

REGIONAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS

NOVEMBER 2023



SHAPING
MURRINDINDI'S
FUTURE

The project is funded through the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and supported by Murrindindi Shire Council and RMIT University



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We proudly acknowledge the Taungurung and Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land we now call Murrindindi Shire.

We pay our respects to First Nations leaders and elders, past present and emerging, who are the keepers of history, traditions, knowledge and culture of this land. We commit to working in collaboration with traditional owners of this land in a spirit of reconciliation and partnership.

CONTENTS

Managing Transition	4
Smart Specialisation	5
Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project	6
The Corridor – Alexandra, Taggerty, Buxton, Marysville	
Community Workshop	7
The Place	9
The People	12
The Economy	22
Key Propulsive Sectors	24
Interviews Summary – The Place	26
Interviews Summary – The People	29
Interviews Summary – The Economy	38
Innovation and Opportunity	44
Farm Forestry	46
Sustainable Agriculture, Aquaculture and Horticulture	48
Advanced Manufacturing	50
Health, Aged Care and Social Assistance	52
Renewable Energy and Circular Economy	54
Tourism	56
References	58
Appendix	59

Managing Transition

In 2019, the Victorian Government announced the Victorian Forestry Transition Program. Under this Program, all harvesting of native forests will cease in January 2024.

Local Development Strategy grants have been made available to eleven communities across Victoria to provide support in future planning which include creating diverse industries and sustainable jobs. The funding is focused on communities impacted by the native timber cessation and supporting actions from Local Development Strategies. Using previous learnings with energy transition in the Latrobe Valley, these communities were identified as being able to benefit from the Smart Specialisation methodology to facilitate this transition.

The Victorian Forestry Program has identified four towns in Murrindindi Shire (also referred to in this document as 'the corridor') including Alexandra, Taggerty, Buxton and Marysville. This resulted in the creation of Shaping Murrindindi's Future project.

The project is funded through the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and is supported locally by Murrindindi Shire Council with research support from Latrobe Valley Authority and RMIT University.

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

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

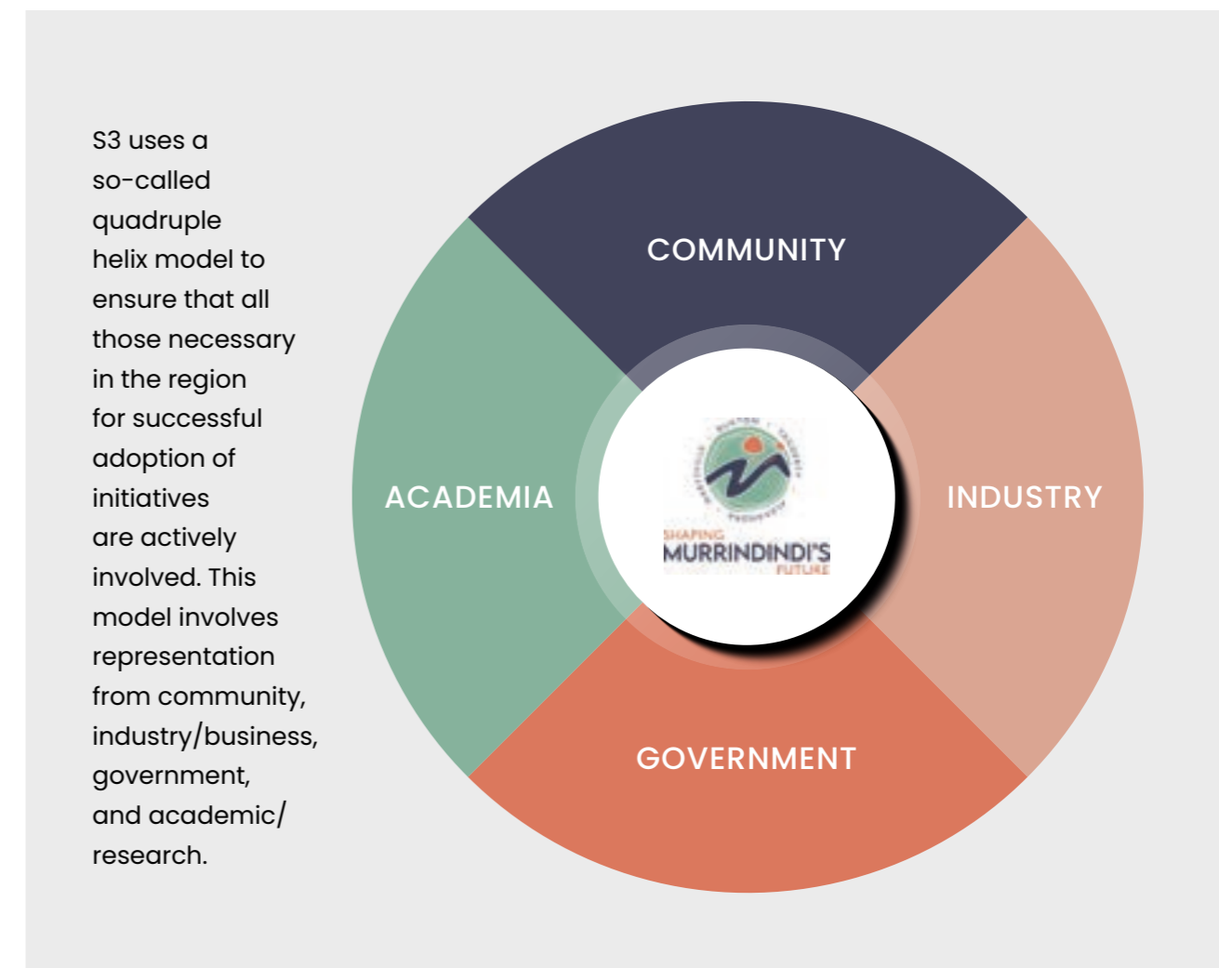
The Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project Manager will be working with the community over the next 2 years to identify areas of strengths, assets, challenges, and to further develop the region's unique opportunities for innovation and the ensuing social and economic development.

Smart Specialisation

What is Smart Specialisation?

The Local Development Strategy utilises Smart Specialisation which is a place based entrepreneurial process of discovery that can reveal economic activity where a region excels or has the potential to excel in the future.

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



Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project

Local Development Strategy

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

The project will be locally led and undertaken with key stakeholders in community, government, and research. This document represents Stage 1 of the project, and has collated information through community consultation and desktop analysis to identify evidence based innovation opportunities that can be developed further. These aim to deliver economic and social benefits that contribute to a thriving and positive future for the community.



WE ARE HERE



Community Workshops

May 2023 - Hosted by Dr Paul Ryan

Shaping Murrindindi's Future Launch events held in May 2023, were designed to start conversations on the cessation of native timber, and to identify strengths and competitive advantages in the region that could be leveraged to build a collaborative innovative ecosystem. The following table, using a 3 Horizon approach show the top responses over the two workshops where over 100 community members participated.

Values to keep in the community – H1

Top Responses

1. Maintain and preserve the natural environment – fire management, forest and land management, access tracks and use of forest, farm forestry, natural beauty, natural resources.
2. Sense of community, country and rural lifestyle, connected and caring community, conversations about the future and working together.
3. Education, health services, and local sporting clubs and associations
4. Outdoor recreation and activities
5. Support for local businesses, and buying local

What is currently lacking H1

Top Responses

1. Lack of education opportunities meaning students and families are leaving the area- decrease in skilled staff available, older population, disengagement, closure of local sporting clubs due to lack of numbers
2. Lack of local support services – health, aged care, childcare, banking, transport
3. Lack of housing, affordability of rentals and availability
4. Volunteering – same people getting involved- want to encourage younger generations
5. Lack of growth and direction for the community – some disconnect

Ideas for change H2

Top Responses

1. Clear future sustainable management for the forest and the natural environment
2. Thoughtful planning towards housing, employment and education
3. Agriculture and aquaculture- innovative change to improve productivity and support young and new generations to move into farming
4. New business start-ups, small business incubator
5. Innovation opportunities in ecotourism

Future state H3

Top Responses

1. Sustainable economy and livelihoods- access to adequate services in education and health, increase in employment and long-term opportunities, thriving community encouraging others to move and live here
2. Sustainable business and agriculture- shops in main street open for trade, farm-to-plate concepts, circular economy, diverse industries, buying local, business support and efficiency.
3. Affordable housing
4. Innovative education opportunities- students stay in the region and have opportunities after school
5. Range of key attractions to the area, sustainable tourism without losing the rural community feel

The Place

The Corridor – Alexandra, Taggerty, Buxton, Marysville

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



Alexandra is the largest of the four towns in the corridor. It has traditionally been a service town and is made up of a diverse range of industries and businesses that cater to local needs and tourists.

The township provides most basic services, with a hospital, primary schools, high school, supermarket, petrol stations, hardware store, post office, library, doctors, several pubs, cafes and a variety of other retail options within the main shopping precinct. There are several zoned industrial areas within the town which foster a range of commercial businesses in manufacturing, processing, and service provision.

The town plays host to several key events annually including the Beanie Festival, Christmas Tree Festival, Open Gardens, Community Christmas Carols, Rodeo, and Truck, Rod & Ute show. The latter being the biggest single community event in the whole Murrindindi Shire, attracting over 10,000 people during the King’s Birthday weekend.

Taggerty and Buxton are smaller in population. There is less commercial infrastructure in these towns.

Taggerty houses a general store (including post office), community hub, local hall, Country Fire Authority, and tourist accommodation options including Bed and Breakfasts and Big4 caravan park. Taggerty hosts the four seasons' markets during key long weekends across the year and provides an annual community Christmas celebration. Buxton also remains a small township with a roadhouse, petrol station (including post office), pub, primary school, local hall, CFA, Salmon and Trout Farm and Buxton Mountain Bike Park.

The surrounding areas are predominately farming or forested land with some noteworthy agricultural businesses that leverage the unique environmental conditions to produce trout, caviar, beef, truffles, cherries, boutique wineries, tea and turf lawns. Hancock Victorian Plantations manage an area of plantation timber in the Buxton area.

Marysville is a well-known destination town and relies heavily on the visitor economy and tourism.

It is surrounded by a wealth of natural resources and offers a diverse range of outdoor activities. Lake Mountain is the closest alpine ski resort to Melbourne. Other key tourist attractions in the local area include Steavenson Falls, one of Victoria's highest waterfalls, Lady Talbot Drive, a scenic drive through rainforest, Keppel Falls lookout and the Beeches.

Marysville has an abundance of tourist accommodation options from small B&Bs, cottages, a motel, hotel and conference centre. Other services and businesses include several cafes, bakery, take away shops, boutique shops, pub, ski hire and supermarket. There is a kindergarten and primary school.

The MiRA centre functions as a tourist information centre and regional arts and community space. Marysville was significantly impacted by the 2009 Black Saturday fires. Around 90% of the town's buildings were destroyed and the official death toll from the disaster was 45. Since 2009 the recovery effort to rebuild the town has been ongoing.

The Connection to the Forest

The region has a strong history and connection to forestry and logging, and European settlement in the 1830s had a profound impact on the natural landscape.

With extensive clearing of vegetation to make way for timber milling, logging quickly became a major industry in the district, followed by gold mining, trout farming, and dairy/agriculture. Many of the region's local towns were established during the 1850s and 1860s.

Sawmills were established in the north and east of Melbourne to cater for the rapid increase in population. It is estimated there was in excess of 80 sawmills operating in Murrindindi Shire at any one time. Over 2.5 million feet of timber was sent out of the district between 1907 and 1925. Bushfires in 1939 however, devastated the district, with 12 lives lost, a large number of sawmills burnt down, and access to quality timber limited. With the exhaustion of saw logs and pulp logs, the area's milling industry declined gradually at first, but more rapidly by 1955, with the 1960s seeing the virtual cessation of supplies from the region. As recently as 2018 saw the closure of the last sawmill in Murrindindi Shire, with the consequent loss of jobs.

The communities of the Murrindindi Shire have a long and deep relationship with forest management, where timber harvesting was one of the major industries, to the devastation of forest fires in 1939, 2006 and most recently 2009, and now with the increase in outdoor education, recreation and nature based tourism. The forests of Murrindindi Shire are also highly regarded for being rich in biodiversity and home to some of Australia's critically endangered species. One of those, is the Leadbeater's Possum.

"The story of the Leadbeater's Possum is a remarkable one"

- Museums Victoria

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

The People

The Alexandra-Marysville corridor has a usual resident population of 4,298 (Census 2023) with almost equal distribution of male and female. During 2016- 2021 the corridor saw an annualised population growth rate of 1.7%, however this changed in 2021- 2022 with only 0.48% growth.

Population

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

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023) (Taggerty suburb profile changes (CENSUS) in 2011 means prior population data is not comparable.)



Median age for this corridor is 53 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023), which is high compared to the states 38 years. Marysville has the highest median age at 59 years, while Alexandra has the lowest at 51 years.

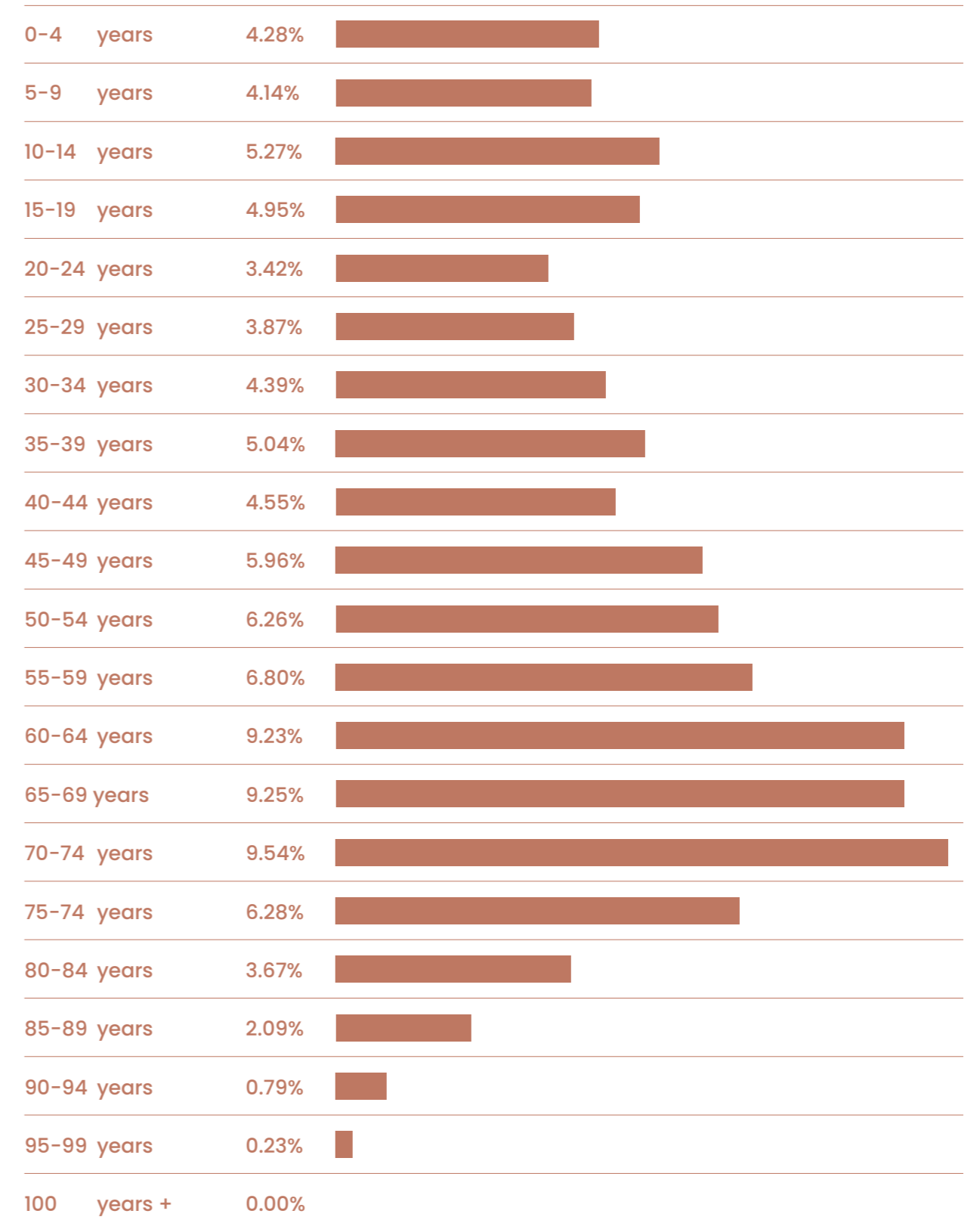
The largest lifestyle age group is 'Retirement' (65-79 years) representing 25.2% of the overall population. The single largest age cohort is 70-74 years, with 424 people representing 9.19% of the population.

Median Age

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

There is an ever increasing aging population within the corridor, with the largest lifestyle group (Retirement 65-79 years) representing 25.2% of the overall population. The following graph outlines the age cohorts, and percentage of population.

Age Group Percentages in the Corridor



(REMPPLAN 2023)

Socio Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) have been created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) from social and economic Census information.

Murrindindi Shire has two mid-sized and two small towns that score below the regional Victorian average (986) on the SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage. These towns are Yea, Alexandra, Eildon and Hazeldene.

Between 36–46% of these populations have low incomes and all have lower than average public housing. All but Hazeldene have a greater proportion of people aged over 65 and all have a higher proportion of single parent families. Only Alexandra has a higher than average multicultural mix.

Localities with SEIFA RSD scores

A higher score is better, and shows less disadvantage.

Melbourne Metro	1022
Victoria	1000
The Corridor	991
Regional Victoria	986
Alexandra	971
Hazeldene	963
Yea	937
Eildon	914

Murrindindi Shire LGA in general compared to the State Average

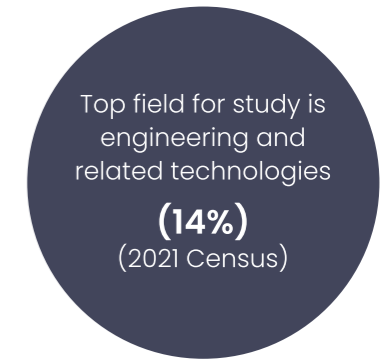
- The LGA has an unemployment rate of 4.6% compared to 5.8%
- One in five (20%) of those aged between 15 and 19 are not engaged in work or further education or training
- One fifth of those employed are semi skilled or unskilled workers (19%)
- The LGA is “accessible” by the Accessibility and Remoteness Index Compared to the Hume averages
- Fewer households have no internet (44% compared to 47%)
- Fewer residents report their area has good facilities and services like shops, childcare, schools, libraries (62% compared to 79%)
- Fewer residents report their area has easy access to recreational and leisure facilities (60% compared to 79%)
- Fewer residents report their area has a wide range of community and support groups (64% compared to 70%)
- More residents report they have experienced transport limitations (34% compared to 20%)
- The area has a lower rate of low care aged care places (41 compared to 51 per 1000 population eligible)
- The area has a lower rate of high care aged care places (32 compared to 41 per 1000 population eligible)

Change and Disadvantage in the Hume Region, Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, State Government Victoria, 2011

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

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

Nearly half the population (41%) has completed Year 12, compared to the state average of 59.5%, with a further 35% who have completed Year 10 or 11 (REMPAN 2023). Of the overall highest level of educational attainment 21.8% listed Certificate III or IV, 10% listed an Advanced Diploma and Diploma level, and 20% listed Bachelor level degree (Census 2023). There is support for young people wanting to work with a business in a school based apprenticeship through the help of Headstart, an education funded program, and Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network.



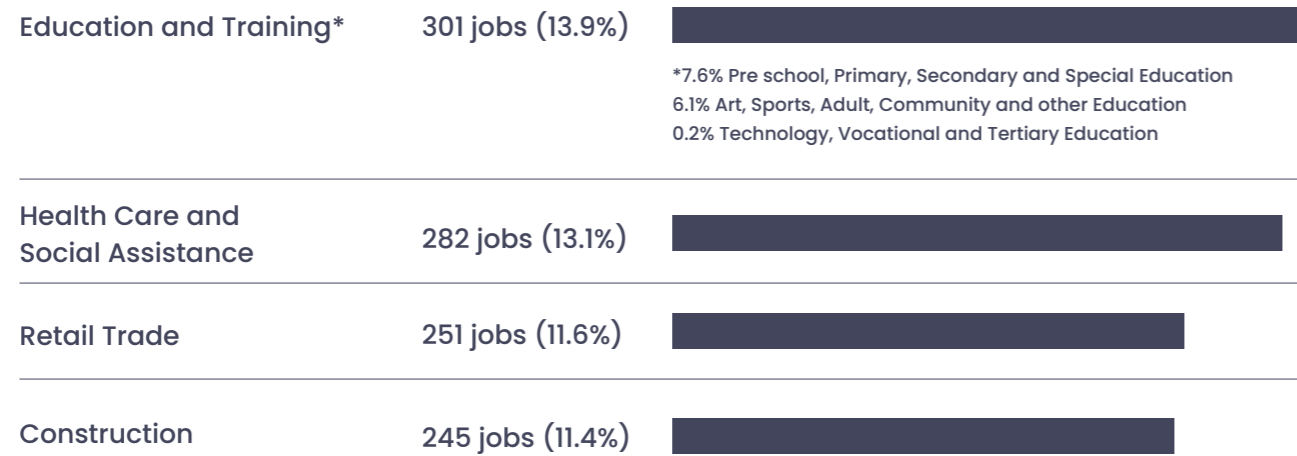
The total labour force participation rate within the corridor is 50.83%. Of those employed 17.5% are Community and personal service workers, followed by Managers (16%), Technical and trades (15.5%), Professionals (15%), and Labourers (12%).

Labour Force Status	Persons	%
Not in the labour force	1,666	43.31%
Employed, worked full-time	963	25.03%
Employed, worked part-time	746	19.39%
Employed, worked away from home	185	4.81%
Unemployed, looking for full-time work	35	0.91%
Unemployed, looking for rpart-time work	26	0.68%
Not Stated	225	5.85%
Total	3,847	100.00%

(REMPAN 2023)

More people aged 45- 54 are employed than any other age group

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



(REMPAN 2023)

Tourism creates 295 of these jobs covering all industries. Of the above jobs 1,110 workers live and work in the corridor, 1,048 work within the corridor but live outside the area, and 506 workers live in the corridor but work outside the area.



Top 3 Industry of Employment by township

Town	First	Second	Third
Alexandra	Health care and social assistance	Retail trade	Public Administration and Safety
Taggerty	Construction	Accommodation and Food services	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
Buxton	Accommodation and Food Services	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	Construction
Marysville	Accommodation and Food services	Education and Training	Public Administration and Safety

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023)

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

Median Weekly Income

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

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023)

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

ALEXANDRA

DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA
7,943
HECTARES



POPULATION
2,480
48.6% MALE 51.4% FEMALE

MEDIAN AGE
52 ALEXANDRA
38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME
\$616 ALEXANDRA
\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

WORKFORCE
50.2% ALEXANDRA
62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

VOLUNTEERING
22.9% ALEXANDRA
13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL	ALEXANDRA	VICTORIA
COMPLETED YEAR 12	11%	14.9%
CERTIFICATE LEVEL	19.2%	14.3%
DIPLOMA & BEYOND	24.6%	39%



TOP 5 JOBS



TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



TAGGERTY

DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA
12,257
HECTARES



POPULATION
405
50.5% MALE 49.5% FEMALE

MEDIAN AGE
52 TAGGERTY
38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME
\$616 TAGGERTY
\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

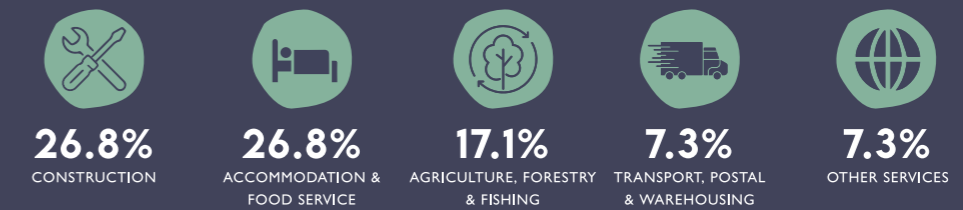
WORKFORCE
52.7% TAGGERTY
62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

VOLUNTEERING
27.5% TAGGERTY
13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL	TAGGERTY	VICTORIA
COMPLETED YEAR 12	9.9%	14.9%
CERTIFICATE LEVEL	22.2%	14.3%
DIPLOMA & BEYOND	31%	39%



TOP 5 JOBS



TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



BUXTON

DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA
6,136
HECTARES



POPULATION
591
50.9% MALE 49.1% FEMALE

MEDIAN AGE
53 BUXTON
38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME
\$698 BUXTON
\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

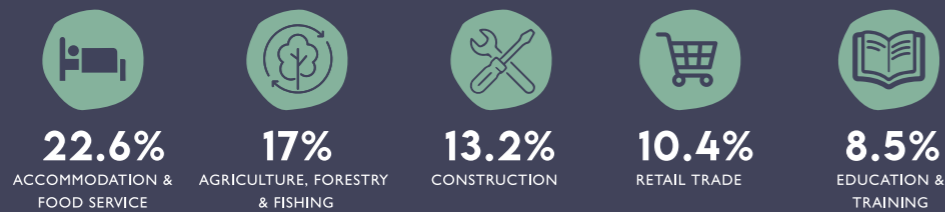
WORKFORCE
58.3% BUXTON
62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

VOLUNTEERING
22% BUXTON
13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL	BUXTON	VICTORIA
COMPLETED YEAR 12	9.4%	14.9%
CERTIFICATE LEVEL	25.4%	14.3%
DIPLOMA & BEYOND	28.8%	39%



TOP 5 JOBS



TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



MARYSVILLE

DISTRICT PROFILE & MAP

LAND AREA
19,627
HECTARES



POPULATION
501
52.3% MALE 47.7% FEMALE

MEDIAN AGE
59 MARYSVILLE
38 VICTORIA COMPARISON

MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME
\$597 MARYSVILLE
\$803 VICTORIA COMPARISON

WORKFORCE
45.5% MARYSVILLE
62.4% VICTORIA COMPARISON

VOLUNTEERING
30.2% MARYSVILLE
13.3% VICTORIA COMPARISON

HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL	MARYSVILLE	VICTORIA
COMPLETED YEAR 12	10.8%	14.9%
CERTIFICATE LEVEL	22.5%	14.3%
DIPLOMA & BEYOND	34%	39%



TOP 5 JOBS



TOP 5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT



The Economy

REMPAN 2023 data shows that the gross industry output generated for the Alexandra- Marysville corridor was \$607.4 million.

Industry Output

Construction dominated the area's economic output with 21% contributing over \$128 million. Of that total, \$61 million is in residential building construction, \$48 million in construction services, and \$15 million in heavy and civil engineering construction. Second is Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing with 11.7% contributing over \$71 million. Of that total \$46 million (7.6%) is in livestock, grains and other agriculture, \$11.8million (2%) in forestry and logging, and \$11.3 million (1.9%) in aquaculture.

Third highest output is Public Administration and Safety which contributes 9.7% or \$58.7 million. There are multiple federal, state and local government agencies in Alexandra including Murrindindi Shire Council, VicForests, Parks Vic, and Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action. Fourth is Manufacturing with 9.6% contributing \$58.3 million.

Regional Exports

Agriculture is the highest industry for regional exports, contributing 25% of the regions total or \$57.6 million. Construction is second, contributing 19.8% or \$45 million. Third is Public Administration and Safety at 14.1% or \$32.4 million, fourth Accommodation and Food Services at 11.5% or \$26.3 million, and fifth highest is Manufacturing at 10.6% or \$24.4 million.



Tourism contributes over

\$94 million & 493 jobs to the Murrindindi Shire's economy

(REMPAN 2023)

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

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

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

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

Key Propulsive Industries

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

The highest performing industries in terms of economic activity are:

Construction (4)

Health and social assistance (2)

Public admin and safety (2)

Accommodation and food services (2)

Agriculture, fishing and forestry (2)

No other industry scored more than 1 point.

DEFINITIONS

Value Added

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

Employment

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

Regional Exports

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

Backward Linkages

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



Interviews Summary: The Place

110 INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED TO PROVIDE A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE CORRIDOR'S STRENGTHS AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES. INTERVIEWS WITH REPRESENTATION FROM COMMUNITY (39%), BUSINESS (41%), GOVERNMENT (15%) AND EDUCATION (5%).

During the interview process many identified the natural environment as being the key asset to the region.

The tall and dense mountain forest grow at higher elevations, where the temperature is cool and wet. These comprise mainly of regrowth of mountain ash with shining gum, mountain grey gum and messmate (The Murrindindi Forest, Mal McKinty 2021). A variety of other species grow in the foothills including manna gum, while drier locations support red/brown stringy barks and broadleaf peppermint.

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

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

There are currently seventeen private timber plantations already established in the Shire ranging in size from two hectares to fifty hectares.

This number is increasing as property owners discover the benefits of planting small scale mixed hardwood timber forests to improve soil and pasture, grow a future investment and timber source, sequester carbon in the trees and create options for economic value in carbon offset credits, and diversify the landscape with multiple use biodiversity. One site in Taggerty has trialled over 130 different tree species over the last forty years and is now used as a demonstration and training site. Local Farm Foresters are well connected in agroforestry both nationally and internationally, researching and comparing Australian agroforestry methods and networks with those in the United Kingdom and Germany with a particular interest in sourcing and processing peeler logs. They recently hosted a field day on their property in Kanumbra with over 70 participants attending, and were hosts of a Master Treegrower course in 2022, with 30 attendees over the course of the 8 week workshop.

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

The natural environment is a strong drawcard for visitors to the area who can participate in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities and take in breathtaking views, uncrowded places and enjoy the rural serenity.

Visitors can experience state and national parks, discover waterfalls, scenic lookouts, pristine waterways, historic bridges, fern gullies and magnificent mountain ash and eucalypt forest all within two hours from Melbourne.

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

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

There are a range of Mountain Bike Parks and tracks located in Buxton, Lake Mountain, and Eildon.

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

Murrindindi Shire Tourism and Events Strategy

“From a local community perspective, trails are important infrastructure that support recreational and fitness activities, such as walking, cycling and running”

Murrindindi Shire Tourism and Events Strategy



Interviews Summary: **The People**

Over 50% of interviewees identified the community spirit is a key strength of the area.

We heard that it is the people who are at the heart of small regional towns making them tick and creating a sense of community. This fosters a strong sense of belonging within the communities.

These are towns where people know each other, look out for each other and support each other. During the interviews, people commonly described their towns as being friendly, welcoming, caring, and supportive. People acknowledged the value of the great community spirit in the corridor with a can-do attitude and willingness to help out where possible. There is a wide variety of community groups, social groups, sporting groups and other interest groups along with a varied range of local community led events which adds to the positive community vibrancy within the corridor.

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

“The people are the biggest asset within our community”

Local Resident

In the last 12 months **25%** or 924 people in the corridor volunteer compared to state average of **13%**

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

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

Local Resident

Population growth has been relatively slow in Murrindindi compared to that of neighbouring municipalities Mitchell and Mansfield, and the devastation of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires is at the forefront of everyone’s mind, which destroyed lives, properties, homes, and entire communities.

It has been and will continue to be a long road to recovery and rebuilding. The threat of future bush fire has been raised as a major concern for people living in this region. The community are quite supportive of growth in tourism and encouraging professionals and families to move to the area, however, still wants to preserve the rural lifestyle and community feel.

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

“Businesses with 20 or more employees are the most likely to collaborate for innovation opportunities compared to those with zero to 4 employees who are the least likely”

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023.

While there is no training facility in Murrindindi, education providers such as GOTAFE are working closely with local communities and businesses to offer a range of short courses and subsidised certificate courses to better support job seekers and businesses looking for skilled or qualified staff.

They currently offer a mobile service to Alexandra twice yearly working with the Alexandra hub to run courses. GOTAFE and CRLEN (Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network) are working collaboratively with the high schools to provide VET courses and assist students wanting to commence school-based apprenticeships.

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

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

Families are quite supportive of the local schools and offerings and acknowledge how hard the educators work in this space. However, parents have shown concern for future opportunities as their child enters high school.

Several families have chosen or will likely chose to send their child outside the region to attend a private high school or a school offering a larger range of elective subjects.



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

Local Resident

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

Local Resident

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

Local Resident

“We have recognised this as a significant challenge and are currently exploring the development of a local Tertiary Education Hub to be based in the Shire.

This will address and support critical skills training and development, remove the distance barriers, and improve accessibility to Education. A skills-based represented steering committee has been formed, and early discussions have already commenced with GOTAFE, CRLLEN and other education providers”

Murrindindi Shire Council

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

CEO, CRLLEN

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

Businesses from all over the Shire have expressed the extensive challenges in finding and retaining suitable, or suitably skilled staff.

This pressure is being felt throughout all industries across the Shire in hospitality, trades and manufacturing, health and aged care, transport services, farming, and retail services. Parents wanting to return to the workforce are faced with limited childcare services locally, and although they are ready and willing to return to the workforce, they have been unable to.

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

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

Local Business

“We simply cannot get the workforce needed by the business”

Local Business

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

Local Business

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

Employers in the corridor have stated the housing shortage is the number one reason they have been unable to fill staffing positions.

Insufficient housing options and suitability in all areas of the Shire could be limiting growth potential and opportunities to encourage new residents, families, and skilled professional employees.

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

Local Resident

“We are facing a critical shortage of housing to accommodate the existing and growing demand in the Shire.

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

Murrindindi Shire Council

While only 2.5% of the population stated they did not have a motor vehicle, transport and accessibility have been raised as a big challenge for locals, especially for those requiring access to medical services, or youth needing to travel to TAFE or University that may not own a vehicle or have the capacity to drive.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023)

There is a daily bus service from Eildon, Marysville, Alexandra to Melbourne (Bus Route 684), however locals have mentioned timetables can be difficult to align with appointments.

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

Local Resident

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

Local Resident

3 Key enablers that have been clearly identified throughout this process include:

**Worker Housing
Childcare &
Available/Suitable
Industrial Land.**

Although these have not been identified as opportunities it will be important to find innovating ways of addressing these shortages to ensure the success of future economic development.



Interviews Summary: The Economy

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

The bulk of agriculture output is predominately beef and sheep, with other large enterprises in trout, turf lawns and cherry farming.

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

“100% of our grown beef and lamb is sold locally”

Local Farmer

A strong and expanding agriculture and horticulture sector also brings its challenges with energy, sewerage, and waste and businesses are looking for innovative sustainable circular economy models to assist.

Small scale renewable energy is being utilised successfully by businesses in the Shire, with many taking up financial incentives offered by government agencies such as Sustainability Victoria.

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

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

Local Resident

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

Local Resident

It is estimated there will be more than 1,000 tonne of waste produced in the Shire each year from the cherry season alone.

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

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

Local Producer

Alexandra is a hub for newly advanced manufacturing businesses. There are a few examples of businesses that were created from scratch in a home garage (for example Hunted Engineering and Dindi Naturals) and in less than ten years have turned that concept into a booming unique and professional business employing over twenty staff.

There are manufacturing businesses ready for expansion of services and staff, including Snow Composites, Hunted Engineering, Helico, and Dindi Naturals. These types of businesses are recognised in the community as being innovative, daring and creative. Their brand and service is highly sought after in both national and international markets.

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

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

“Murrindindi Shire Council through its network of towns has many bespoke industrial and manufacturing businesses.

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

Murrindindi Shire Council

Having such a large and growing ‘Retirement’ age cohort will put additional pressure on current Health and Aged Care Services which will need to be able to expand and grow to suit the demand.

As with most regional areas, expansion of these services comes with its challenges too. The COVID pandemic impacted these services dramatically especially in aged care where there needed to be more qualified nurses on site. Given the already limited availability of skilled and qualified nurses in the area, this meant that these specialist aged care providers have had to reduce their services and capacity further.

“In 5 to 10 years the corridor will not have sufficient staff to cater for this age group”

Local Health Care Provider

The hospitals have faced similar challenges, and where there was once a broad range of surgeries offered, it has now been reduced from a risk management perspective impacting and removing majority of surgical procedures in the region

While endoscopy and eye surgery can be conducted locally, all other speciality surgeries have been removed. Employers are concerned staff will continue to leave because of limited services and no opportunities to further training and development and are unsure how to attract new professionals to the area.

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

As a way of combating the staff shortages and to help rebuild regional capacity, Menzies Support Services, Kellock Lodge, Darlingford Nursing Home, both Alexandra and Yea Hospital, and GOTAFE are working together to receive government funding to research new innovative working models that will better connect these services and help diversify, expand the workforce and create new pathways to support their staffing needs.

These providers are willing and ready to diversify, grow their business models, and provide better and more effective services to the community. Menzies have available industrial land and infrastructure that could be better utilised to support such expansion and growth.

“We need to find ways to attract qualified professional health care workers to regional areas”

Local Health Care Provider

Innovation Opportunities

The data from the desktop analysis, in conjunction with community interview data, identified the following innovation opportunities which have been recommended for further investigation.

The innovation opportunities will be reviewed in Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) workshops where the idea will be examined, and initial viability assessed based on evidence. The ideas recommended for further investigation will progress to Innovation Working Groups.

Farm Forestry

Farm forestry presents a promising opportunity to revitalize the local forestry sector while providing economic, social, and environmental benefits. Small and medium-scale plantations on farming land can diversify income sources for farmers by producing timber, firewood, carbon offset credits, eucalyptus oils, and native foods.

Sustainable Agriculture, Aquaculture and Horticulture

Sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and horticulture have significant potential for growth and innovation. Initiatives focusing on farm-to-plate and buy-local, local product utilisation, and environmental sustainability are gaining traction.

Advanced Manufacturing

There is a significant opportunity to foster specialised manufacturing growth within existing networks. The core proposition is to leverage existing expertise in applied engineering and manufacturing by clustering specialized industries, combining skills and trades to serve both existing and potential businesses. This approach will lead to the emergence of new industries.



Health, Aged Care and Social Assistance

The health, aged care, and social assistance sector faces challenges due to an aging population, limited access to specialist services, and a shortage of qualified nurses. Local service providers are collaborating to find innovative new working models to meet and exceed these challenges.

Renewable Energy and Circular Economy

Buxton is identified as a prime location (Melbourne University) for pumped hydro power due to its favourable geographical features, including hills, valleys, and proximity to the Goulburn River. The proposition is to leverage existing hydro power stations and explore opportunities in waste-to-energy conversion (circular economy model) to stimulate economic growth and job creation in the region, fostering a strong circular economy.

Tourism

Tourism is driven by our natural assets, attracting varying levels of visitors throughout the year. The proposition is to further capitalise on prime locations, particularly Marysville, by extending visitor stays and increasing opportunities for investment in the local economy.

Farm Forestry

“We believe that in marginal hill county - the type of agricultural land prevailing in the Murrindindi Shire area - farm forestry could play an important role in assisting a successful transition for the local forestry sector”

– Murrindindi Climate Network



BASIC PROPOSITION

There is a unique opportunity to bring together small and medium scale plantations on farming land with multiple economic, social and environmental benefits.

Economic benefits could diversify income streams for farmers to multiple sources including high quality valued timber products, firewood, carbon offset credits, eucalyptus oils, other food products and native foods like wattle seeds. This could also support manufacturing of small harvest equipment. Social benefits could improve the range and quality of jobs available to community and support the existing knowledge and expertise in this field. Environment benefits could improve the soil structure, stability and biodiversity.

KEY ASSETS

The district has extensive local forestry expertise and farmers interested in mixed hardwood plantations for the multiple benefits.

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

STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

There is a strong network of researchers and scientists in this field, with farm forestry groups focused on addressing the current hardwood timber shortages while planning for future sustainability.

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

KEY CHALLENGES

One key challenge will be ensuring there is no increased fire risk to community by keeping the plantations small scale and scattered.

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

WORKSHOP DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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

Sustainable Agriculture, Aquaculture and Horticulture



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

– Local Resident

BASIC PROPOSITION

There are several examples of high value add or specialist agricultural opportunities focusing on farm to plate and buy-local initiatives.

These initiatives also support environmental sustainability and the benefits of reutilising agricultural byproducts.

KEY ASSETS

Economic data as well as stakeholder input demonstrates the significance of agriculture in the corridor with many farmers identifying new products and exploring potential markets.

Education providers have recognised the importance of agriculture in the region and now offer VET certified courses through Yea High School. The demand by the local community to purchase local produce supports the Shire’s large agriculture industry in fresh meats, fruit and other produce. Produce grown in the area is highly sought after in both national and international markets. A key asset to the corridor is the abundance of farming land available, linked with rainfall patterns, climate and soil types.

STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The growing conditions, soils, agriculture, expertise, provenance and access to local, regional and international markets all point to competitive advantage in high value add products.

There is high demand by the community to buy and support local farmers and growers. Innovative businesses already involved in research, product testing and sustainability are ready to expand.

KEY CHALLENGES

Climate change and the impacts this will have on water supply and potential future water usage will be a key challenge.

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

WORKSHOP DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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

Advanced Manufacturing



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

– Murrindindi Shire Council

BASIC PROPOSITION

There is a unique opportunity to build on existing expertise in applied engineering and manufacturing.

Clustering of specialised industries by combining skills and trades to support existing and new businesses. This could lead to the development of new industries or new products for example manufacturing small harvesting equipment, powder coating or laser cutting factories.

KEY ASSETS

Alexandra is continuing to grow as a service town.

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

STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Several innovative businesses in the Shire are already exporting to national and international markets and have further capacity to diversify and expand.

Proximity to Melbourne contributes to this growth. There are opportunities and sufficient scale to form collaborative networks combining skills and expertise to design new production models.

KEY CHALLENGES

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

Finding and retaining skilled or qualified staff is a challenge for all industries and employers across the Shire. This could be better supported with local access to education and training, and Council are currently exploring the development of a local Tertiary Education hub. Available, affordable and suitable housing has been raised multiple times by interviewees as a major barrier to encouraging professionals to live and work in the region.

WORKSHOP DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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

Health, Aged Care and Social Assistance



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

BASIC PROPOSITION

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

KEY ASSETS

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

STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The existing aged care providers are thinking creatively about how to address the needs of the local aging population and staff shortages, while enhancing their options as that population continues to grow.

There are opportunities and sufficient scale to form partnerships with expertise from outside the corridor to help design new service models and test new processes.

KEY CHALLENGES

From community conversations, several aged care providers are struggling to find qualified registered nurses.

Which has forced organisations like Kellock Lodge to look outside Australia to fulfill their employment requirements. Sponsoring an employee (and often associated family members), also comes at significant financial and administrative costs to the organisation.

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

WORKSHOP DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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

Renewable Energy and Circular Economy



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

– Melbourne University

BASIC PROPOSITION

Murrindindi Shire has two hydro power stations already established at the Eildon Weir (two turbines) and in Rubicon (AGL).

There is interest in the community to explore converting waste into an energy or power supply and supporting further expansion and growth of the region. The corridor could position itself as a focus to benefit from new technology, creation of jobs, and a strong circular economy.

KEY ASSETS

Murrindindi Shire falls within a priority zone for hydro power development under the Victorian Government’s new entity called Vic Grid.

This project is planning improvements to the electricity distribution network with six renewable energy zones developed. Melbourne University have identified potential sites for pumped hydro, with Buxton rated highest in the State because of the topography and proximity to the three hydro distribution lines. Small scale renewable energy is being utilised successfully by businesses through financial incentives offered by government agencies such as Sustainability Victoria.

STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Murrindindi Shire enjoys a position as a top potential site for pumped hydro with the hills, the valleys, and the Goulburn River providing geographical opportunity for establishment of a local renewable energy facility.

Researchers have identified Buxton as being the top site in the State with ongoing testing and trialling of various prototype pumped hydro equipment. The main distribution feed from the Snowy Mountains Scheme also runs through MSC to Melbourne (Merton – Kinglake).

KEY CHALLENGES

The area experiences inclement weather with high fire and storm damage risks which currently impact on power connectivity.

Environmental damage is also a key consideration due to any construction of potential pipeline or tunnelling. Future high voltage easements from Buxton to the existing Eildon/Rubicon hydro power lines that run through Taggerty will need to be considered. Circular economy models will need to consider what is the readily available waste and quantity needed, transport/logistics, and where this will be manufactured. A large concern for the corridor with the creation of new jobs is the suitability of available housing and finding skilled and suitable staff.

WORKSHOP DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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

Tourism

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

– Murrindindi Shire Council



BASIC PROPOSITION

This prime location, in particular Marysville is already attracting visitors.

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

KEY ASSETS

The surrounding natural environment is regularly mentioned as a prime asset for the corridor.

Marysville is a well-established tourism destination with links to Lake Mountain, Alexandra, and Lake Eildon. It is surrounded by a wealth of natural resources and offers a diverse range of outdoor activities.

STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The location and proximity to Melbourne is a key advantage, as well as already being an established tourist destination with high visitation.

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

KEY CHALLENGES

Challenges to tourism in the corridor include seasonal and extreme weather impacts on tourism, the high threat of fire in the summer, land access and lack of infrastructure to support longer stays in the region.

Availability of housing and accommodation for both visitors and staff. Finding suitable staff is also a big concern for majority of local businesses. Identity of the region needs some redefining- being part of Tourism North East, often associated with Yarra Valley, and part of the Goulburn Region for other activities.

WORKSHOP DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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

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

Murrindindi Shire Tourism and Economic Strategy 2019-2023
Tourism Research Australia

Museums Victoria

REMPAN 2023

Socio Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)
Victoria's Forestry Heritage

Taanurung Land and Waters Council

The Murrindindi Forest – Mal McKinty (bio) 2021

Appendix

Murrindindi Shire Council Plan 2021-2025

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

Murrindindi Shire Council Tourism and Events Strategy 2019-2025

Murrindindi Shire Council Waste and Recovery Strategy 2030

Murrindindi Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016

COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan – 2020

COVID-19 Business Recovery Plan – 2020

Boston Consulting Group – Marysville and Triangle Economic Strategy – 2020

Taggerty Urban Design Framework

Buxton Urban Design Framework

Buxton Progress Association – Buxton Community Vision 2030

Marysville Community Plan 2020-2022

Goulburn Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) 2022

Lower Hume Sub Regional Plan 2010- 2020

Murray Primary Health Network Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Regional Economic Development Strategy- Goulburn region

Regional Development Victoria – dashboard

Goulburn Regional Skills Demand Profile 2023

Murrindindi Cycle Club – Trail Master Plan 2022

Victorian Fisheries Authority Final Report- 2020

Experimental Ecosystem Accounts for Central Highlands Victoria – Summary Report
Water for Victoria – Water Plan

Lake Eildon Recreational Boating Facilities Improvement Plan

Goulburn Murray Water Strategic Plan- 2017

Lake Eildon Masterplan- 2020



SHAPING
MURRINDINDI'S
FUTURE