buloke Shire that cannot be met locally. Consequently, skills are a secondary priority to finding individuals that can turn up and do the work. This is most evident in community services and agricultural roles and some manufacturers. Selected businesses in other industries faced similar constraints. Addressing labour shortages is beyond the scope of this project although critical issues exist around childcare which limits the ability for workers, particularly women, to work in the region and the scarcity of rental accommodation creates barriers for people to move to the region.

## **The Shire is at risk of becoming disconnected from the tertiary education system**

The Shire is at significant risk of becoming disconnected from the tertiary education system (Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education). Employers are unsure of who to contact and engage with for to meet their requirements. TAFEs who were previously active in the Buloke Shire have largely exited. Some private RTOs (located within and outside the broader Mallee region) have filled part of this gap but there are many needs that are not being met. Workers travel more than an hour away to undertake training which incurs additional costs to businesses.

These are thin markets which presents challenges, but communities are prepared to travel and to work together to ensure local responses. However, they struggle to navigate the funding and provider landscape and rightly are not prepared to invest the significant time and resources to try and find an appropriate solution. The default is to train staff themselves or to look to recruit skilled workers elsewhere, in many cases from other local businesses. Further all acknowledged more can be done with schools to encourage and support local young people to pursue a career in the region.

## **Industries share some common opportunities for workforce development and training**

Common challenges were identified across several of the key industries in the Buloke Shire. Opportunities exist to address these challenges and can be achieved in collaboration with the Shire, industry and training providers. Addressing these challenges is critical for unlocking the shire's potential. Key opportunities for the shire are outlined below, and further opportunities are discussed in detail in later sections.

Themes include:

- Strengthen collaboration between schools and industry to improve career pathways for young people and highlight local employment opportunities
- Provide employers with information on training providers and available funding to increase access and participation of workers in the training system
- Explore options to better utilise existing training facilities including the North Central Trade Training Centre at the Charlton College Campus
- Utilise and coordinate the delivery of the Regional and Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) to deliver training for regional areas and subsidise additional expenses due to travel for training
- Develop new training models which incorporate online learning with applied on-the-job experiences to overcome geographic factors affecting access and participation in training
- Develop modular training programs to upskill managers and supervisors to effectively manage their teams and participate in training alongside work.

## **Each industry in the Buloke Shire has unique education and training needs**

The consultation process identified several challenges and opportunities for local industry groups in the shire. The skills and training system, in collaboration with industry, will play an important role to address these challenges to ensure the local workforce development and training needs are met. Table 1 below summarises the key challenges and opportunities by industry for education and training in the Buloke Shire.

**Table 1 | Challenges and opportunities in education and training by industry**

Industry	Challenge	Opportunity
Agriculture	Employers require workers with broader knowledge and awareness of agribusiness operations	Update entry-level training to foster understanding of agribusiness operations
	Farms have an increased dependence on technology enabled machinery for farm profitability	Provide additional training hours around expensive equipment and plant machinery to increase proficiency levels of workers
Community services	University qualified workers are difficult to attract and retain (key areas of focus include social workers, allied health professional, nurses and early childhood educators)	Collaborate with universities to engage with current students and attract recent graduates to the region. Develop new education models that enable individuals with the right attributes to study and work in the region while gaining their higher education qualification
	Entry-level roles lack the skills and training to provide required support	Create a skillset for workers to upskill in personal care, footcare health and in-home support
	High numbers of unqualified workers in social work, catering and maintenance roles	Employers and training providers should work together to recognise and complete training for workers
	Workforce quality and safety standards are being scrutinised by the Royal Commissions	Work with local employers to respond to any recommendations arising from the Royal Commissions
Rural services	Employers require workers with broader knowledge and awareness of agribusiness operations	Update entry-level training to foster understanding of agribusiness operations
	Workers lack skills in customer service, communication and sales	Update training to include customer service, communication and sales skills
	Agronomists are in shortage with potential downstream impacts for farm productivity and performance.	Collaborate with universities to engage with current students and attract recent graduates to the region
Hospitality and tourism	Workers lack skills in customer service, digital marketing and business (including product development)	Update training to include customer service, digital marketing and small business skills (including product development)
	Locally skilled chefs, cooks and baristas are in demand	Increase and modernise training for local chefs, cooks and baristas in food and beverage preparation
	Locals starting their own businesses in hospitality and tourism require skills and training to be successful	Develop short in-location courses for small business to upskill in hospitality and tourism. These could be non-accredited and run through Learn Locals or community resource centres

Industry	Challenge	Opportunity
Manufacturing	Young workers can benefit from greater exposure to broader trades	Embed a pre-apprenticeship program which gives young people a feel for the work they would be doing in an apprenticeship and eventually a career
	Workers with broader knowledge and awareness of manufacturing operations are in demand	Update entry-level training to foster understanding of manufacturing operations (e.g. lean operations)
	Employers require workers to be trained in safe food handling, food science and quality assurance.	Work with local employers to explore options to deliver affordable entry level training that fosters a greater understanding of safe food handling, food science and quality assurance and meets compliance requirements

### Action is required to engage and support employers to address their workforce needs

Education is a critical enabler to economic growth and community resilience within the Buloke Shire. Understanding local needs is the first step in working with employers to ensure they have the skilled workforce they need to unlock the potential of the shire. While some of these needs are common with the Mallee and regional Victoria, others are unique.

This report outlines the critical needs, challenges and opportunities that must be addressed for local employers to realise the benefits experienced by employers in regions better served by tertiary education providers. It also outlines opportunities to better connect and make use of education providers currently active in the region.

While some opportunities can be addressed immediately others will take time. In each case they cannot be done in isolation and will require collaboration by employers, the shire, TAFEs, Universities, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regional Development and Department of Education and Training and various industry groups and stakeholders.

Implementation of the initiatives identified in this report represents the next step in developing relevant relationships, education, pathways that can underpin the Shire's future prosperity.



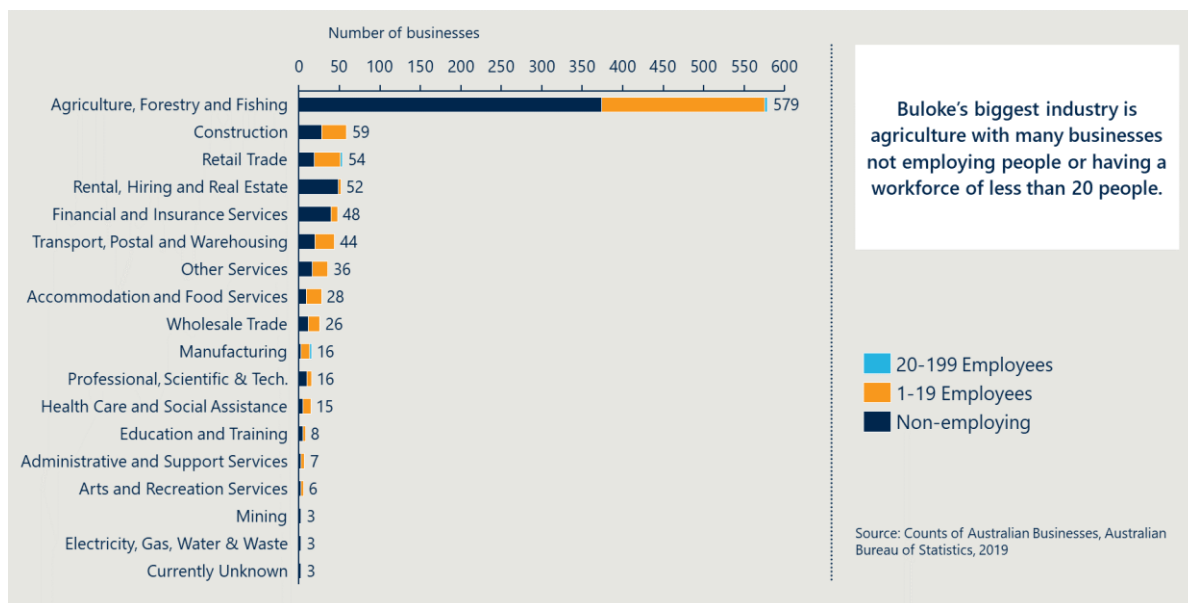
# 1 Labour shortages hold the Shire back from reaching its full potential

The Buloke Shire is in north-central Victoria, it is within the Victorian administrative region of Loddon Mallee, but also has alignment with part of the Mallee Region. It covers 8,000 square kilometres and is the fifth largest Local Government Area (LGA) in Victoria by area with a large network of towns and roads but has the second lowest population density in the State.

The biggest employing industries in the Buloke Shire are in agriculture, rural services, healthcare and social assistance and hospitality and tourism. Land is used largely for agriculture, particularly grain (wheat, oats and barley) production and sheep grazing. Broadacre agribusiness remains the biggest segment of the Shire’s economy.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Shire’s economy is predominantly driven by the agriculture industry and effects the growth of other industries such as construction and rural services. Hospitality and tourism have undergone rapid growth, particularly in Sea Lake with Lake Tyrrell being the main drawcard for the town and its positioning along the Silo Art Trail.

Approximately 1,000 businesses are based within the Buloke Shire with 59 per cent of businesses who are non-employing and a further 38 per cent of businesses employing less than 20 workers. There are few large employers except for Local Government and businesses in agriculture, manufacturing and retail trade. Figure 2 shows the distribution of businesses across industries and the number of workers they employ.

Figure 2 | Count of businesses in the Buloke Shire



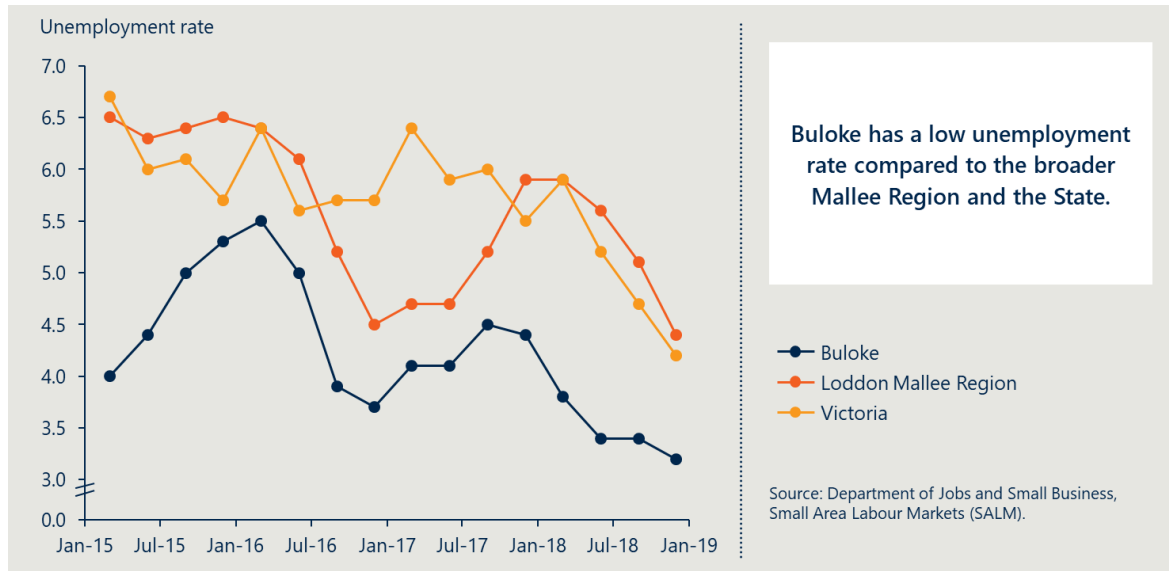
The biggest challenge for employers is finding workers to fill the available jobs in their businesses. The unemployment rate for the Buloke Shire is 3.2 per cent which is much lower than the broader Mallee region and the State at 4.2 per cent and 4.4 per cent respectively (shown in Figure 3 below).<sup>2</sup> The lack of childcare services and limited availability of rental properties contributes to workforce challenges and the

<sup>1</sup> Buloke Shire Council, Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, 2018-2021

<sup>2</sup> Department of Jobs and Small Business Australia, Small Area Labour Markets Australia, December quarter 2018

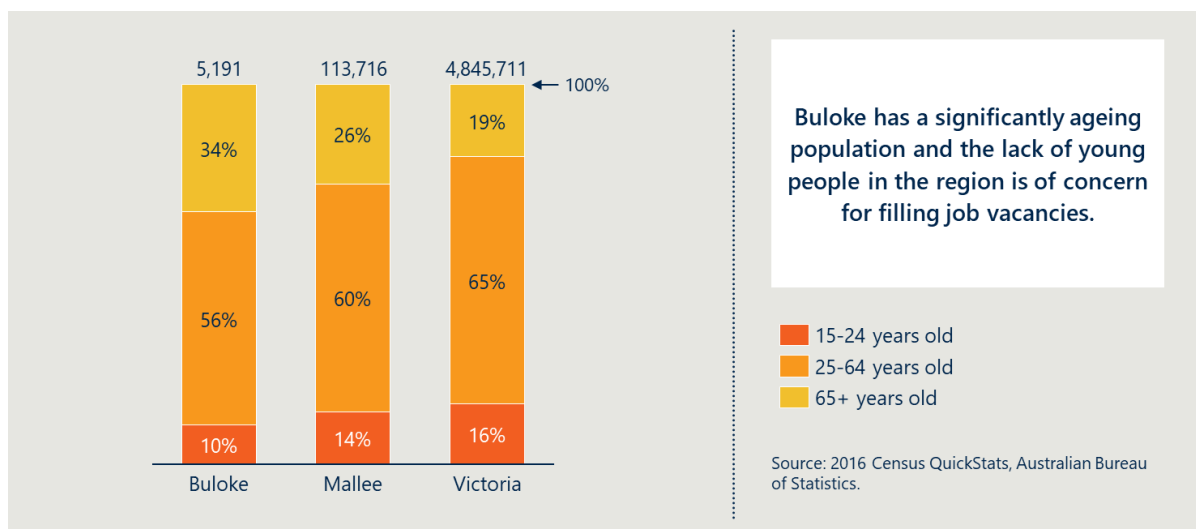
inability to attract people to the area. Furthermore, these workforce challenges are accentuated by young people leaving the region and relocating to urban centres to pursue further education, training or other employment opportunities. While some return later in life, it is insufficient to meet workforce needs.

**Figure 3 | Unemployment rate for the Buloke Shire**



The Buloke Shire experienced a steady population decline between 2011 and 2016 of approximately 2.8 per cent. Current population is estimated at 6,200<sup>3</sup> and is unlikely to meet the population projection identified in the Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan of 6,800 by 2021.<sup>4</sup> Buloke Shire has an ageing population and workforce which will bring significant challenges in the next 5-10 years. Over a third of the population is over the age of 65 years and over half of the population are in the 25-64 years range. The age distribution of the Buloke Shire is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4 | Age distribution of the Buloke Shire**



<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census QuickStats

<sup>4</sup> Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Victoria, Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan, 2014

The viability and vibrancy of local towns in the shire is closely tied to the success of the region's employers. Without first addressing the availability of workers, the population declines of recent years are likely to continue as families and retirees seek the services that can no longer be supported in the region.



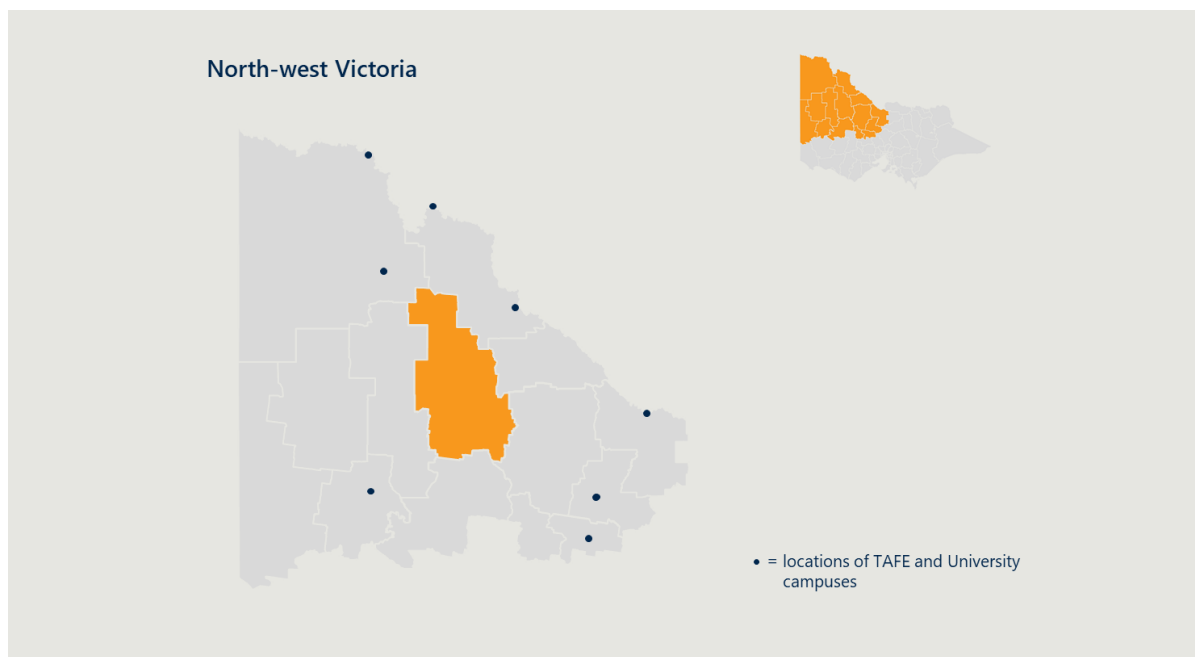
## 2 The Shire is at risk of becoming disconnected from the tertiary education system

The Buloke Shire is one of several shires or councils in Victoria that does not have a TAFE or University campus located in their borders. Consequently, residents must travel to TAFE and University campuses located in Bendigo, Horsham and Swan Hill. Depending on locations, residents in Buloke must travel between 90 and 210 kilometres each way, which equates to between one and two and a half hours each way, and potentially need to stay overnight. This imposes significant costs on employers and staff through costs of travel and indirectly through lost productivity from having an employee away from the business for lengths at a time.

TAFEs who were previously active in the shire have withdrawn while engagement by universities is limited primarily to student recruitment. Some private RTOs (located within and outside the broader Mallee region) have filled part of this gap. However, they do not provide the breadth of offers available through TAFE or access to key government programs such as Free TAFE and other interventions designed to support access to quality education for all.

Consequently, many needs are not being met as confused or disenfranchised employers disengage from the education system. Employers report in most cases they are unsure of who to contact and engage with for training requirements.

Figure 5 | Locations of TAFE and University campuses in North-west Victoria



Businesses and communities are prepared to work together to ensure local responses. However, they struggle to navigate the funding and provider landscape and are not able to invest the significant time and resources to try and find an appropriate solution. Employers are unaware of the incentives, processes or availability to take on workers in traineeships and work placements. The default is to train staff themselves or to look to recruit skilled workers elsewhere, in many cases from other local businesses. Businesses are willing to pool demand for training so that the aggregate demand in the community will be attractive enough for training providers to run training in the Buloke Shire.

### 3 Industries share some common opportunities for workforce development and training

Industries in the Buloke Shire face common challenges and opportunities for workforce development and training. This includes strengthening collaboration between schools and industry, providing employers with information on training providers, utilising the Regional and Specialist Training Fund (RSTF), developing new training models and developing modular training for managers and supervisors.

These challenges and opportunities are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2 | Common challenges and opportunities for Buloke Shire industries**

Challenge	Opportunity
Varying levels of engagement between schools and employers in the region limits visibility and understanding of local careers	<p><b>Strengthen collaboration between schools and industry</b></p> <p>Improve connections between secondary schools and employers to showcase local career pathways and employment opportunities. Increased exposure of industries and local careers will better equip students to make informed decisions about their future education and training to better meet the needs of their community. This can also provide a channel for employers to fill traineeships, apprenticeships and work experience placements with local young people.</p>
Employers are confused about who and where to go for training and the support that could be made available to them	<p><b>Provide employers with information on training providers</b></p> <p>Employers currently rely on word-of-mouth recommendations and information on available training for their workers. They require information (e.g. cost, duration, mode of delivery) on relevant training for their workforce and the available funding to increase access and participation in training for their workers. Information needs to be centrally provided, easy to access, current and applicable to employers and industries in the region.</p>
Existing resources and partnerships are not being fully utilised to deliver improved training access	<p><b>Explore options to better utilise existing training facilities</b></p> <p>In the absence of TAFEs in the region, the shire has facilities that are well suited to support vocational training in the region, specifically the North Central Trade Training Centre at the Charlton College Campus. The centre is currently used for secondary school students, however there are opportunities to utilise this facility more for adult education. Facilities in other regions are similarly underutilised and a policy shift is required to better utilise them for adult education.</p>
Absence of TAFEs in the shire contributes to higher costs of training compared to similar organisations in other regions	<p><b>Utilise and coordinate the delivery of the Regional and Specialist Training Fund (RSTF)</b></p> <p>The RSTF is available to meet the needs of localised employers in regional Victoria and is available to training providers who hold a current Skills First VET funding contract. However, with the absence of TAFEs in the shire, the fund is not currently being utilised to deliver training for Buloke’s industry needs. A coordination of resources is required to ensure this fund is being utilised and is working to deliver training for regional areas. This fund can be used to coordinate the delivery of training in-place, leveraging the facilities and resources already available in the shire. It can also be used to subsidise the additional out of pocket expenses employers incur due to the need for employees to travel for study.</p>
Geography is a barrier to access and participation in standard vocational	<p><b>Develop new training models</b></p> <p>Adopt models that incorporate online theory with applied local on-the-job experiences to better overcome the geographic factors that prevent workers from access and participation to training. This should also explore options to take training to individual employers where</p>

Challenge	Opportunity
training and higher education models	possible. Further, learn locals with an existing presence in the shire could be better utilised to deliver high value short courses for employers and for individuals disengaged from work.
Employers require workers with skills and training in people management and leadership	<p><b>Develop a modular training program to upskill managers and supervisors</b></p> <p>Team leaders, managers and supervisors require training in people management and leadership to effectively manage their respective teams. A modular program delivered in the shire will allow these workers to engage in training alongside their work and encourage lifelong learning. It could also be an important catalyst to support the shires leaders of tomorrow form connections with providers able to help develop their future workforce.</p>

## 4 Each industry in the Buloke Shire has unique education and training needs

Consultations with representatives across key industry groups in the Buloke Shire has identified opportunities to strengthen the education system to address the challenges and skills and workforce requirements of the local industries. This section of the report provides a snapshot of each industry's profile, outlook, job requirements and current challenges and opportunities for the education system.

Profile summaries on each of the key industries in Figure 6 are provided overleaf.

Figure 6 | Key industry groups in the Buloke Shire





## Agriculture

### Farm consolidation and adoption of new technologies will shape the future of agriculture

<b>Profile</b>	The Buloke Shire is characterised by its strong agriculture industry. Land is used largely for agriculture, particularly grain (wheat, oats and barley) production and sheep grazing. Broadacre agribusiness is the biggest segment of the Shire's economy and the growth of other industries are closely linked with the agriculture industry. Many small, traditionally-run family farms have been consolidated into larger farms and have transitioned to corporate farm models. Occupations in agriculture are diverse, including positions that require a broad and well-rounded skill set such as farm technicians, farm managers and more specialist positions such as machinery operators, agronomists, accountants, IT technicians and other corporate roles.
<b>Outlook</b>	The industry will continue to see consolidation of family farms into large family and corporate farms. Growth in agriculture is subject to weather conditions in the area, particularly rainfall, as many farms are used for cropping and producing feed for livestock. Major changes in the industry are coming from higher rates of farm consolidation and a greater need for seasonal and contract workers during harvest times to cover the shortage of workers in the area. The agriculture industry is varied in its adoption new and emerging technologies. When adopted it is shifting the way the industry operates with increased importance of data collection and the tracking of machinery using apps and web-based platforms. Agricultural automation technologies, remote sensing and data are likely to shape the future of Australian agriculture and this will impact on agricultural employment, training and skills requirements.

### Skills and training needs are dependent on new technologies

<b>Skills and training</b>	The consolidation of farms has seen the loss of farmers and their skills from the industry as these farmers transition to other industries and occupations. However, farm consolidation has created opportunities for farms to gain more workers. Employers require a diverse skill set from their workers, no two farms are the same, and the changing nature of the work means that every day can bring different work and therefore different skills required to do the work. The skills which make the greatest difference include animal husbandry, machine handling and operations, agribusiness, and people management. Due to the lack of skilled workers, employers look to hire hardworking and highly motivated workers for entry-level positions who they can upskill on the farm through a mixture of training opportunities and on-the-job experience. However, many farmers did not see value in qualifications beyond meeting compliance needs. The prevalence of larger scale farms creates an opportunity for middle-level management roles responsible for the business aspects of operating a farm and managing people in teams. Farm workers due to their work ethic and diversity of skills are in high demand across many industries.
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Current challenges to vocational training and skills	Opportunities for the training system
Employers require workers with broader knowledge and awareness of agribusiness operations	Update entry-level training to foster understanding of agribusiness operations
Farms have an increased dependence on technology enabled machinery for farm profitability	Provide additional training hours around expensive equipment and plant machinery to increase proficiency levels of workers



## Community services

### The ageing population and NDIS will drive growth in community services

<b>Profile</b>	The community service industry includes community care, residential aged care, disability care sectors and early childhood. The significant ageing population in the Buloke Shire means there is growth in this industry which will continue for years to come. The workforce similarly reflects the ageing population of the shire with many workers close to retirement age.
<b>Outlook</b>	Community services are positioned for continued growth over the next 5-10 years with a strong growth in demand being driven by the shire's ageing population and opportunities to better address unmet needs of individuals in the region. There is a heavy dependence on publicly provided services that are under strain. There are challenges in maintaining the workforce to ensure there are no service provision gaps within the broader community. Doctors, specialists in allied health in the region, diploma and degree qualified nurses, social workers and early childhood educators are some of the key roles in short supply. Even when someone is attracted to the shire they can be hard to retain.

### Upskilling entry-level roles is crucial to the healthcare and social assistance industries

<b>Skills and training</b>	Employers in this industry seek a combination of low-skilled workers for domestic duty roles and highly-skilled workers for more specialised roles. Employers identified training which allows entry-level roles to upskill and take more proactive steps in preventative treatments to reduce demand from highly skilled and specialist roles as highly valuable. For example, personal care workers with training in footcare health can prevent the onset of common foot conditions and refer people to podiatrists when necessary for chronic conditions. This was particularly the case for workers that might have qualifications in another area or industry. Home catering is also a crucial support service. There are opportunities to upskill the workforce in food safety, catering and other food related skillsets. In demand qualifications include Certificates IV in Disability and Aged Care the Diploma of Community Services, Diploma of Nursing and various degree qualifications. Employers also identified the potential significant implications if new minimum standards emerge from either the Royal Commissions into aged care or disability.
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Current challenges to vocational training and skills	Opportunities for the training system
University qualified workers are difficult to attract and retain (key areas of focus include social workers, allied health professional, nurses and early childhood educators)	Collaborate with universities to engage with current students and attract recent graduates to the region. Develop new education models that enable individuals with the right attributes to study and work in the region while gaining their higher education qualification
Entry-level roles lack the skills and training to provide required support	Create a skillset for workers to upskill in personal care, footcare health and in-home support
High numbers of unqualified workers in social work, catering and maintenance roles	Employers and training providers should work together to recognise and complete training for workers
Workforce quality and safety standards are being scrutinised by the Royal Commissions	Work with local employers to respond to any recommendations arising from the Royal Commissions



## Rural services

### Rural services are important in servicing the agriculture industry in the region

<b>Profile</b>	Rural services in the Buloke Shire predominately service the agriculture industry in the shire and the broader Mallee region, particularly services in Swan Hill and Bendigo. This industry consists of small businesses, subcontractors and large corporations. Elders is one of the larger employers in this industry and have a head office based in Wycheproof. The workforce in this industry is quite diverse including salespersons, agronomists, managers, diesel mechanics, grain traders and truck drivers.
<b>Outlook</b>	Demand and growth for services in this industry is heavily reliant on the agriculture industry and growth is often linked to farms' propensity to purchase goods and services. The short-term outlook is positive after solid early season rainfall, high sub-soil moisture and commodity prices at record levels. The biggest threat to businesses in this industry is being able to fill roles with skilled workers to match growth.

### Customer service and sales skills are important, and apprenticeships fill roles

<b>Skills and training</b>	<p>Skills which make the greatest difference in this industry include occupational health and safety, industry and product knowledge (e.g. affiliations with agriculture), customer service, sales skills, communication skills and building and maintaining relationships. Rural services also require qualified and skilled workers such as auto electricians, diesel mechanics and agronomists.</p> <p>Employers are sourcing their workers from traineeships, work experience and some school-based apprenticeships. Higher education qualified employers are difficult to attract and retain to the region. No formal pathways appear to exist.</p>
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Current challenges to vocational training and skills	Opportunities for the training system
Employers require workers with broader knowledge and awareness of agribusiness operations	Update entry-level training to foster understanding of agribusiness operations
Workers lack skills in customer service, communication and sales	Update training to include customer service, communication and sales skills
Agronomists are in shortage with potential downstream impacts for farm productivity and performance.	Collaborate with universities to engage with current students and attract recent graduates to the region





## Hospitality and tourism

### Rapid growth in the visitor economy has created opportunities in hospitality and tourism

<b>Profile</b>	The Buloke Shires' hospitality and tourism industry is diverse with businesses ranging from family owned cafes, bakeries and restaurants to motels, hotels, holiday parks, bed and breakfasts and various tour operators. The shire's environmental assets such as lakes and rivers, cultural heritage, recreational activities and major regional events contribute to the region's growing visitor economy.
<b>Outlook</b>	Hospitality and tourism in the Buloke Shire have experienced significant expansion and is expected to see continued growth. Sea Lake in particular, has undergone rapid growth with Lake Tyrrell being the main drawcard for the region, along with the Silo Art Trail. There are many job opportunities and an increasing number of tour operators and providers are seizing the opportunities spurred by the tourism growth in the region. Important roles for these industries include managers, chefs, kitchen hands, wait staff, receptionists and housekeeping.

### Customer service, digital marketing and product development skills are important

<b>Skills and training</b>	Employers are open to take on people with qualifications but are happy with a capable worker that is willing to learn on the job. There are opportunities for training and upskilling of the current workforce. Customer service skills was seen to be a very important skill throughout the industries as workers predominately interact with customers daily. High quality food and beverage preparation skills were seen to be lacking in the local workforce. Digital marketing skills are also highly sought after to assist with webpage development, social media, photos and reviews. Businesses see the importance of being accessible online with plain information which is easy to access and current. Small business skills are also likely to become more important for individuals seeking to capitalise on greater visitor numbers.
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Current challenges to vocational training and skills	Opportunities for the training system
Workers lack skills in customer service, digital marketing and business (including product development)	Update training to include customer service, digital marketing and small business skills (including product development)
Locally skilled chefs, cooks and baristas are in demand	Increase and modernise training for local chefs, cooks and baristas in food and beverage preparation
Locals starting their own businesses in hospitality and tourism require skills and training to be successful	Develop short in-location courses for small business to upskill in hospitality and tourism. These could be non-accredited and run through Learn Locals or community resource centres



## Manufacturing

### A strong manufacturing hub in Donald drives growth in this industry

<b>Profile</b>	The manufacturing industry in the Buloke Shire is closely linked to the agriculture industry. Food and beverage processing also comprise a significant part of the shire's manufacturing industry, most notably being Kooka's Country Cookies operating out of Donald. Most manufacturing businesses operate out of Donald making it the manufacturing hub of the Buloke Shire, with other smaller businesses operating throughout the shire.
<b>Outlook</b>	Growth in the manufacturing industry is dependent on the growth in agriculture. However, there is a growing demand for the export of manufacturing goods to other parts of the state and country. Generalist manufacturing workers are usually tradespeople, welders, fitters and engineers and designers. Food and beverage manufacturing workers are mainly food science technicians, lab attendants, packagers and managers. As the industry grows, employers are finding it difficult to replace workers with the required licences and experience to meet regulatory requirements, food science technicians and lab attendants.

### Compliance and regulatory based training are most needed in manufacturing

<b>Skills and training</b>	<p>Employers in generalist manufacturing require workers to have completed specific training for them to be able to carry out work; for example, forklift licences, elevated work platform training, working at heights training and occasionally confined space training. There are many opportunities in manufacturing for apprenticeships, including adult apprenticeships. Specific skills which make a difference in the workplace includes metal fabrication, proficiency with Computer-Aided Design (CAD) software and communication skills.</p> <p>Food and beverage manufacturing predominately require workers to undertake training for health and safety compliance, such as safe food handling, dangerous good, food science and to meet other compliance needs. Favourable skills for employers in this subsector include food science and quality assurance. Employers also highlighted the need for workers to be skilled in leading and managing teams.</p>
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Current challenges to vocational training and skills	Opportunities for the training system
Young workers can benefit from greater exposure to broader trades	Embed a pre-apprenticeship program which gives young people a feel for the work they would be doing in an apprenticeship and eventually a career
Workers with broader knowledge and awareness of manufacturing operations are in demand	Update entry-level training to foster understanding of manufacturing operations (e.g. lean operations)
Employers require workers to be trained in safe food handling, food science and quality assurance.	Work with local employers to explore options to deliver affordable entry level training that fosters a greater understanding of safe food handling, food science and quality assurance and meets compliance requirements

## **5 Action is required to engage and support employers to address their workforce needs**

Education is a critical enabler to economic growth and community resilience within the Buloke Shire. Understanding local needs is the first step in working with employers to ensure they have the skilled workforce they need to unlock the potential of the shire. While some of these needs are common with the Mallee and regional Victoria, others are unique.

This report outlines the critical needs, challenges and opportunities that must be addressed for local employers to realise the benefits experienced by employers in regions better served by tertiary education providers. It also outlines opportunities to better connect and make use of education providers currently active in the region.

While some opportunities can be addressed immediately others will take time. In each case they cannot be done in isolation and will require collaboration by employers, the shire, TAFEs, Universities, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regional Development and Department of Education and Training and various industry groups and stakeholders.

Changes in policy (e.g. towards trade training centres), grant programs (e.g. regional and specialist training fund) and partnerships between employers and training providers will all be important components of a sustainable solution.

Implementation of the initiatives identified in this report represents the next step in developing relevant relationships, education, pathways that can underpin the Shire's future prosperity.

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## ABOUT NOUS

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**Nous Group** is the largest Australian-founded management consulting firm. We partner with leaders across Australia and the UK to shape effective government, world-class businesses and empowered communities.



bold  
performance & influence  
engaging

400

PEOPLE

50

PRINCIPALS

8

LOCATIONS

2

COUNTRIES

**Financial Review Client Choice Awards 2017**  
Best Management Consulting Firm  
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