

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY



2018-2021



# WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY?

## THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY PROVIDES DIRECTION FOR COUNCIL TO:

Support the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the Shire.

Attract new business investment and infrastructure.

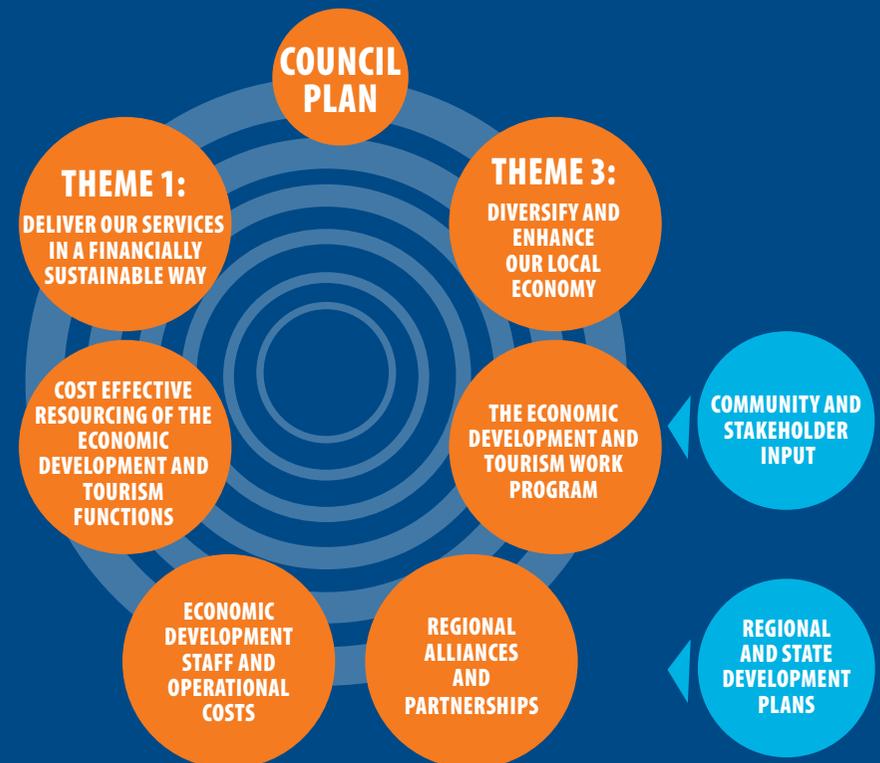
Collaborate at a regional level (through alliances with government, businesses and community organisations) to share in economic development and tourism initiatives

Leverage financial resources for economic development by helping to deliver State and Federal economic development and tourism agendas, where they are consistent with Buloke's economic strengths.

**THE STRATEGY IS CLOSELY ALIGNED TO THE COUNCIL PLAN, AND PARTICULARLY TO THE PLAN'S THEMES OF "DIVERSIFYING AND ENHANCING THE LOCAL ECONOMY" AND "DELIVERING SERVICES IN A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE WAY".**

## WHERE DOES THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY FIT WITH COUNCIL PLANNING?

### ALIGNMENT OF THE BULOKE COUNCIL PLAN WITH THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY



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# FOREWORD FROM THE MAYOR

Buloke Shire Council, and its predecessor Councils have a history of proactive involvement in economic development spanning several decades.

As a Council we understand that looking after our current business and helping them to harness new opportunities is an integral part of our core business. How we do this is set out within this document and includes building on our emerging tourism, strengthening agricultural diversification and a regulatory environment that is conducive to development.

**DAVID POLLARD, MAYOR**



## ACCEPTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROLES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

- Developing economic development policies and commitments which have the longevity that only local government and/or the community/private sector can provide.
- Lobbying and advocacy for Shire communities and businesses.
- Providing leadership in innovation and coordination for new initiatives and best practice.
- Giving incentives and removing barriers for desirable businesses, investments and job creation.
- Facilitating links between public, business and community sectors in economic development through projects at local and regional level.
- Partnering in regional economic development initiatives (beyond the Shire boundaries).
- Undertaking or commissioning projects to achieve economic development in, for example:
  - Stimulating alliances, networks, and supply chains
  - Encouraging new investment (through investors guides and other data)
  - Conducting research
  - Managing special projects.

# WHAT WE HEARD

– guided by the community

**BULOKE SHIRE BUSINESSES AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS WERE ENCOURAGED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE STRATEGY IN PERSON, AS PART OF A GROUP FORUM, ONLINE, OR IN WRITING, THROUGH A RANGE OF OPTIONS, INCLUDING:**

- Listening posts and business visits encompassing discussions with over 60 business owners and community representatives.
- An online interview form available through Council's website.
- A Community Summit in Wycheproof attended by about 30 Buloke invited residents.
- Discussions with community organisations across the Shire (including town forums, tourism, and commerce groups)
- Briefing and feedback sessions with around 40 senior students at Donald and Sea Lake Secondary Schools.

Council is grateful for the input and suggestions provided by so many people through the consultation process, and acknowledges their time and effort in helping to shape the strategy.

**SEVERAL PERVADING, AND COMPELLING, MESSAGES FROM COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS HAVE INFORMED AND INFLUENCED THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS:**

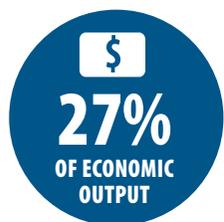
- Broadacre agribusiness (ie broadacre agriculture and value-adding) remains the major segment of the Shire's economy. Agricultural automation technologies, remote sensing and data are likely to shape the future of Australian agriculture over the next 10-15 years and this will impact on agricultural employment and investment over the period.
- New forms of agribusiness should be pursued (notably intensive livestock, local processing and branding of grains and pulses, some horticultural crops, and further food manufacturing), and the time is right for attracting those agribusiness segments that may have not seen Buloke Shire as an effective location in the past.
- Buloke has potential as a prime location for renewable forms of energy and biofuels.
- Tourism is widely considered a growth area for the Shire, and it requires a level of resourcing from Council to build on the emerging opportunities.
- Council is sending the wrong messages to business and investors, and its reputation has shifted from being "pro-development" to becoming a "statutory enforcement agency" over the past decade.
- Meaningful incentives are needed for expanding and new businesses, to make it clear that the Shire is open for business and welcomes investment.
- The Shire is suffering from major economic development barriers caused by:
  - Lack of child day care services.
  - Limited retail, accommodation and food service offerings in some towns.
- Buloke communities need to build their capacities to commit to, and help deliver, some of the opportunities on their economic development 'wish list' rather than relying on Council as the responsible body.

# INTRODUCTION

Buloke Shire is located in north-central Victoria. It is within the Victorian administrative region of Loddon Mallee, but also has alignment with part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region. It covers 8,000.4 square kilometres (or 800,040 hectares) and is the fifth largest Local Government Area in Victoria by area with a large network of towns and roads. At 0.78 persons per square kilometre, Buloke has the second lowest population density in the State<sup>1</sup>.

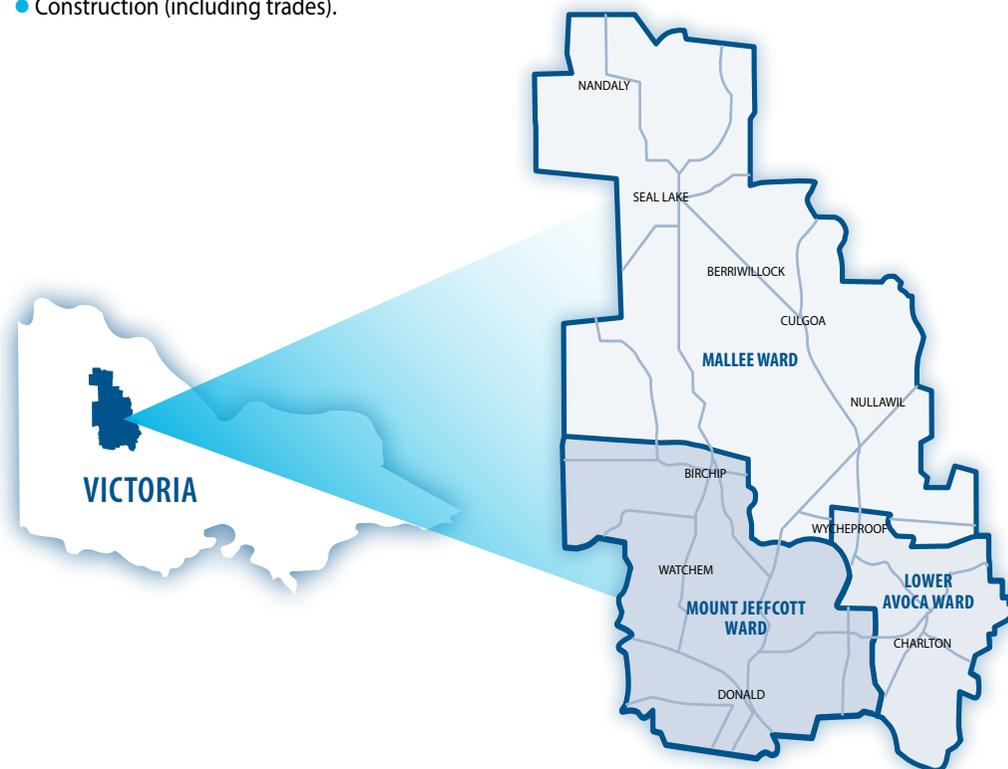
The Shire's main townships are Wycheproof, Donald, Charlton, Birchip and Sea Lake, with many smaller towns that have dwindled since with the aggregation and automation of grain farming (such as Berrivillock, Culgoa, Watchem, Nullawil and Nandaly). The Shire is rated as socio-economically disadvantaged among Victorian local government areas, with population decline, relatively high underemployment, low rates of workforce participation, an older age structure, and a relatively low income structure.

## BULOKE'S ECONOMY IS DOMINATED BY AGRICULTURE (MAINLY DRY LAND CROPPING AND LIVESTOCK) WHICH GENERATES



## THE MAJOR EMPLOYING INDUSTRIES IN BULOKE SHIRE ARE, IN ORDER:

- Agriculture.
- Health care and social assistance (led by medical and other health care services).
- Education and training (almost entirely school education).
- Retail trade (supermarkets and other food retailing are the largest sub-sectors).
- Construction (including trades).



<sup>1</sup>West Wimmera Shire has the lowest population density, at 0.43 persons per square kilometre

# INTRODUCTION

## BULOKE'S MAJOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRENGTHS ARE:

- Land and environment suited to broadacre cropping, coupled with over 150 years of inter-generational expertise in growing grains.
- Industry driven capabilities in innovation and research and development in broadacre farming.
- Land and environment suited to extensive livestock and intensive livestock production. Extensive sheep grazing has a long history in the Shire, with Wycheproof recognised as the largest store sheep selling centre in regional Victoria. Intensive pig production and cattle lot feeding are well established in the Shire, and there has been recent growth in intensive poultry growing (for both meat and table eggs).
- Assets that attract visitors, including Victoria's largest salt lake (Lake Tyrrell), an acclaimed silo art trail (in adjacent Yarriambiack Shire, drawing visitors through Buloke), heritage sites and historic buildings and collections, recreational lakes (Lakes Watchem, Tchum, Wooroonook, Buloke and Green Lake)
- Regular annual events such as the Mallee Rally, Mallee Root RoundUp, Charlton Film Festival and regular race meetings and sporting events, and emerging events such as Cuisine in the Crop and the Esoteric Dance Festival.

Just as the overall Shire economy is highly dependent on broadacre farming, so are the Shire's towns, where a majority of businesses contribute to agribusiness supply chains and provide services to farming communities. Agricultural activity is dominated by cereals, pulses, oilseeds and sheep for meat and wool. This agricultural focus has been responsible for the many distinctive features in the towns, strong resilience and connected communities, but it has also led to decades long population decline as farms have become bigger and more automated, and the financial returns from agricultural commodities have declined in an increasingly competitive global environment.

The total resident population of Buloke Shire decreased by an annual average of 1% over the 2006- 2016 decade. In 2016, the population was 6,204 (having declined from 6,862 in 2006)<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> ABS Censuses of Population and Housing 2006 to 2016

# STRATEGY 1

## ENHANCE THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE WITHIN THE BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL

**The current rate of Intensive Animal Husbandry development** demonstrates the key advantages of Buloke Shire Council. Recent investment in poultry (chickens, ducks and eggs) as well as piggery expansions have seen significant economic growth and jobs in this area of agriculture.

There is a need to ensure that Buloke Shire Council continues to attract Intensive Animal Husbandry through its natural advantages, policy settings and welcoming investment climate.

Projects to look at value adding streams to Intensive Animal Husbandry including waste to energy streams are considered to be the next stage of economic development as critical mass is achieved locally.

**As agriculture becomes more automated** the need to continuously update and improve the infrastructure needed as well as adjusting to the employment impacts and opportunities becomes vital.

A significant proportion of agricultural machinery is already highly automated through auto steer and other data collection mechanism. Projects such as AgTide and investment in communication upgrades will be an important part of the future Buloke and wider agricultural landscape.

**The importance of road and rail infrastructure** are set out as their own strategy but Council needs to manage its assets to ensure that our main economic driver, agriculture, can continue to access markets and create wealth.



# STRATEGY 2

## BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO FACILITATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

**Establishing a Buloke Economic Development and Tourism Board** (with standing committees in Agribusiness and Value adding, Town Business and Services, and Tourism) with representation from each town or relevant town forum/committee, and an operational charter to provide advisory input to Council on local priorities.

**Implementing a business support system** (mentors, advisory panels) to interface with both businesses and Council. Local communities in the Shire have strong volunteer networks and, with ageing population profiles, there is a core of experienced people able to help new and expanding businesses. This could be achieved through a Shire business mentoring system; with either individual mentors or community organisations.

**Supporting town communities to establish and oversee community enterprises** (in circumstances where the private sector is unwilling or unable to act) in meeting local needs and removing barriers to investment and business development (eg child day care, housing, business services, and some retail and food service businesses), with Council support. The suggested first, pilot, project is a Business Hub in a Buloke Shire Office building.

**Assisting with town specific promotions to attract businesses** to fill gaps in town centres and/or trades businesses.



# STRATEGY 3

## ENSURE COUNCILS INVESTMENT IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM SUPPORT

### EXPLICIT BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

Regional economic development history suggests financial incentives are unlikely to be among the important motivators in business location decisions. Neither are financial incentives likely to improve the sustainability of a business investment

In any business developments, the ability to exploit a sound customer base, a supply chain connection, local assets or infrastructure will be far more important than any financial incentives which could be offered by Council.

The purpose of Council incentives would, therefore, be to demonstrate that Council is supportive of new investment by a business and to create a feeling of goodwill from people and organisations making decisions to invest and to innovate in the Shire: "Sending the right message".

The major issue is to send a positive and welcoming message to businesses. This 'message' could extend to a range of low cost incentives:

- Provision of minor infrastructure upgrades and connections in a timely way and, in some circumstance, at no cost to the business (including roadworks)
- Advice, contacts, referrals and communications (through the designated case officers)
- Assistance, through implementation of a special land zoning, for agricultural value adding activities, to allow for first stage processing activities close to agricultural production, and to enable agricultural producers to easily invest in value adding. Examples include stockfeed manufacturing, egg grading and packaging, grain mixing/milling and packaging, and biofuel/bioenergy production.
- Site selection and assistance with making supply chain connections (for targeted industry sectors such as broadacre cropping, intensive livestock, manufacturing and processing, and tourism).
- Assistance in accessing relevant training programs, and training subsidies, at a local and regional level.
- An explicit "local procurement" policy by Council favouring local businesses in tenders, quotes and supply contracts.
- Rate reduction incentives, which could be rate 'holidays' or discounts for initial years of operation/ expansion, or interest free term payments.

**Whole-of-Council coordination of new business and business expansion projects, with nominated business case officers who** coordinate Economic Development and Tourism Projects through a single point of contact

A customer-focused, single point of contact for all significant new economic development initiatives (new businesses and expanding existing businesses) would help to ensure that investment and jobs are not compromised.

This would mean that all communications with a new or expanding business would go through the nominated Council customer- service person, rather than the business dealing with several functional areas within Council separately, helping to avoid:

- Confusion and misunderstandings.
- Delays in receiving responses or in complying with legislative requirements.
- Perceptions that Council is more of a regulator than a facilitator of business development.

### COUNCIL POLICIES AND PLANNING PROVISIONS WHICH SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE NEW INVESTMENT, JOB CREATION AND INNOVATION

This sub-strategy involves using Council policies and planning provisions to recognise and enhance the contribution made by existing and emerging industries and individual businesses in the Shire, in order to complement the whole-of-Council support and the business incentives by further demonstrating Buloke is a supportive environment for business.

# STRATEGY 4

## SECURE APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO IMPROVE LIVEABILITY AND INVESTMENT

### SECURING IMPROVED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ARRANGEMENTS

Normally, child care and education services would be considered a function of community development rather than economic development. However, comments by business and town representatives that the Shire is suffering from major economic development barriers caused by a lack of child day care services, and limited early childhood development education were common across the Shire's towns, and the situation was reported to be most acute in Charlton and Wycheproof. In this context early childhood education and child care facilities are considered investment opportunities as well as inequities impacting on economic development.

Wimmera Southern Mallee Partnership has a strategy in early childhood education, "to guarantee WSM pre-schoolers are as healthy, educated and life-ready as their counterparts in other regions and metropolitan areas". Buloke Shire is partnering with WSM Regional partnership on this issue, to tackle the consequent barriers to:

- Local workforce participation.
- Attraction of new residents
- Quality of early learning opportunities for existing residents.



**Improve housing availability and options** to support businesses to attract workers. The housing market factors have led to affordable properties being available but choice is limited and return-on-investment is low.

Higher quality housing and rural residential allotments for professional workers and those seeking a lifestyle change may encourage migration in to Buloke and should be supported through Councils land use policies.

**Advocate for improved communication systems and connectivity** through lobbying and making representations to argue for equity for Buloke businesses including agricultural entities.

Innovative ways to attract technology providers and system developers should be considered with opportunities to tailor Buloke and rural area specific solutions that include future proofing upload and download speeds.

**Work collaboratively with health service providers to ensure place based service delivery** which is an important employment sector within the Shire but is also a critical service expected to maintain population.

The need to ensure that health provision still occurs within our communities is a key driver of liveability across the demographic spectrum.

# STRATEGY 5

## SECURE FUNDING FOR OUR INFRASTRUCTURE TO ATTRACT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The need for investment and regular upgrades of town and rural assets such as road, rail, recreation, waterway, streetscapes, historical features and commercial land is crucial to enhancing the climate for investment, however the Council cannot fund its asset renewal program alone and attracting funding from a wide range of sources is critical.

**The Road Management Plan** sets out Council's commitment to its nearly 6,000km's of road network throughout the shire area. The classification of the road network takes in to account the condition of the road as well as the livability and economic contribution made by the specific section of road in our overall network.

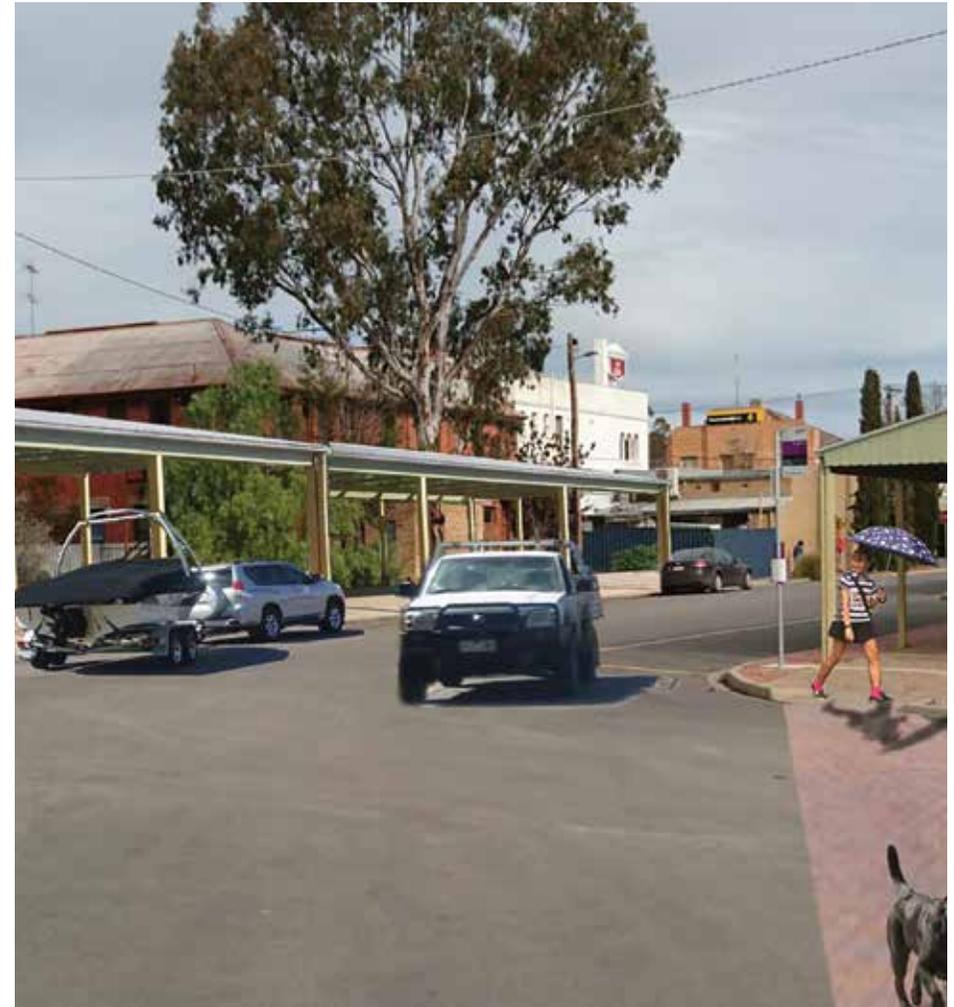
Grant programs such as Road to Market and others that offer funding for key freight routes that reduce first and last mile blockages and provide business access are important to ensuring ability to trade and should be consistently sought.

As part of the **Rail Freight Alliance**, Buloke Shire should continue to campaign for improved rail freight and infrastructure and the current upgrades should ensure an improved future in this area that needs to be capitalized upon.

**Streetscape plans for the five larger townships have been developed** and have consistently been raised by communities as a high priority. Streetscapes feature predominantly in the Council Plan and other council documents including the Major Projects Pipeline.

The ability for retail to trade in an enhanced environment which facilitates the movement of motor and pedestrian traffic is also of benefit to the wider community from a livability perspective.

**The road, rail and streetscapes are all built around improving transport through Buloke Shire**, however transport links through our network of aerodromes and also public transport networks including community and volunteer transport are also important pieces in our infrastructure jigsaw that Council needs to seek and secure funding for in order to grow the economic development and tourism potential of the area.



# STRATEGY 6

## MAXIMIZE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM POTENTIAL THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

### MALLEE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Mallee Regional Partnership is one of nine Partnerships across the state, established by the Victorian Government, recognising that local communities are in the best position to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by their region.

The Mallee themes include; access to services, connectivity, economy, livability and social fabric. Lake Tyrrell tourism infrastructure funding was secured through assistance with work undertaken by the partnership.

### BIRCHIP CROPPING GROUP (BCG)

BCG's mission is 'to improve the prosperity of Australia's broadacre farmers through science-based research, and extension'. In achieving this mission BCG works with several tertiary institution/university partners, the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), CSIRO and its subsidiary Data61, and the Bureau of Meteorology (where the work includes a Climate Variability Research program and Yield Prophet climate risk management tool operated by BCG in cooperation with CSIRO, Square V and other consultant project partners), a range of industry and regional organisations, state and commonwealth government agencies, and philanthropic organisations.

BCG is clearly one of the Shire's competitive strengths. BCG has been very successful in building a work program with a wide source of commercial, government and philanthropic contributors. It is based in Buloke Shire but has regional, State and National significance. Buloke Shire Council is BCG's only local government partner/collaborator. However, BCG notes that the proportion of time and resources dedicated to economic development of broadacre cropping in Buloke Shire does not reflect its pre-eminence to the local economy.

As the Shire's locally based, and highly regarded, broadacre cropping research and extension organisation, there is potential for BCG to have a more explicit role in Buloke's economic development work program. Taking advantage of this expertise to assist in capitalising on economic development opportunities in broadacre farming by having specific Buloke Shire and BCG joint projects is logical, provided the projects are structured around opportunities specific to Buloke Shire producers and/or land resources.

The potential to have a joint economic development program with BCG is also attractive if modest levels of funding can be used to leverage grant or industry funds from other organisations.

### NORTHERN POULTRY CLUSTER

The Northern Poultry Cluster (NPC) represents poultry industry members and stakeholders in north central Victoria. The region's poultry industry now includes almost 100 businesses, supports around 3,000 jobs (full time and part time) and generates more than \$750 million in annual contribution to the regional economy. NPC's mission is "to enhance the long-term sustainability of poultry production, processing and value-adding in the Northern Victoria region, and to maximise the attractiveness of the region as a location for investment in sustainable and biologically secure poultry business operations". Since its establishment in 2006, NPC has implemented a work program committed to collaboration among the members in both commercial and regional development oriented projects.

Since 2006 NPC has collaborated with Buloke Shire in helping existing growers to diversify into poultry production, to shift from growing turkeys to other forms of poultry, and to find sites for new growers. Currently there are 10 Layer sheds and 17 Broiler sheds in operation in Buloke. Projects now in progress will result in a total of 26 sheds for layers (table egg production) and 27 broiler sheds (meat production) with 34.5 new jobs. There are also expansions occurring in pigs and feedlots.

As well, NPC has worked with Buloke Shire to produce investment guides for poultry and other intensive livestock enterprises (piggeries and lot-feeding) and a regional approach to planning for intensive livestock. A feasibility assessment for processing poultry waste and manufacturing fertiliser and other value-added products is in progress. The Shire's involvement with NPC requires minimal resourcing, although the work generated by alliance projects does consume a proportion of economic development staff time.

# STRATEGY 6

## MAXIMIZE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM POTENTIAL THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

### WIMMERA MALLEE TOURISM

A regional collaboration between four rural council areas to ensure that the tourism profile of the region is lifted. West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarriambiack and Buloke Shire Councils have similar tourism infrastructure challenges and opportunities and work together to promote the region, attract funding sources, create destination material and combine limited tourism operation resources.

Successful projects have included the Wimmera Mallee Tourism website and destination guides in print and online material, photo competitions and presence at Melbourne and Adelaide caravan and camping shows.

### CENTRAL VICTORIAN GREENHOUSE ALLIANCE

The CVGA works across Central and Northern Victoria to support twelve local government with climate change mitigation and adaptation activities. CVGA helps them to develop and implement innovative regional initiatives to benefit their local communities and the economy.

Since launching in 2001, the Alliance has facilitated numerous large scale projects and these continue to have a positive impact in the community. Over the past five years, the Alliance has led projects worth over \$50m worth in our region. We advocate on behalf of our member councils to ensure the voice of local government is heard strongly in state and federal policy settings.

Benefits to Buloke Shire Council have included the streetlights program, heat mapping, solar savers and tree audits of our main townships.

### WIMMERA DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (WDA)

WDA is the Wimmera Southern Mallee region's peak sustainable development body. It has a role is to work with the community and governments to attract new investment, lobby for improved regional infrastructure, further develop existing business, promote the Wimmera's sustainable development opportunities, and project manage significant initiatives on behalf of the local councils.

WDA is an established link between industry and government and has a proven track record in attracting new development to the region. Formally, WDA covers the municipalities of Horsham Rural City and the Shires of West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians and Yarriambiack. WDA is aware that the Councils in the region have their own economic development staff units. It works in a supportive role, brings additional resources, and largely focuses on projects which extend across the region.

Buloke Shire's location for State government administration (in the Loddon Mallee North region) technically places it outside the Wimmera Southern Mallee. However, it is unarguable that Buloke Shire shares most characteristics of the demographically smaller Wimmera local government areas (Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh and West Wimmera) and is within the Rural City of Horsham's economic 'sphere of influence'. As a result, Buloke is logically part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Economic Region as well.

WDA has recognised the appropriateness of including Buloke Shire in regional initiatives, and the Shire has benefited from participating in many WDA projects including; the establishment of a regional Weather Radar Station and the Socio Economic impact of recreational water resources in the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

WDA's current projects include several initiatives which have major implications for economic development in Buloke, and in which Buloke Shire should be an active participant, namely:

- Including Buloke in the recently funded WDA and Wimmera Mallee Tourism partnership program (governance and destination management) and Aboriginal Tourism plans (Wotjabuluk Tourism). WDA will offer Buloke Shire a position on the Steering Group.
- Grains Network Centre of Excellence (GCoE): A cooperative network (virtual centre) and a physical facility which participates in, and leverages; training, agri-technologies, research, niche and mainstream product development and tourism.
- AgTIDE (Ag-Technical Innovation, Development and Extension) project. This project is about 'getting on with it' in the Wimmera Southern Mallee by delivering and embedding digital solutions to improve agricultural production across the supply chain. The AgTIDE proposal reflects a solid regional investment to support local farm businesses to use the latest digital technology, with local project development, planning and implementation.

# STRATEGY 7 TOURISM EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

It is important that Council builds on the experience that tourists have whilst in the Buloke Shire Council and wider tourism precinct area to ensure the maximum dollar can be captured.

- **The Buloke Tourism Board** has been used primarily as a communication and coordinating group for tourism related activities across the shire. Their role should be strengthened and supported to ensure they have the necessary administrative support and strategic context to progress the shire wide tourism experience.
- **The number of events held in the Buloke Shire Council is significant**, however the brand recognition is often difficult to garner. Curating an events calendar that showcases these events and looking at passive event engagement such as half day and full day app led visitation would strengthen the tourism experience and financial viability of events that are also enjoyed by Buloke residents.
- **Collaboration with a range of partners** including Wimmera Mallee Tourism, Mallee Regional Partnerships and Registered Aboriginal Parties to attract funding sources, improve communication, develop relevant marketing material including visitor information and furthering this to other tourism development projects such as tours.
- **Prepare a Buloke Country Marketing Plan** that has its own tourism centered style guide that can then be used across a range of different promotional material including print and online. This may extend to updating online material about the tourism facilities within our communities and also clear visitor signage.

The marketing plan should also consider the destination name, identification of clear points of difference and inclusion of appropriate cultural heritage information and commissioned professional photography.



# STRATEGY 8

## PROMOTE THE ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE BULOKE SHIRE

**Buloke Shire Council has the geographical benefits that make investment in solar and wind energy attractive** if the correct infrastructure was developed to ensure the energy could be transmitted.

With two wind energy facilities in the southern part of the Shire and large open areas for solar; the policy settings for council encourage alternate energy development. The inadequacy of the transmission infrastructure has stifled development in this field and Council needs to continue to advocate for improvements.

There are also economic development opportunities from smaller scale alternate energy programs including:

- Integrated water management
- Battery storage
- Small scale township projects
- Self-powered Intensive Animal Husbandry developments

**The market for landfill waste and recycling matter is currently being challenged** and there are new opportunities for markets that are able to develop waste stream.

These opportunities for jobs and economic growth include waste to energy production, upcycling and new product development. Again Council needs to ensure its land use policy settings and investment environment that considers its geographic advantages are emphasised.

**The securing of native vegetation on farming land for the purpose of offset trading** is becoming an attractive economic development pursuit with the new offset market pricing mechanisms being attractive long term returns for property owners. This includes legislative changes that allow owners to pre sell offsets prior to securing them on Title and therefore having a guaranteed return on investment prior to outlay.



# ACTION PLAN

ACTIONS	INDICATIVE TIMING
<b>ENHANCE THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE WITHIN THE BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL</b>	
1. Continue to actively seek Intensive Animal Husbandry opportunities including achieving critical mass for value adding options from waste stream or for feed and litter.	2019
2. Support and advocate for automation ventures such as AgTide,	2020-2021
<b>BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO FACILITATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM</b>	
1. Conduct research to identify gaps in services and products across the Shire and build business cases to attract private sector investors.	2019-2020
2. Identify knowledge and skill gaps amongst business as well as preferences for training solutions.	Late 2019
3. Establish a Buloke Economic Development and Tourism Board with representation from a range of towns and areas (Agriculture, Retail, Tourism) to provide advisory input to Council on local priorities.	2019
4. Implement a business support system to interface with business and Council.	2020
5. Support town communities to establish and oversee community enterprises in meeting local needs.	2018
<b>ENSURE COUNCILS CONTINUED AND STRENGTHENED INVESTMENT IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT</b>	
1. Agree on the whole-of-council coordination of new business and business expansion, with nominated case officers.	Late 2018
2. Decide on the most appropriate package of business and investment incentives to send a welcoming message to business.	2019-Early 2020 for 20/21 Draft Budget
3. Review the Municipal Strategic Statement and other Council documents to ensure land use strategies are attractive to investment.	2020

ACTIONS	INDICATIVE TIMING
<b>SECURE APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO IMPROVE LIVEABILITY AND INVESTMENT</b>	
1. Lobby for equity of access for Buloke businesses in accessing new technology.	2019
2. Develop a partnership to attract new technology providers and system developers to overcome current IT challenges.	2020-2021
3. Ensure the Buloke Planning Scheme provide for quality housing options and potential rural residential allotments near townships.	2020
4. Secure funding support to map current and develop new opportunities for Early Childhood education provision.	2018
<b>SECURE FUNDING FOR OUR INFRASTRUCTURE TO ATTRACT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	
1. Regular seeking of investment for critical town and rural assets through grant programs.	2019
2. Having a clear asset management plan and project priorities pipeline to ensure shovel readiness when grants are released.	2019
3. Actively lobby levels of government for improved rural funding models that address asset renewal.	2018-2021
4. With Rail Freight Alliance, campaign for improved rail freight and infrastructure.	
5. Seek opportunities to promote public transport including sustainable funding models for community and transport.	Early 2019
6. Prioritise the advocacy of streetscape upgrades.	2019

# ACTION PLAN

ACTIONS	INDICATIVE TIMING
<b>MAXIMIZE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM POTENTIAL THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS</b>	
1. Present the benefits of all formal memberships to Council for consideration.	2019
2. Active involvement in directing and participating in work programs and potential projects with partners. Consideration of how the projects lead to economic development for BSC such as BCG preparing investment guides for legumes and oilseeds.	2020-2021
3. Work with NPC on attracting intensive animal value add products.	2019
4. Participate and support WMT initiatives including production of new print and online visitor information.	2020
<b>TOURISM EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	
1. Continue a targeted community grants program to support events.	2018-2021
2. Assist with event promotion including Calendar of events online and in print.	2020
3. Feasibility if chartered air services to tourism destinations.	2020
4. Incentivise shop owners to upgrade shop facades. Council could subsidise as part of a streetscape improvement program.	Early 2019
5. Address the gaps in infrastructure facilities in towns to ensure the provision of essential, quality visitor amenities such as caravan parking, signage and improved public toilet facilities.	2019-2021
6. Develop a tourism signage strategy to encourage consistency in appearance.	2019
7. Prepare a Buloke Country marketing Plan that includes; a style guide, a brand name, inclusive information and utilises commissioned photography.	2019
8. Improve the online content about Buloke Shire's attractions and services.	2020
9. Develop thematic trails with adjacent Shires to connect self-drive and coach visitors with key attractions and supporting services.	2019
10. Improve the distribution of visitor information.	2020

ACTIONS	INDICATIVE TIMING
<b>PROMOTE THE ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE BULOKE SHIRE</b>	
1. Continue the land use policy support for alternate energy provision in the Buloke Planning Scheme whilst also providing support and active engagement with potential small scale programs.	2020
2. Develop a partnership to attract new technology providers and system developers to overcome current IT challenges.	Late 2018
3. Investigate the options for farmers to secure native vegetation offsets on their property for investment.	2019

# BULOKE'S CHANGING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

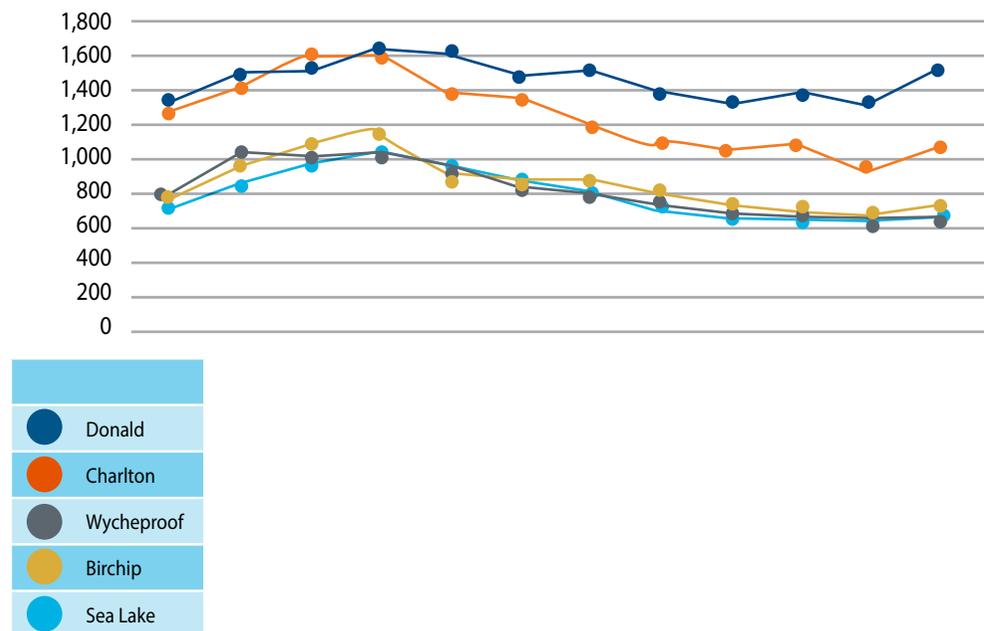
TABLE 2.2 EMPLOYMENT AND OUTPUT BY SECTOR AND INDUSTRY, BULOKE SHIRE 2016

		Buloke 2016 Employment by Industry				Buloke 2016 Output by Industry	
		Person	%	Number of People Employed	% of Total Jobs	Output 2016	% of Total Output
<b>Primary Sector</b> (agriculture, fishing, forestry and mining industries): This sector generates products from the earth's natural resources.	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	957	33.3%	727	29.24%	\$184,497,000	27.29%
	Mining	11	0.4%	9	0.36%	\$2,810,000	0.42%
	<b>Total Primary Sectors</b>			<b>736</b>	<b>29.60%</b>	<b>\$187,307,000</b>	<b>27.71%</b>
<b>Secondary Sector</b> (manufacturing, construction, electricity, gas, water and waste): This sector transforms and adds value to natural resource products.	Manufacturing	139	4.8%	81	3.26%	\$104,045,000	15.39%
	Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	29	1.0%	17	0.68%	\$3,399,000	0.50%
	Construction	138	4.8%	135	5.43%	\$59,437,000	8.79%
	<b>Total Secondary Sectors</b>			<b>233</b>	<b>9.37%</b>	<b>\$166,881,000</b>	<b>24.68%</b>
Tertiary Sector (retail trade, wholesale trade, transport, postal and warehousing): This sector provides services which deliver products to consumers.	Wholesale Trade	110	3.8%	82	3.30%	\$42,816,000	6.33%
	Retail Trade	251	8.7%	202	8.13%	\$22,118,000	3.27%
	Transport, Postal and Warehousing	154	5.4%	132	5.31%	\$13,091,000	1.94%
	<b>Total Tertiary Sectors</b>			<b>416</b>	<b>16.74%</b>	<b>\$105,531,000</b>	<b>15.61%</b>
Quaternary Sector (finance, real estate, information/ media, professional/technical/scientific, administrative, and education services): Services targeted largely to businesses, and other organisations.	Information Media and Telecommunications	10	0.4%	14	0.56%	\$40,597,000	6.00%
	Financial and Insurance Services	28	1.0%	33	1.33%	\$6,562,000	0.97%
	Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	10	0.4%	6	0.24%	\$18,546,000	2.74%
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	29	1.0%	46	1.85%	\$63,039,000	9.32%
	Administrative and Support Services	37	1.3%	42	1.69%	\$7,791,000	1.15%
	Public Administration and Safety	154	5.4%	120	4.83%	\$6,585,000	0.97%
	Education and Training	235	8.2%	244	9.81%	\$28,850,000	4.27%
	<b>Total Quaternary Sectors</b>			<b>505</b>	<b>20.31%</b>	<b>\$157,240,000</b>	<b>23.26%</b>
Quinary Sector (health, accommodation and food services, art and recreation, other personal)	Health Care and Social Assistance	319	11.1%	304	12.23%	\$25,867,000	3.83%
	Accommodation and Food Services	98	3.4%	125	5.03%	\$33,345,000	4.93%
	Arts and Recreation Services	9	0.3%	12	0.48%	\$1,212,000	0.18%
	Other Services	93	3.2%	81	3.26%	\$11,508,000	1.70%
	<b>Total Quinary Sector</b>			<b>522</b>	<b>21.00%</b>	<b>\$59,156,000</b>	<b>8.75%</b>
<b>Total: All Sectors</b>			<b>2,486</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$676,115,000</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

# THE POPULATION CHALLENGE

There is a perception among most community members consulted that, populations in the larger towns as well as the rural parts of the Shire have continued to decline in the past decade. This is not borne out by the available statistics, as shown in Table 2.5.

**TABLE 2.5 POPULATION CHANGES IN MAIN BULOKE TOWNS**



Source: ABC Censuses of Population and Housing

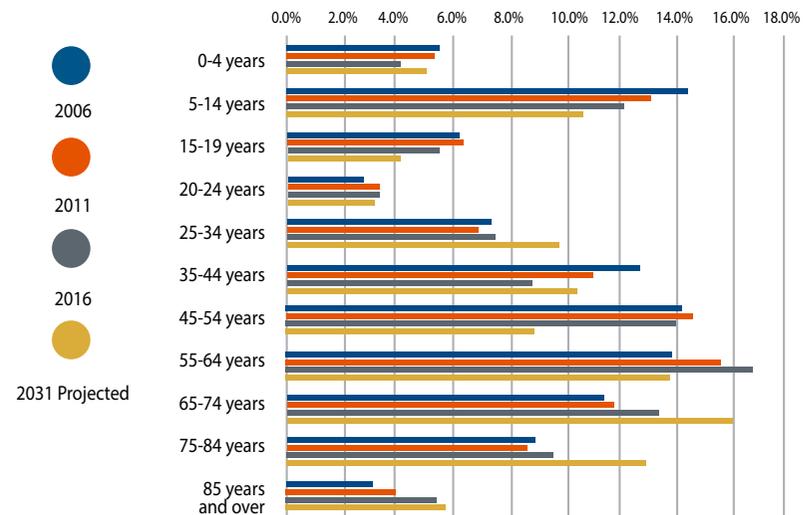
Note: Town Boundaries vary over time, so some changes reflect boundary changes rather than strict population growth or decline. The 2016 figures reflect the Australian Standard Geographic System and use "state suburb" boundaries.

## CHANGES TO HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSING

Overall in the Shire, there has been reduced demand for housing as the population has decreased (although not at the same rate as population decline, since household sizes have also declined).

Victoria in Future is the Victorian government's official projection of population and households. It includes trends and projections in birth rates, life expectancy, migration and living arrangements across all of Victoria.

**FIGURE 2.3 THE AGEING, AND PROJECTED FURTHER AGEING OF BULOKE'S POPULATION**



Reversing the population trends and future outlook by creating jobs and sustaining community and lifestyle services is a key challenge for economic development and tourism in Buloke.

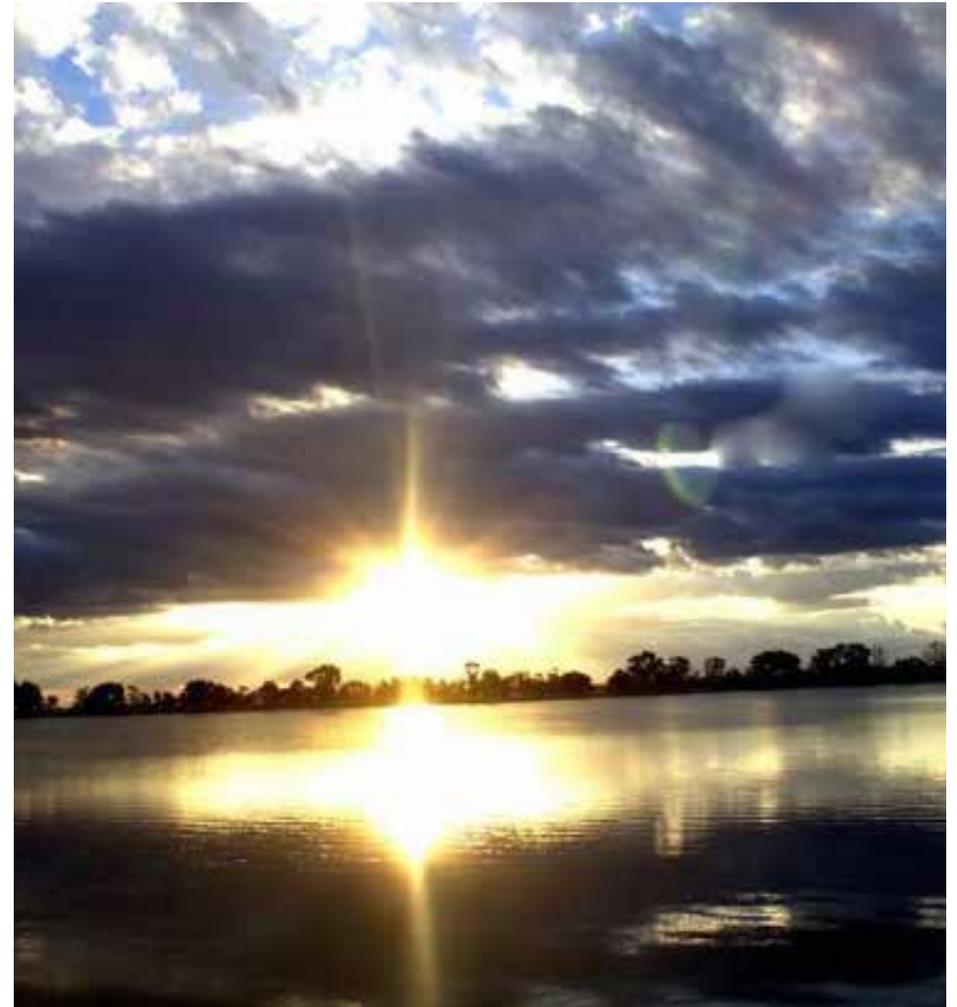
The creation of an additional 5 net new jobs per annum would build on the people employed in 2016m increasing it from 2,482 to 2,557 employed residents by 2031, if this could be achieved, the population challenge becomes far from insurmountable.

# TOURISM IN BULOKE

## MAJOR TOURISM ASSETS

### BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN FOR THIS PROJECT IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING KEY DRIVERS OF TOURISM ACTIVITY IN BULOKE SHIRE:

- **Lake Tyrrell** is Victoria's largest salt lake and is especially popular with visitors from China who are drawn to its capacity to facilitate altered-perception / reflection photography, as well as its exceptional night skies. It is also increasingly appealing to the domestic market. The Aboriginal heritage of the lake is currently being investigated and it is widely acknowledged that it has many sites of cultural significance. The lake's traditional custodians were also considered to have advanced astronomical knowledge. The lake currently receives around 40,000 visitors a year, which is anticipated to rise to more than 192,000 by 2025 with the appropriate level of investment.
- **Lakes** are a major drawcard for visitors who are interested in water sports, fishing and camping. Work is underway at many locations to enhance visitor facilities and undertake conservation initiatives.
- **History and the unique character / built heritage of each town**, including the original architecture of residences and public buildings, railway heritage, agricultural heritage, especially in grain farming, and the shire's pioneering characters are often of interest to visitors. There is also significant potential to identify and share information about local Aboriginal cultures. Unique natural attractions, such as Mount Wycheproof (the smallest mountain in the world), also specifically attract some visitors to the shire.
- **Events** – there is a range of successful annual events in the shire, including the Mallee Rally, Mallee Root RoundUp, Esoteric Dance Festival, Wycheproof Races and Charlton Film Festival, whose attendees include a significant proportion of visitors. There is also a host of smaller, community-based events that attract a small portion of tourist visitation.
- **Refreshment break** – the shire's towns host visitors travelling between Mildura and Melbourne, or touring the Wimmera Mallee, who are often seeking food, refreshment and accommodation.
- **Silo Art Trail in Yarriambiack Shire** is drawing many visitors through Buloke Shire. The further development of the trail in Buloke, as part of an extension across the Wimmera Mallee, will be a huge asset.



# TOURISM IN BULOKE

## NEW TOURISM RELATED INVESTMENT

- **Lake Tyrrell infrastructure project** – \$2.575 million has been secured to install a series of visitor information and infrastructure works to improve the safety and quality of the visitor experience, as well as protect environmental and cultural sites. The project includes interpretive signage, walking tracks, a boardwalk, toilets and vehicle parking area, including a coach turning circle. A cultural heritage study is also underway by Aboriginal Victoria.
- **Tyrrell Drive Project** – a self-drive trail which will feature five sites at various townships along Tyrrell Creek, is being facilitated by Mallee CMA with contributions from local community groups. It will include walking trails, interpretation on natural and cultural heritage, including Aboriginal history, and directional signage.
- **Charlton Park** – \$4 million has been secured to develop the sporting, recreational and cultural facilities at Charlton Park.
- **Green Lake** – \$2 million has been secured to reline and fill the lake.
- **Watchem, Wooroonook and Tchum Lakes** – nearly \$1 million has been earmarked to upgrade visitor amenities at the lakes. A slalom water skiing course is also being trialled at Tchum Lake.
- **Lake Marlbed and Tchum Lake** – Mallee CMA, in association with Barengi Gadjin Land Council and the Yibunga Group, is upgrading the walking trails, interpretation signage and visitor facilities at the lakes, which will feature the area's Aboriginal cultural and natural heritage.
- **Donald Recreation Reserve** – \$1 million has been secured to upgrade the building facilities at the recreation reserve as part of a \$2.8 million project. This will increase opportunities to host regional sporting events, supporting sports tourism in the shire.
- **Town Facilities** – investment to improve town streetscapes, traveller's rests and parklands will occur in many of the shire's towns.
- **Ten community plans** are being developed or updated in the shire during the next 12 months, with a single, overarching shire community plan to be prepared. These will provide opportunities to refresh the communities' engagement with initiatives in their town that will support tourism activity.
- **Regional tourism leadership** – a project initiated by the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership is underway to identify opportunities to enhance the marketing of the Wimmera Mallee region, including Buloke Shire. The project has three elements – (i) to identify the most appropriate governance structure to manage the tourism marketing and development of the Wimmera Mallee area; (ii) to prepare a Destination Management Plan for the Wimmera Mallee, and (iii) to undertake tourism data collection and analysis of visitation to the Silo Art Trail and other areas.

# TOURISM IN BULOKE

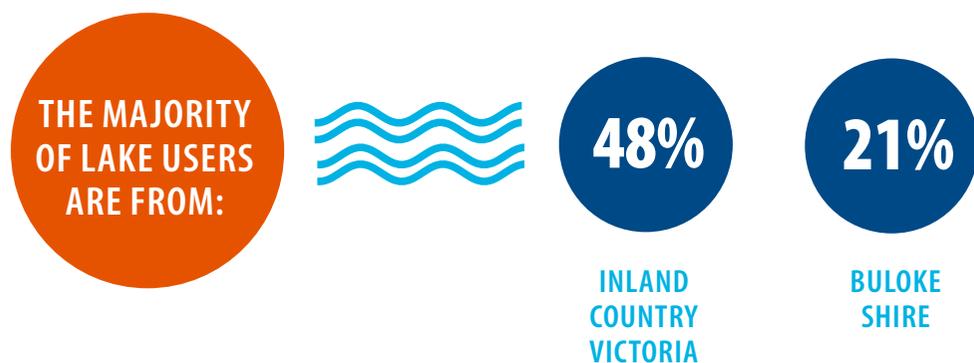
## LAKES:

Buloke Shire's lakes are among the most important attractions in the shire. This is verified by the data below which indicates that overnight lake visitors are staying nearly 4 days on average. For the four assessed lakes, over 4,000 people stayed one night or more, and there were nearly 12,000 visits by people on day trips over a one-year period.

**TABLE 3.2 BULOKE SHIRE LAKE USERS' PROFILE**

Recreational Water Facility	Visit Nights/ Person Nights	Overnight Visitors	Active Day Users	Passive Day Users
Donald Park Lake	4,742	912	2,197	3,645
Tchum Lake	3,830	1,343	2,600	1,459
Lake Watchem	3,203	1,139	900	0
Lake Wooroonook	3,630	764	1,094	0
<b>Total Buloke Shire</b>	<b>15,405</b>	<b>4,158</b>	<b>6,791</b>	<b>5,104</b>

Source: Wimmera Development Association, Wimmera Southern Mallee: Socio-Economic Value of Recreational Water, July 2017 (Street Ryan)



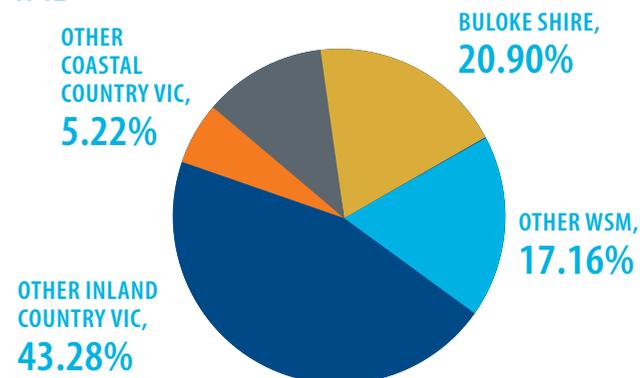
The table below indicates the level of expenditure in the shire by visitors at the four lakes, which amounts to over \$600,000 per annum. Active day users spending significantly more (\$22 per day) than passive day users (\$2 per day). Overnight visitors spent around \$110 per person per trip, or approximately \$30 per day.

**TABLE 3.3 EXPENDITURE BY LAKE USERS, BULOKE SHIRE 2016-17**

In-town*	Expenditure Overnight Visitors	Expenditure Active Day Users	Expenditure Passive Day Users	Expenditure Total Day Users	TOTAL
Donald Park Lake	\$118,550	\$48,847	\$6,379	\$55,225	\$173,775
Tchum Lake	\$112,565	\$48,750	\$3,720	\$52,470	\$165,035
Lake Watchem	\$98,552	\$19,125	\$0	\$19,125	\$117,677
Lake Wooroonook	\$129,964	\$30,670	\$0	\$30,670	\$160,634
<b>Total Buloke Shire</b>	<b>\$459,631</b>	<b>\$147,392</b>	<b>\$10,099</b>	<b>\$157,490</b>	<b>\$617,121</b>

Source: Wimmera Development Association, Wimmera Southern Mallee: Socio-Economic Value of Recreational Water, July 2017 (Street Ryan)

**FIGURE 3.2 RESIDENTIAL LOCATION OF RECREATIONAL WATER USERS IN BULOKE SHIRE 2016-1712**



# TOURISM IN BULOKE

## BULOKE TOURISM BUSINESS PROFILE

“Tourism” is not a discrete industry, because local residents as well as visitors often consume the same products and services as visitors. However, five of the standard industries (within the quaternary and quinary sectors) are classified as either ‘tourism characteristic’ or ‘tourism connected’ industries.

**TOURISM CHARACTERISTIC INDUSTRIES, INCLUDE BUSINESSES THAT ARE SIGNIFICANTLY RELIANT ON INCOME FROM VISITORS, SUCH AS ACCOMMODATION, ATTRACTIONS, TOURS, CAFES, PUBS, ETC. THE SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES ARE:**

- Accommodation and food services
- Transport, postal and warehousing
- Arts and recreation services

**TOURISM CONNECTED INDUSTRIES, INCLUDE BUSINESSES THAT PROVIDE SOME PRODUCTS/ SERVICES TO VISITORS. THE SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES ARE:**

- Retail trade
- Education and training.

**TABLE 3.4 TOURISM CHARACTERISTIC AND CONNECTED INDUSTRIES: BULOKE SHIRE TRENDS 2006-2016**

	2006	%	2011	%	2016	%	% p.a. 2006-2016	Australia %	Location Quotient
<b>Tourism Characteristic Industries</b>									
Accommodation and food services	98	3.4%	97	3.6%	125	5.0%	2.5%	6.9%	0.73
Transport, postal and warehousing	154	5.4%	173	6.3%	132	5.3%	-1.5%	4.7%	1.14
Arts and recreation services	9	0.3%	10	0.4%	12	0.5%	2.9%	1.7%	0.29
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>0.82</b>
<b>Tourism Connected Industries</b>									
Retail trade	251	8.7%	208	7.6%	202	8.1%	-2.1%	9.9%	0.82
Education and training	235	8.2%	226	8.3%	244	9.8%	0.4%	8.7%	1.13
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>-0.9%</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	<b>0.97</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>26.0%</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>26.2%</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>0.91</b>
<b>Total All Industries</b>	<b>2,876</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,726</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,486</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.00</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006-2016

Note: Location quotients for Buloke equal the percentage employed in the relevant industry sector in the region divided by the percentage employed in Australia (as a whole) in that industry sector. A location coefficient of 1.14, for example, indicates that 14% higher percentages of workers are employed in the specific industry than the percentage employed nation-wide for that industry. These location quotients show industry sectors where there is a local comparative advantage.

Recognition of tourism as an industry with the potential to make a significant economic contribution in Buloke has been very recent. Notwithstanding, employment in tourism characteristic industries in Buloke Shire has increased from 9.1% in 2006 to 10.8% in 2016; an average annual growth of 0.3% per annum (during a period when the shire as a whole had a decrease of 1.4% per annum).

Employment increased in only 7 of 19 industries in Buloke between 2006 and 2016. Three of these were in tourism related industries.

Tourism is clearly not yet a competitive industry in Buloke compared with other local areas around Victoria and Australia. This is evidenced by the relatively low ‘location quotients’ of tourism characteristic industries (location quotient of 0.82) and tourism connected industries (location quotient 0.91).



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