

Campaspe Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

July 2024

urban enterprise planning economics+tourism

Campaspe Shire Council



Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire of Campaspe is the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta Peoples.

We respect and acknowledge their unique Aboriginal cultural heritage and pay our respect to their ancestors, descendants and emerging leaders as the Traditional Owners of this Country.

We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

This Economic Development and Tourism Strategy was prepared by Urban Enterprise in collaboration with Campaspe Shire Council.

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This report has been graphically designed by Georgiana Babatsikos.

The front cover image is credited to Lyn Keillor – Sunset over Gunbower Waterways – Gunbower.

Campaspe Shire Council

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Acronyms

AAGR	Annual Average Growth Rate
C4EM	Committee for Echuca Moama
CEDTS	Campaspe Economic Development and Tourism Strategy
CPE	Campaspe Port Enterprise
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
LGA	Local Government Area
MRC	Murray River Council
PA	Per Annum
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
TRA	Tourism Research Australia



Glossary

Economic Output

Represents the gross revenue generated by businesses in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Gross revenue is also referred to as total sales or total income.

Regional Exports

Represents the value of goods and services exported outside of the defined region that have been generated by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors within the region.

Employment

Employment data represents the number of people employed by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Employment data presented in this report is destination of work data. That is, no inference is made as to where people in a defined region reside.

Natural Capital

The region's stock of natural assets, including water, soil, air, biodiversity, and ecosystems, which provide essential services and benefits to the community, and underpin the area's agricultural productivity, tourism, and quality of life.

Daytrip Visitor

Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.

Overnight Visitor

People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope of the National Visitor Survey.

International Visitors

A person is defined as an international visitor to Australia if they are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia for less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.

Small to Medium Enterprise

The ABS defines a business entity employing less than 20 employees as a Small to Medium Enterprise

Non-Employing Business

A type of business that does not have employees. This may include a range of entity types, such as non-employing sole traders or any other businesses without employees.

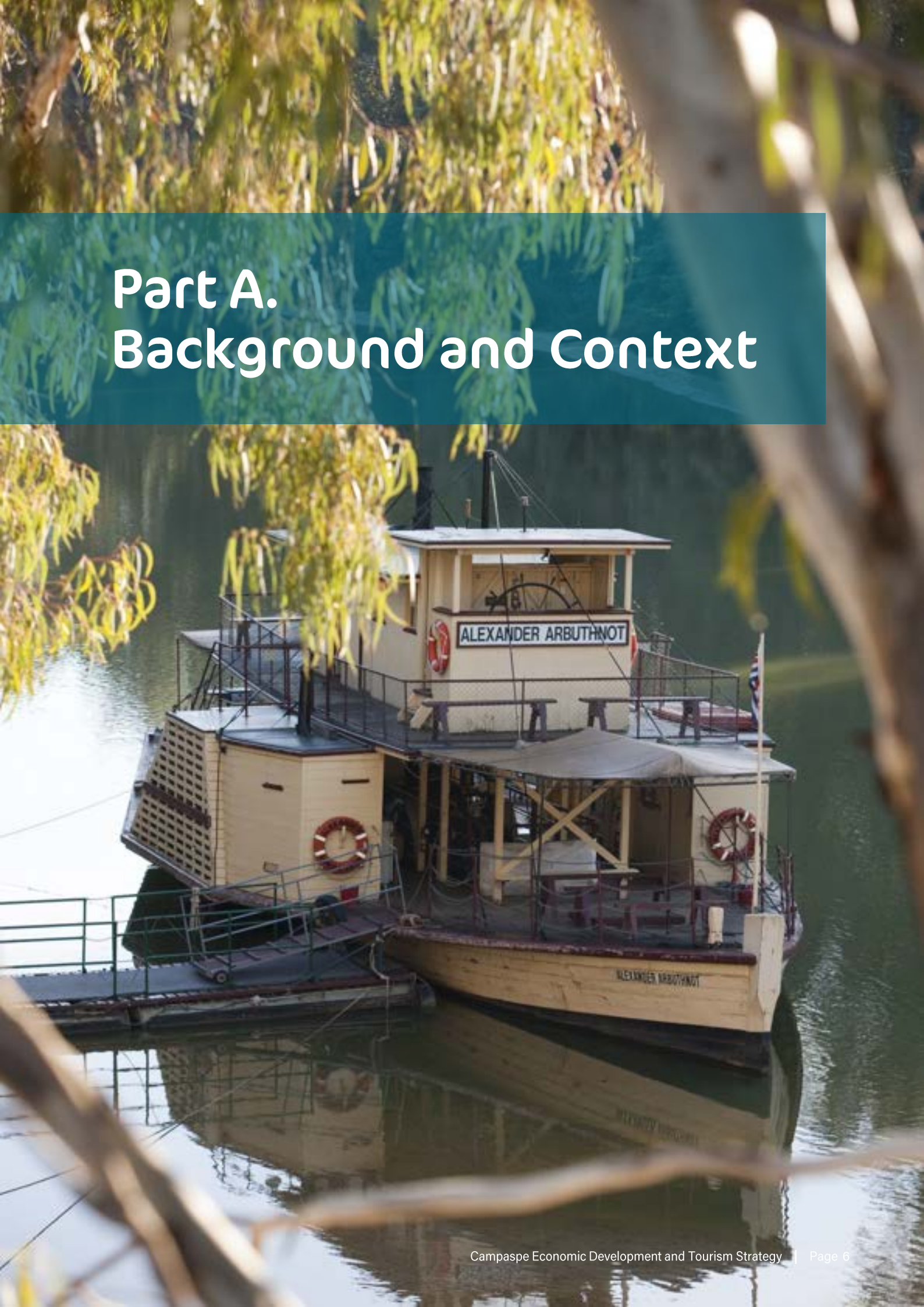


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Part A.
Background and Context



1. Introduction

Overview

The *Campaspe Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2024-2029* (CEDTS or Strategy) is designed to guide the achievement of a **prosperous, diverse, and resilient economy** for the Shire.

The purpose of the CEDTS is to:

- Set the vision for economic and tourism development in Campaspe Shire from 2024 to 2029; and
- Provide a guide for Council to focus its resources and address the challenges facing all areas of Campaspe's economy.

The information in this Strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, community groups, businesses and Government stakeholders.



Key Definitions

Economic Development and Tourism are interlinking components that the economy. The following articulates and defines the terms and how they relate to this Strategy.

Economic Development

Economic Development involves building the economic capacity of an area to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all. It is a process by which public, business and non-government sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation. *(Victorian Government 2016)*

Tourism

The term 'tourism', when referenced in this report, refers to both the activities of visitors as well as businesses that offer direct visitor services (e.g. accommodation, tour operators).

Visitor Economy

The term 'Visitor Economy' encapsulates a broader definition of tourism that considers the broader implications of the tourism industry. When referenced in the report, this refers to the 'production of goods and services for consumption by visitors, which includes the industries that directly serve visitors (e.g. accommodation) as well as intermediaries/supporting sectors (e.g. retail, food).' *(Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy, 2016).*

These definitions should be considered when reviewing the report.

The Role of Local Government

The role of local government in supporting economic development and visitor economy, typically involves the following core functions and interventions.

Table 1. Local Government Functions and Interventions

Functions
• Supporting the Existing Business Base • Attracting New Businesses and Jobs • Promoting Liveable and Sustainable Communities • Growing the Visitor Economy[1]
Interventions
• Strategic planning • Policy and regulation • Supporting local business to succeed • Cooperation and partnerships • Promotion and attraction • Customer service • Direct service delivery • Infrastructure provision • Advocacy

Source: Western Australia Local Government Association, Economic Development Framework, 2019; Annual Performance Measures of Local Economic Development in Victoria, Urban Enterprise and EDA, 2016



Delivery of this Strategy, therefore, requires a holistic, whole of government approach with clear objectives and measurable actions that align with municipal needs.

[1]Annual Performance Measures of Local Economic Development in Victoria, Urban Enterprise and EDA, 2016

Strategy Development

This Strategy has been developed over two phases, which has ensured an extensive, evidence-based approach that responds to the unique issues and attributes of the Shire.

Phase 1

Issues and Opportunities Paper (April 2023)

A detailed background report that provides an overview of the Shire's economy and visitor economy, including emerging trends and implications for the future.

Engagement Summary Report (September 2023)

A summary of the challenges, opportunities and the role of key stakeholders in supporting economic growth in the Shire. This is based on input from over 400 participants from Council, industry and the community across workshops, online surveys and interviews.

Phase 2

Background Review and Update

Review the key findings to-date to understand the emerging issues and profile Campaspe Shire's population and economy, providing updated data where relevant.

Stakeholder Consultation

Additional engagement with relevant stakeholders from Council, industry and the community to further gather insights into relevant opportunities and priorities for the Shire. A summary of the consultation undertaken to support the CEDTS is provided in Appendix A.

Draft CEDTS and public exhibition

Prepare a Draft CEDTS for public exhibition.

Final CEDTS

Finalise the CEDTS for Council endorsement.

Report Structure



The report has been structured through the following sections and headings:

Part A: Background and Context:

- **Campaspe Shire**. A profile of Campaspe Shire and key attributes influencing economic development and visitor economy, including:
  - Regional context, policy drivers and external macroeconomic trends; and
  - A profile of Campaspe Shire's population, economy, industry specialisations and visitor economy.
- **SWOT Analysis**: A SWOT analysis of the Shire informing the key issues and opportunities for economic development and visitor economy growth.

Each section and component of Part A informs the Strategic Framework and Recommendations outlined in Part B.

Part B: Strategic Framework and Future Directions

- **Framework Overview.** A framework that sets the vision, strategic principles, themes and actions to support economic development and visitor economy in Campaspe Shire.
- **Themes.** Identifies the key areas of focus and future projects and initiatives to be delivered to support Strategy outcomes.
- **Goals, Measures and Projects.** Detailing the key actions for Council and relevant stakeholders to implement the Strategy.

Each Theme has been designed to support each other, with projects developed with consideration of existing initiatives, the broader strategic context, as well as community and industry expectations.

2. Campaspe Shire

Overview

Campaspe Shire, which has a population of over 38,000 residents, is located in Northern Victoria along the NSW border.

It is situated within the Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership, as well as Murray Regional Tourism, approximately 200 km north of Melbourne and proximate to the Regional Cities of Shepparton and Bendigo, as well as the neighbouring NSW town of Moama (see Figure 1). This provides access and connectivity to a greater volume of jobs, businesses, residents and visitors, which can contribute to economic and investment outcomes (see Figure 2).

The Shire has a diverse geography and multi-faceted economy. The northern border is located on the Murray River and includes the popular visitor destination of Echuca – which borders Moama in Southern NSW and is the closest Murray River location to Melbourne.

In addition, Campaspe Shire is well-renowned for its food production and processing, with majority of the Shire comprising productive farming land, which is complemented by large food manufacturers.

Campaspe Shire also has a distinct hierarchy of towns contributing to the community and industry. This includes:

- Echuca (regional centre) – the primary location for services, amenity and infrastructure in the region, catering to the municipality and surrounding towns;
- Kyabram and Rochester (service centres) – provides key employment, social and community services to surrounding communities; and
- Small rural townships (including Colbinabbin, Gunbower, Girgarre, Lockington, Rushworth, Stanhope and Tongala) – support industry and the community with a selection of local services and amenity.

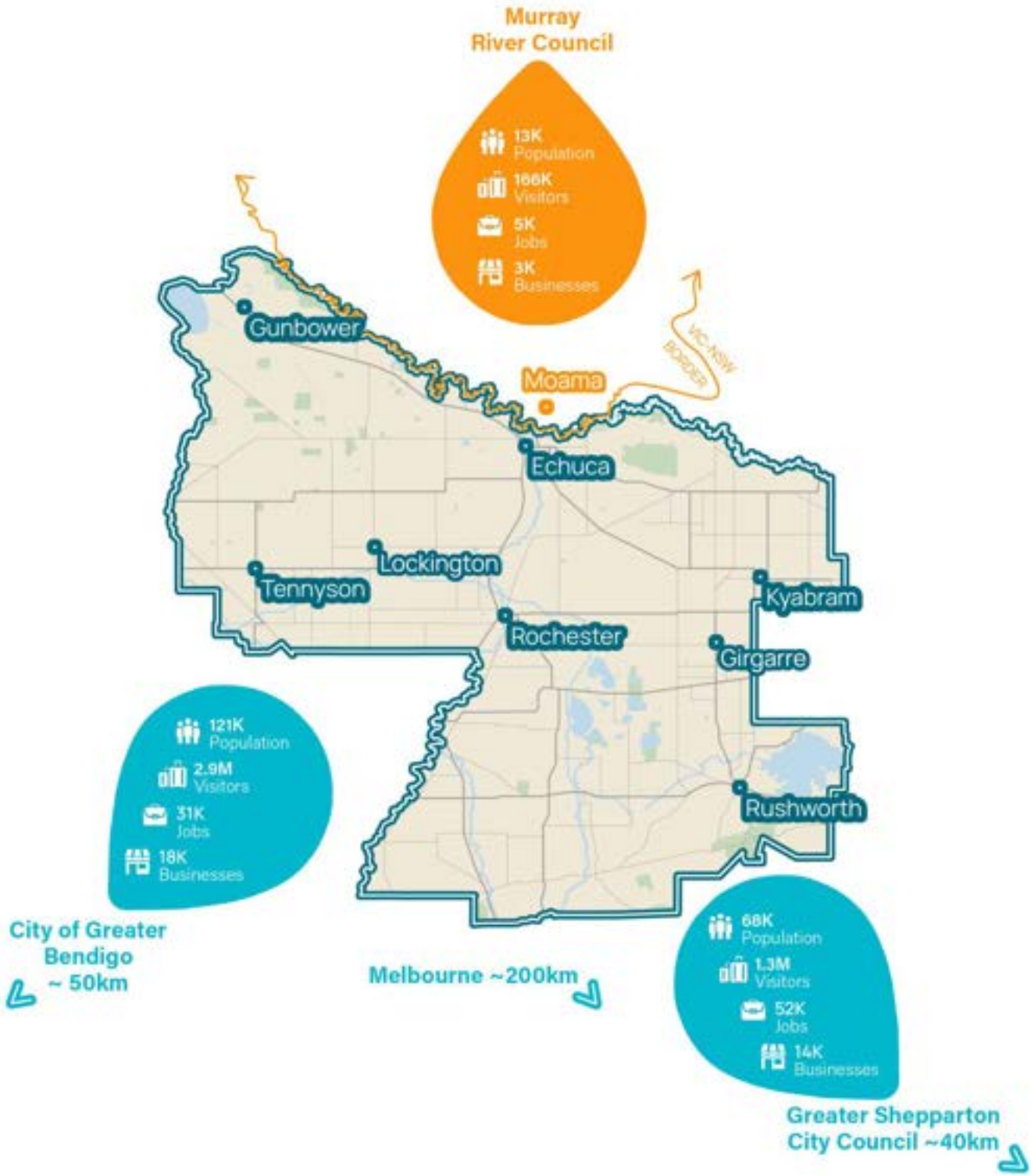
This strategy considers the role of all towns across the Shire as well as opportunities for smaller towns to contribute to economic development and visitor economy outcomes.

Figure 1. Campaspe Shire Regional Context



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024.

Figure 2. Campaspe Shire Regional Map



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024.
Population data is derived from ABS Quickstats (2021), Visitor data is derived from Tourism Research Australia (2022/23), Jobs data is derived from ABS Tablebuilder (2021) and Businesses data is derived from ABS Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits (June 2023).

Key Economic Assets and Employment Areas

The figure below illustrates the key economic and employment areas across the municipality. These areas provide key services and amenity to residents, businesses, workers and visitors. This includes:

- **Industrial precincts** in Echuca, Rochester, Kyabram and Tongala, which support industry and employment across manufacturing and food production.
- **Commercial-zoned land** in Echuca and Kyabram to support retail and hospitality businesses to service residents, employees and visitors.
- **Natural Capital and Farming-zoned land** across the municipality, which supports food production in dairy, beef, fruit, vegetables and wineries.
- **Residential-zoned land** in Echuca, Kyabram and Rochester.
- **Township zoned land** in smaller rural towns including Tongala, Gunbower, Lockington, Stanhope and Rushworth. This is a dynamic and flexible zone that can accommodate both employment and residential uses.
- Key **health services** provided in Echuca, Kyabram and Rochester to promote community health and wellbeing.
- **Bendigo TAFE** Echuca Campus providing local tertiary education and training.
- Key **road infrastructure** and **V/Line** stations supporting regional connectivity and access to export markets.
- **Echuca and District Livestock Exchange** generating activity for rural industry.
- **Echuca Aerodrome** providing emergency services for medical and fire relief purposes, as well as recreation.

Figure 3. Campaspe Shire Local Context



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024.

3. Demographic, Economic and Visitor Economy Profile

Key Demographic Trends

- The Shire's population is expected to increase by 2,300 between 2021-2036 (with an additional 2,000 dwellings over the same period). While this growth is relatively slower than the Regional Victoria average, Campaspe Shire can benefit from the recent growth experienced in Moama, making the combined Echuca Moama population of almost 22,600 as at 2021.
- It will be critical to support future population growth above current forecasts, as well as leverage the growth experienced across the NSW border in Moama – through collaboration with Murray River Council – to increase the local workforce and stimulate economic activity.
- The population is also expected to age over time, with over one-third of the population including either 'seniors' (70-84 years) or 'empty nesters/retirees' (60-69 years). This will have implications for the future demand for health and social services, as well as the size of the local workforce. It will be important to target working aged residents and young families to the Shire as this will support the local workforce and help sustain the economy over the long-term.
- To support population attraction and retention, quality services and infrastructure are required to meet the needs of residents. This includes a focus on providing quality housing (and rentals) to meet the future needs of residents and workers.

Demographic Snapshot

Forecast Profile

Population & Dwellings Growth (2023)



2036 Population
+2.3K Change (2021-36)

2036 Dwellings
+2K Change (2021-36)



Age Groups Growth (2023)

Top 3 Age Groups in 2036

1. **Seniors (70 to 84)** 20%
2. **Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)** 18%
3. **Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69) 14%**

Household Profile

Composition (2021)



Couples without children | Lone person | Couples with children

Structure (2021)

Separate House **89%**

Household Prices (2023)

$440.5K Campaspe
Median House Price

$550K Regional Victoria

Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024. 2021 data is from ABS, 2021, 2023 forecast data is from Victoria in Future, 2023, 2023 household data is from A Guide to Property Values, 2023,

Key Economic Trends

- As shown in the Economic and Industry snapshot (on following page), the economy is driven by a combination of food production (agriculture) and processing (manufacturing), supported by a significant healthcare and social assistance sector. Sustaining these strengths in agriculture, manufacturing and health, whilst identifying opportunities to generate value-add and diversify, will be important in achieving future economic and employment outcomes.

- The Shire's strengths in food production and processing are evident through its large agriculture ($1 billion in output) and manufacturing sectors ($1.5 billion), which comprise 19% and 39% of total industry output, respectively, across the Loddon Campaspe Region.

- Employment in the Shire increased between 2016-2021, driven by Health, Construction and Education. This reflects overall economic growth across the industry base, particularly for the service sector which is influenced by increasing demand. This demonstrates the Shire has been an increasingly attractive place to work, which should be supported to achieve ongoing economic outcomes.



- However, manufacturing has experienced a decline in local employment over the same period. This reflects the transition to more innovative/automated practices that requires fewer workers. Identifying and harnessing advanced manufacturing opportunities will help maintain the value of manufacturing and promote industry competitiveness.

- A relatively large proportion of residents both live and work in the Shire (78%), demonstrating its strong industry and role as an employment hub for many communities. Measures to support investment and business growth, as well as attract suitable skilled workers, will sustain and increase the job containment rate.

- Almost all businesses in the Shire are considered non-employing or SMEs (98%) and will require ongoing support to promote business development, investment and growth.

- An analysis of the value of domestic imports, by industry, demonstrates the gaps in local supply chains and potential to identify import substitution opportunities (i.e. produce imported goods and services locally) to expand the economy. Manufacturing and agricultural goods are heavily imported, reflecting the potential to attract more primary industry businesses and localise the supply chain.

- In addition, many industries also import 'white collar' professional and financial services to support operations. This represents opportunity to attract these services more locally to increase value-add and employment for the Shire.

Economic and Industry Snapshot

Industry Profile (2023)

Total Output Value

$6 Billion

1. Manufacturing (25%)
2. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (14%)
3. Construction (14%)

Total Employment

15,700

1. Health Care & Social Assistance (18%)
2. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (13%)
3. Manufacturing (11%)

Total Export Value

$2 Billion

1. Manufacturing (48%)
2. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (24%)
3. Construction (11%)

Employment Profile (2021)

Jobs Growth (2016-2021)

Jobs **+1K**

1. Health Care & Social Assistance (+567)
2. Construction (+265)
3. Education & Training (+122)

Jobs Decline (2016-2021)

-262

Manufacturing

Job Containment (2021)

78%

Residents Work in Campaspe LGA

- Residents commuting to Greater Shepparton (8%)
- Workers commuting from Murray River Shire (10%)

Business Profile

Businesses (Jun 2023)

4.5K Businesses

1. **Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing** (30%)
2. **Construction** (17%)
3. **Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services** (7%)

Businesses by Size (Jun 2023)

62%
Non-Employing

35%
Small to Medium Enterprise

Gap Analysis (2023)

Domestic Import Value by Industry
(value of goods and services imported into Campaspe from the rest of Australia)

1. Manufacturing (20%) **$331 M**
2. Financial & Insurance Services (12%) **$155 M**
3. Agriculture (11%) **$140 M**
4. Professional Services (11%) **$133 M**

Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024. 2021 data is from ABS, 2021 , 2023 data is from REMPLAN, 2023, Jun 2023 data is from ABS, June 2023, 2023 data is from ABS, 2023.

Industry Specialisations and Economic Drivers

An analysis of the industry and employment profile of Campaspe Shire reveal key economic drivers and specialisations. These specialisations, which are detailed below, are fundamental to the function and productivity of the local economy.

They indicate areas of economic strength and competitive advantages, which could be leveraged to drive future growth outcomes.

Table 2. Industry Specialisations and Economic Drivers

Specialisation	Key Sub-Sectors	Economic Contribution			Major Employers
Primary Industry 	• **Livestock, Grains & Other Agriculture** • **Food Product Manufacturing** • **Road Transport**	**31%** Output	**60%** Export	**22%** Jobs	• **Kagome** • **Kraft Heinz** • **Fonterra** • **Greenhams** • **Simplot** • **Kyvalley Dairy**
	Rural businesses that produce raw materials, as well as the processing and distribution of tradeable goods. • Food production and processing are key contributors to economic output, exports and jobs in the Shire, and a strength for Campaspe that could be leveraged to drive future growth. This includes beef and dairy production, as well as the processing of dairy, fruit, vegetables and wine. • As such, the municipality is able to accommodate large-scale growers and manufacturers, through provision of farming land and industrial land dispersed across the Shire. • The role of primary industry also supports the transport of goods, utilising existing linkages and proximity to export markets in Metropolitan Melbourne and surrounding regional cities.				
Public Sector & Knowledge Based 	• **Health Care Services** • **Residential Care & Social Assistance Services** • **Education & Training**	**11%** Output	**5%** Export	**25%** Jobs	• **Rochester and Elmore District Health Service** • **Echuca Regional Health** • **Kyabram District Health Service** • **Bendigo TAFE Kangan Institute**
	Provides key services that promotes community health, education, wellbeing and engagement. • The health, social and education sectors support a large proportion of jobs in the Shire – driven by the three major health services – and provides essential services to the population, supporting liveability and community wellbeing. • A growing population is expected to increase demand for these services, which will further stimulate workforce demand. This will impact the education and training sector to provide local employment and training opportunities to help meet industry need. • Workforce attraction from surrounding regional cities and urban centres will also be critical in ensuring provision of key services to meet community need.				

Specialisation	Key Sub-Sectors	Economic Contribution			Major Employers
Population & Visitor Driven	• **Construction Services** • **Retail Trade** • **Accommodation & Food Services**	**13%** Output	**5%** Export	**24%** Jobs	• **Big W** • **Kmart** • **Quest Echuca** • **Mercure Port of Echuca**
	Industries that service resident, worker and visitor demand and is influenced by local consumption. • A strong retail and hospitality (accommodation and food services) industry reflects the large population, workforce and visitor base in key centres – primarily Echuca and Kyabram. These sectors, which support a large proportion of local jobs, provide important amenity to residents as well as visitors, and account for most town centre trading. • The construction service industry is also a large contributor to output (and the business base), which is driven by both residential and commercial property development.				

Source: Remplan, 2021, Urban Enterprise, 2023.





Visitor Economy Snapshot

Economic Contribution (2023)

Output

$185 Million
Economic Output

Jobs

Jobs **997**

Expenditure

$294 Million

Average Visitor Spend

$141 Domestic Daytrip Spend

$486 Domestic Overnight Spend

$976 International Spend





Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024. All data is from TRA, 2022/23 Average.

Visitor Profile

Trips

1 Million Visitors (22/23)

55% Domestic Daytrip

44% Domestic Overnight

1% International

Purpose of Visit

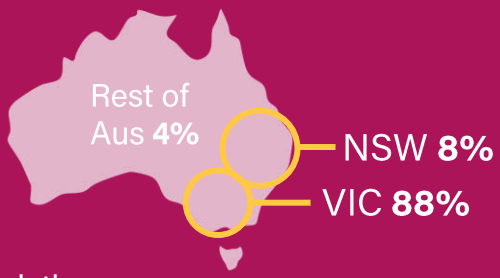
52% Holiday

29% Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR)

11% Business

Other – 8%

Visitor Origin



Accommodation

1. **Hotel/resort/motel or motor inn** (32%)
2. **Friends or relatives property** (26%)
3. **Caravan park or commercial camping ground** (19%)

Key Visitor Economy Trends

Campaspe Shire has long been a destination of choice for visitors, attracted by a diversity of product strengths. This includes its historic and natural attractions such as the Murray River and the Port of Echuca, as well as its other strengths, including: food and wine, water sports and outdoor recreation, as well as a strong calendar of events and festivals.

The region attracts around 1 million visitors annually, generating $294 million in visitor expenditure. As such, the visitor economy provides a substantial contribution to the economy, including $185 million to total output, and supports 997 jobs.

However, this represents a decline in the visitor economy from pre-COVID levels (including a 185K decrease in visitors and $43 million decrease in visitor spend since 2018-19). Therefore, as the visitor economy continues to recover from the impacts of COVID and the recent floods any opportunities to drive visitation and spend should be prioritised.

The region has a range of existing and emerging target markets that contribute to a vibrant visitor economy. This includes those seeking natural amenity, exploring the region, as well as those seeking regional escapes and more luxurious experiences.

The majority of visits are derived from the domestic market, comprising 99% of the total, with a relatively even distribution between day-trippers at 55% and overnight visitors at 44%. International visits account for 1% which is an opportunity to consider as a market for the future.

Majority of visitors are drawn to the region for holiday purposes (52%), followed by visiting friends and relatives (29%) and business visitors (11%). Providing product and infrastructure that caters to this range of visitor types will be important in meeting market needs.

Overnight visitors spend over 3 times more than day tip visitors, demonstrating the economic injection that growth in the overnight market can contribute if there were further investment in accommodation stock and product to increase length of stay.

Target Markets



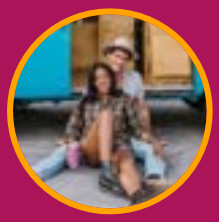
Murray Habituals

The traditional Murray region visitor who travels to the Murray region at least once every two years – the Murray's biggest advocate.

Back to Basics

The simple traveller, the free spirit - escaping to nature to press pause on real life, spend time with loved ones, and hit reset.





Road Trip

Inspired by the freedom of a road trip, this market wants to explore the country, see new destinations and escape the city.

Explorer & Discoverer

Socially conscious and adventurous travellers, open to travelling to new destinations and seeking new, unique experiences.





Luxury Travellers

With a holiday mindset of indulgence, the luxury traveller seeks relaxation achieved through high quality experiences.

Source: Murray Region Destination Management Plan, Urban Enterprise, 2023.

Product Strengths

Primary

- Water Sports
- Food, Wine and Produce
- Fishing
- Houseboats / River Cruises
- Golf
- Festivals and Events
- History and Heritage
- Nature-Based

Secondary

- Business Events
- First Nations
- Arts and Culture

Source: Murray Region Destination Management Plan, Urban Enterprise, 2023.

Other key findings and trends include:

- The region has been impacted by a range of crises over the past 5 years with not only the global pandemic but also flood events. As the region recovers it is important to future proof the visitor economy sector with diversity in product and accommodation offering and dispersal into all corners of the Shire.
- Currently, industry is fragmented, and visitor services have been altered with a recent relocation of the Visitor Centre to the Port of Echuca. To move forward as a successful and collaborative region, a visitor centric approach needs to be adopted that brings industry together and ensures high quality services that meets the needs of visitors.
- Events continue to attract large numbers of visitors to the region and have the ability to address seasonal gaps and dispersal. Seeking to populate the calendar year-round with a balance of major and minor events will support consistent visitation.
- The predominant activities undertaken by visitors are water sports, food, wine and produce, history and heritage and nature, aligning with the regions products strengths. There is an emerging growth in First Nations experiences and arts and culture which can be fostered.
- 88% of visitors originate from Victoria demonstrating the Shire's popularity as a visitor destination from across Regional Victoria and Melbourne. However, given the location of Echuca along the Murray River (and on the NSW border), greater collaboration with other Murray destinations could help the Shire capture a higher proportion of Victorian and NSW visitors to the Murray Region.

Sub-Regional Context

The geography of Campaspe Shire is large and varied, with a diverse network of towns as well as a dispersed population and business base with different needs and priorities. The sub-regional map (overleaf) illustrates the distribution of key demographic and economic variables across the Shire, which has implications for the role, directions and opportunities for various towns.

- Echuca's role as the regional centre for the Shire is reflected by its high concentration of ***residents (40%), visitors (71%), jobs (54%) and businesses (40%)***.

- Echuca's employment base is concentrated in Health Care and Social Assistance, as well as retail, which reinforces its role to service the area and provide amenity. This also contributes to its high proportion of 'holiday' visitors, which reflects its location along the Murray River and the Port of Echuca, its proximity to Melbourne, as well as prevalence of major events and provision of food and wine offerings.

- As such, sustaining and enhancing Echuca's role will be critical to achieving economic development and visitor economy outcomes for the Shire.

- The population and economic base of Echuca and surrounds increases when factoring in the border town of Moama. This includes an additional 7K residents, 5.6K businesses and 166K visitors, with around 1,700 workers commuting into Campaspe Shire from MRC. This expands the economic potential of Echuca, given it is able to access a larger pool of workers and capture local consumption from Moama residents, as well as attract its significant visitor base.

- The other sub-regions also provide a substantial contribution to the Shire's economy. When combined, the remaining sub-regions provide a significant influence on the economy and community, comprising ***60% of residents, 39% of visitors, 46% of jobs and 60% of businesses***.

- The Kyabram and surrounds sub-region (inc. Tongala and Girgarre) is a hub for food production and processing, including dairy and beef, while majority of the Shire's fruit and vegetables are grown in this area. The sub-region also services a large population base, which contributes to a large proportion of VFR markets. The Kyabram Fauna Park, now part of Zoos Victoria, represents significant opportunity to grow visitation in this area, and the Gargarro Botanic Gardens in Girgarre provides an emerging tourism offering which boasts a premier outdoor events space for arts and culture activities.

- Rushworth's industry base is also driven by agriculture and manufacturing, with economic development focused on sustaining the food industry. The township also has a range of gold rush heritage assets, as well as water-based assets (Waranga basin), which supports holiday visitation and presents an opportunity to grow its visitor base. The southern aspect of the sub-region also has a productive wine industry, which is linked to the Mt Camel and Heathcote Wine Regions.

- Rochester is a key service centre that has a varied industry base consisting of agriculture and health care, as well as a high proportion of business visitors. Therefore, supporting the business base and population through relevant infrastructure and services will enhance its economic role. In addition, enhancing its product strengths (inc. heritage, arts and culture, and food) will help generate yield from visitor markets.

- Lockington-Gunbower is the most rural sub-region that encompasses the north-west corner of the Shire, which is driven by the agricultural industry (inc. dairy and beef) and comprises nature-based and outdoor tourism assets (such as Gunbower Wetlands). This is the key strength of the sub-region that should be capitalised to drive further investment, visitation and value-add.

Increasing the economic and social contribution of all sub-regions, through targeted investment that considers local issues and strengths, is critical for Campaspe's future and will support a more sustainable economic base.

Sub-Regional Map



Population	Jobs	Businesses	Visitation	Key Tourism Product Strengths
Echuca & Surrounds				
15.6K Population	**8.5K Jobs** *21% HC&SA*** *13% Retail Trade* *9% Manufacturing*	**1.8K Businesses**	**710.9K Visitation** *60% Holiday* *24% VFR* *6% Business*	• Houseboats and River cruises • Festivals and events • Food, wine and produce
Kyabram & Surrounds				
11.1K Population	**3.8K Jobs** *55% AF&F** *49% HC&SA*** *33% Manufacturing*	**1.2K Businesses**	**104.1K Visitation** *43% VFR* *23% Holiday* *10% Business*	• Nature based • Food, wine and produce • Arts and culture
Rushworth & Surrounds				
4.2K Population	**1.3K Jobs** *31% AF&F** *25% Manufacturing* *7% Education & Training*	**478 Businesses**	**86.5K Visitation** *49% Holiday* *37% VFR* *14% Business*	• History and Heritage • Water sports and activities • Food, wine and produce
Rochester & Surrounds				
4K Population	**1.3K Jobs** *21% AF&F** *17% HC&SA*** *10% Retail Trade*	**440 Businesses**	**67K Visitation** *40% Business* *25% VFR* *11% Holiday*	• History and Heritage • Arts and culture • Food, wine and produce
Lockington – Gunbower & Surrounds				
3.9K Population	**933 Jobs** *56% AF&F** *8% Construction* *5% Manufacturing*	**585 Businesses**	**40.1K Visitation** *57% Holiday* *29% VFR* *14% Business*	• Nature based • Water sports and activities • Fishing
Campaspe Shire				
38.7K Population	**15.7K Jobs** *18% HC&SA** *13% AF&F*** *11% Manufacturing*	**4.5K Businesses**	**1M Visitation** *52% Holiday* *28% VFR* *10% Business*	All (refer page 21 for primary and secondary product strengths)

Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024. Population and jobs data is from ABS, 2021. Visitation data is from Tourism Research Australia, 2022/23 Average, Business Data is from ABS, June 2023. *AF&F: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. **HC&SA: Health Care & Social Assistance.

Agricultural Land Use

Campaspe is rich in and has a diverse range of natural assets that underpin its agricultural sector, which includes irrigated land to support production.

The agricultural land use map illustrates the key elements of agriculture across the Shire that contributes to food production.

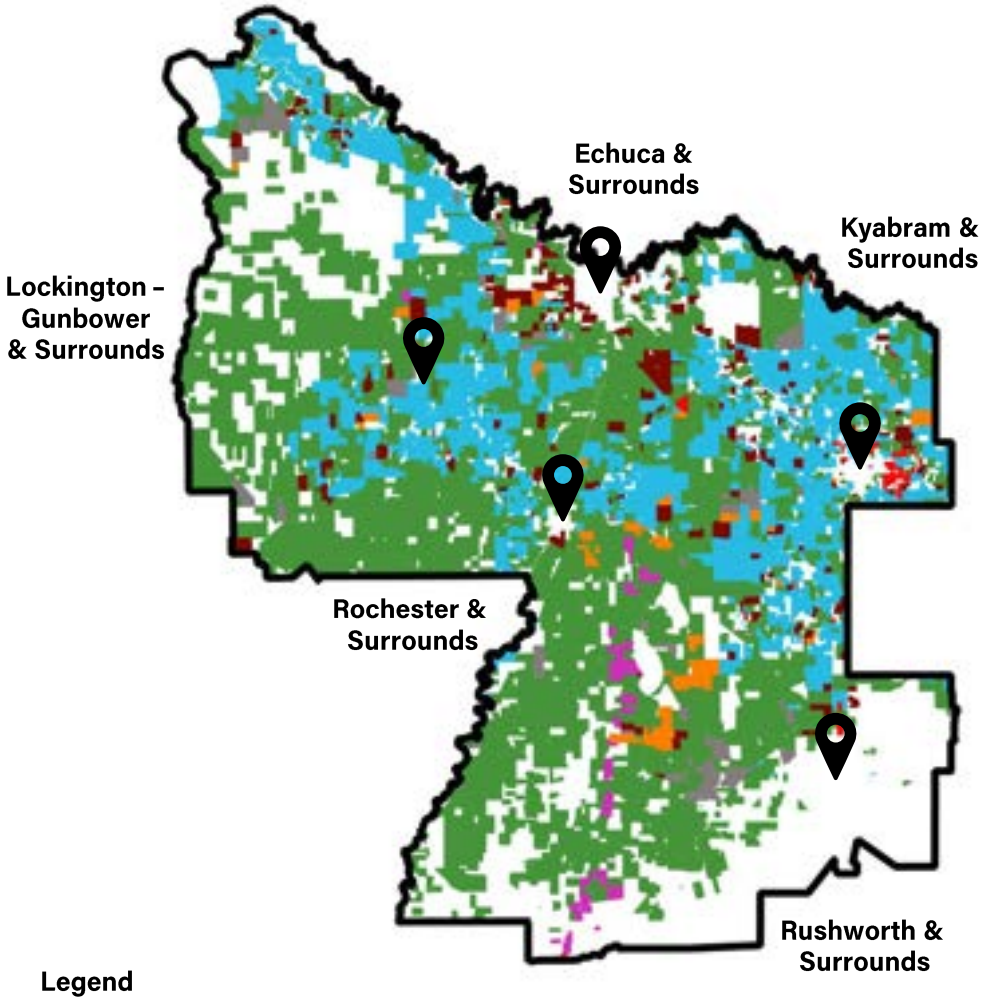
Cropping comprises 40% of total land use on the Shire, which is dispersed across the central, north, south and west areas.

The Shire's strengths in dairy production is linked to its large volume of dairy cattle, which equates to 16% of total land use. Dairy production covers most of the northern parts of the Shire.

There are also smaller pockets of beef cattle around the central and northern areas, while the fruit and vegetable production is concentrated around Kyabram and Colbinabbin.

The Shire's vineyards are primarily located across the south (proximate to the Heathcote Wine Region), which provides opportunities for industry and the visitor economy to leverage the wine industry.

Figure 4. Campaspe Shire Agricultural Land Use Map



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2024. Land use data is derived from Victorian Land Use Information System (VLUIS) 2021/22 Release 3, DEECA Spatial Datashare, 2024.

External Influences

The following macroeconomic trends will require Council consideration as they continue to influence local economic development and visitor economy in Campaspe Shire.

Economic and Demographic Influences



Skills and workforce shortages

Skills and workforce shortages are being experienced across most industries in regional areas, including primary industries (i.e. manufacturing and agriculture) and service industries (i.e. childcare, aged care, retail and hospitality). This has had a substantial impact on business operations and service provision for residents.

Labour force shortages and skills gaps were identified by industry as a key barrier to business productivity and growth. Attracting labour and developing local skills will be particularly important to build economic resilience and support future investment.



Housing and worker accommodation shortages

Market forces (such as high construction costs) has constrained housing supply and, together with increasing demand, has placed upward pressure on housing affordability (including rentals). This has led to significant housing and workforce accommodation shortages across Regional Australia, which is negatively impacting job security and staff attraction for industry.

There is a need for strategic interventions across all levels of Government to address shortages of housing and worker accommodation in Campaspe. Initiatives aimed at expanding housing supply, improving affordability and expanding workforce accommodation options will help overcome workforce shortages and bolster economic resilience.



Cost of living pressures

Higher interest rates above historic levels, caused by high inflation and supply chain shortages, are creating cost of living pressures for daily essentials, utilities and basic services. This has affected both business and consumer confidence across Australia, with the potential to constrain economic growth over the short to medium-term.

Decreased consumer and business sentiment will affect economic growth in Campaspe, as well as constrain the levels of investment attraction. Supporting the resilience of the community and industry, as well as providing ongoing support, will be critical to help overcome these pressures.



Climate resilience and environmental sustainability

Given the recent government commitments to reducing emissions, environmental sustainability is playing an increasing role within local government and influencing business and consumer decisions. As a result, there is increased demand for investment in new, clean energy technologies, as well as transition to more sustainable circular economy practices to improve industry efficiency.

Campaspe Shire needs to identify and harness opportunities that improve business productivity and achieve the transition to 'net-zero' emissions through policy support, engagement and advocacy.

Prevalence of extreme weather events

The impacts of climate change, through increased prevalence of extreme weather events (e.g. bushfires, floods), has had a significant impact on businesses and communities. Ensuring regions have the tools to adapt and recover in response to these events has become more critical for economic development, particularly as this will influence community wellbeing, business operations, as well as productivity of rural industry.

Campaspe Shire is extremely susceptible to extreme weather events and adopting measures to mitigate climate risks will enhance long-term economic viability and community wellbeing.

Growing demand for health care and social assistance

As the population grows and ages, demand for health care and social assistance will increase and significantly grow healthcare-related spending, demand for public health facilities and workforce requirements.

Health care and social assistance is the largest employing sector in Campaspe Shire, and combined with an ageing demographic profile, will have implications for service provision and workforce demand in the municipality.



Evolving work patterns

The increased prevalence of working from home, as a result of COVID-19, has led to hybrid working arrangements for many employees, including more remote and flexible working. This provides the opportunity for workers and families to be more flexible in choosing a place of residence, as well as supporting the decentralisation of businesses from metropolitan to regional areas.

Regional councils such as Campaspe Shire will have access to more workers and businesses that have the ability to work and operate remotely. This will need to be met with appropriate investments in digital and business infrastructure required to increase the competitiveness of the Shire.

Migratory shift to regions

Recent population shifts to the regions, including increased internal migration from Melbourne to Regional Victoria, has created opportunities (such growth in the local workforce and local consumption), as well as issues (such as increased demand for services and infrastructure) for regional areas. This growth needs to be sustainably managed to support local communities and economies

Campaspe Shire is forecast to experience ongoing population growth. Council will need to support an increasing population, which is critical for workforce attraction, through provision of relevant infrastructure, housing and services.

Shifting agricultural practices

The agricultural industry is experiencing change, with businesses facing new challenges and opportunities, including increasing global demand for food (inc. demand for niche products), adopting more sustainable practices to combat climate change and extreme weather events, as well as harnessing innovative technologies to increase productivity.

With a significant agricultural sector that contributes to the economic and social fabric of the Shire, Council should explore opportunities to enhance the competitiveness of agriculture by identifying and pursuing innovative trends and technology to drive the growth and resilience of the sector.



Transition to advanced manufacturing

Manufacturing has been a key part of Australia's COVID-19 response, particularly due to the global supply chain impacts and the subsequent need to produce goods locally. As a result, manufacturing in Australia is moving toward a new era of more advanced and sustainable manufacturing practices, to become more competitive and resilient, through investment in more technologically advanced and innovative manufacturing activities.

Manufacturing is the largest economic and employment driver in Campaspe. Therefore, to sustain and enhance its strengths in the sector, the ongoing pursuit of more efficient and future-focused practices should be supported to align with broader trends.



Visitor Economy Influences

Rise in socially conscious consumers

Visitor markets are placing increasingly higher value on social issues such as sustainability, inclusivity and diversity. This includes greater connection with the environment, First Peoples culture and locally produced goods and services. It is important that the region responds to these expectations to capture this growing market.

Campaspe Shire attracts a diverse range of visitors each year, therefore, it is important to recognise shifting consumer preferences and promote this change across industry.

Authentic nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism has remained consistently important for visitors to regional destinations, particularly as the pandemic restrictions led to the prevalence of outdoor gatherings and recreation. Having an activated nature-based product that provides an authentic and immersive experience – that aligns with region's culture and history – will cater to market needs.

Campaspe is rich in nature-based assets, which should be appropriately activated and developed in a way that meets visitor needs and showcases the environmental strengths of the region.



Asian migration and CALD market exploration

As Asian migration returns back to pre-COVID levels, there will be opportunities to attract these visitors by offering unique experiences and catering to market needs (inc. through translated and interpreted collateral). In addition, there has been growth in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities exploring regional destinations. It is important that the municipality understands the needs of this market and supports growth in domestic visitation.

This presents Campaspe Shire with the opportunity to cater to culturally diverse visitor markets through leveraging existing nature-based and heritage assets, which will stimulate economic growth through increased yield.

Increase in Working from Home

The rise in remote working has also benefited the regional visitor economy, as it provides domestic visitors with more flexibility to travel and stay for longer periods. The ability for a regional destination to capture this market will depend on the availability of suitable accommodation and appropriate business facilities.

Campaspe Shire has the ability to accommodate remote workers for short-term holidays (and repeat visitation) through quality and diverse tourism product and infrastructure that supports the worker and travel party.

Policy Drivers

The CEDTS supports the broader national, state, regional and local policy context. Ensuring alignment to these policies will help support future funding and initiatives designed to achieve economic growth.

Key documents reviewed to support development of this Strategy are outlined below:

Campaspe Shire Council Plan 2021-2025

The Council Plan is the the key strategic document for Council that guides the work Council performs on behalf of the community and industry.

This Strategy aligns with the Council Plan 2021-25 and its vision: - ***'Our places are vibrant and sustainable, our people are strong and supportive.'***

In addition, the following Council Plan priorities have been referenced to inform this document:

- Flourishing local economy
- Well Planned Places
- Resilient protected and healthy natural environment
- Growing quality of life

This vision and priorities help inform the development of key projects included in this document.



Loddon Campaspe Regional Economic Development Strategy (2022)

The Loddon Campaspe Regional Economic Development Strategy is one of nine regional strategies aimed at making regional Victoria a resilient and thriving place to live, work and do business.

The Strategy recognises Echuca as an important part of the employment and innovation corridor that runs between Gisborne, Bendigo and Echuca-Moama. The following strategic directions aim to drive economic growth in the region and support the CEDTS strategic framework:

- Support growth in **agriculture and food product manufacturing** to enhance value adding throughout the supply chain
- Pursue **diversification of the tourism sector** by leveraging natural, cultural and built endowments
- Maximise gains in the **'employment and innovation corridor'** to attract professional services workers and entrepreneurial activity
- Foster better links between education providers, industry, research, employers and students to develop **career pathways** and a workforce that meets the future needs of the region
- Leverage local opportunities to strengthen value chains and **diversity into new industries**, including in mining, renewable energy and waste processing.

A range of other state, regional and local documents relevant to economic development were also reviewed and assessed. These help to identify the relevant themes, areas of focus and opportunities for economic development and tourism in the region. These documents are listed in Appendix B.

4. Strategic Considerations

Overview

The following examines the Shire's competitive advantages, challenges and subsequent opportunities for economic development and the visitor economy, which guides future decision-making for Council.

This information, which is drawn from a combination of background research, policy review and stakeholder consultation, is used to inform the strategic framework and recommendations in this Strategy



Competitive Advantages

The following strengths and competitive advantages should be harnessed and leveraged to achieve economic development and visitor economy outcomes.

Economic Advantages

High-Value Food Production and Processing

The presence of a strong agricultural and manufacturing base, focused on food production and processing in dairy, beef, fruit and vegetables contributes to economic and employment growth. It also supports value-adding industries across the supply chain, including the storage and distribution of tradeable goods.

Variety of Zoned Employment Land

Supply of zoned employment land dispersed across Shire (inc. industrial, commercial and township zone) provides room for the Shire to 'grow' and support future business investment in diverse locations.

Loddon Campaspe Employment and Innovation Corridor

A portion of the corridor is within the Shire (including Echuca and Rochester). This provides spatial linkages to the population, businesses base and public infrastructure – across the transport corridor between Melbourne, Bendigo and Echuca-Moama (a map of the corridor is shown in Appendix C). This will support ongoing investment and employment across a range of industries.

Economic and Geographic Diversity

A diverse geography – with productive farming land, nature-based assets and access to the river – and multi-faceted economy provides a range of economic specialisations in agriculture, manufacturing, health and tourism. This expands the local jobs base and contributes to a more sustainable economic base.

Social Advantages

Proximity to Urban Centres

Proximity to regional cities, metropolitan Melbourne, as well as connectivity to Moama, provide access to services, as well as labour, consumption and visitor markets.

Diverse Network of Townships

Having a range of townships, varying from regional centres to service centres to rural towns, provides diversity in lifestyle offerings and experiences. This provides residents, workers and businesses with choice of location to suit needs and expands market reach of the Shire.

Role of Echuca

Echuca as the primary regional centre for the municipality provides key services and amenity to support residents, workers, visitors and businesses. This supports both the local communities and local economy, as well as surrounding areas across southern NSW.



Visitor Economy Advantages

Access to the Murray River

The Murray River is one of the leading tourism assets in Victoria, providing a variety of on-water (paddle steamer, water sports, fishing) and off-water (camping, sightseeing, trails) experiences. With multiple offerings along the river and a range of access points, the Murray River is a significant driver of visitation and establishes the region as a well-renowned visitor destination.

History and Heritage

Significant history and heritage assets across the Shire attract visitors to the area, ranging from the gold rush heritage across Rushworth, to the historic Port of Echuca. Campaspe Shire is also the meeting of three First Nations groups and significant sites and stories are located throughout the region.

Events

Hosting major tourism events helps to build destination awareness, activate seasonal periods, injects funds into the economy, creates local jobs, drives repeat visitation and supports an engaged community.

Visitor Amenity

Supporting amenity across the Shire helps provide a high-quality visitor experience, this includes visitor information, public toilets, car parking and rest stops, signage and picnic areas. This is supported by the provision of quality product such as contemporary dining experiences, beverage offerings (wine and distilleries), tours and boutique retail.

Challenges to Growth

The following requires consideration to offset and overcome the key challenges and issues that constrain growth.



Economic Challenges

Water access

Ensuring water security is a critical challenge for rural industry in Campaspe in order to safeguard production. This is essential to support existing growers and also for attraction of new agricultural businesses.

Workforce Supply

All industry stakeholders identified labour and skills shortages as the key issue impacting business operations and constraining investment opportunities.

Housing Supply

Existing shortages in supply of housing and rental properties is a key constraint for resident and worker attraction (and retention). The need for more short-term and long-term housing options was identified across all industries to attract both transient (mainly in agriculture) and full-time workers.

Climate Change

The threat of extreme weather events – particularly floods, bushfires and droughts – will continue to impact communities, industry (particularly agriculture) and natural capital across the Shire. Ensuring the threat is mitigated through key actions and developing a more resilient industry base will be critical to achieving future growth.

Maintaining Competitiveness

As the use of technology becomes more prevalent across key industries, including manufacturing and agriculture, it will be critical for industry to harness and adopt new technologies to maintain competitiveness and promote investment.

Fragmented Business Representation

Representation for industry is fragmented across multiple groups, which limits the ability to achieve a unified vision that supports businesses and communities. Establishing more active and collaborative representation across all key sectors is a key challenge to supporting economic outcomes for the Shire.

Social Challenges

Youth Retention

Retaining youth is a key challenge for the Shire, which impacts the ability of industry to access workers. In particular, the lack of local training and education opportunities limits the ability of youth to transition into the workforce.

Ageing Population

An ageing population will increase demand for health services and place a further strain on attracting professionals to meet this demand.

Internal Transport

Poor internal transport linkages, including road, rail and public transport, disrupt residents accessing services, workers accessing jobs and visitors accessing key nodes.



Visitor Economy Challenges

Commercial Accommodation Supply

There is a lack of high-quality and diverse commercial accommodation in the Shire, which constrains the volume of overnight stays and limits the ability to grow overnight visitation. This also impacts the ability to accommodate increased numbers of visitors to large-scale events.

Bookable product

A lack of diversity in bookable tourism experiences limits the ability to engage visitors in some of the hero product and forecast visitation. Limited experiences narrows the attraction of target markets and reduces potential visitation and yield.



Tourism Industry Governance

The current governance structure for the tourism industry, including the roles and responsibilities, is convoluted and requires clarity to reduce duplications and ensure efficient use of resources both human and financial.

Visitor Dispersal

Lack of visitation outside Echuca limits the spread of tourism benefits across the Shire and creates an overreliance on Echuca to support the visitor economy. This also leads to congestion during peak periods placing pressure on all services linked to the visitor economy.

Night-time economy

Campaspe has a constrained night-time economy with limited products and services open during evening trade periods.

Opportunities

The following summarises the strategic range of opportunities that Council could pursue to guide future decision-making and priorities.

Economic Opportunities

Import Substitution

Reduce the industry reliance on imports and explore opportunities to expand the economy via import substitution to produce goods and services locally.

Diversify Industry Base

Attract new and diverse industries to help grow the economy, expand the jobs base and make the business base more sustainable and resilient. Key opportunities include:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Tourism and hospitality (including accommodation)
- Retail
- Transport and logistics
- Training and education
- Agri-business
- Green industries
- Professional services and start-ups
- Creative industries

Remote Workers

Leverage the growth in remote working and subsequent regional migration to attract workers, residents and visitors to the Shire.

Collaboration with Moama

Leverage connectivity with Moama (and its recent economic and tourism growth) to further develop Echuca's industry, workforce and visitor economy.

Social Opportunities

Workforce and Skills Development

Collaboration with employment and skills providers, as well as industry, to create a more skilled local workforce that meets the needs of businesses.

Small Town Development

Attract increased investment in key services and infrastructure across the network of small towns to support the social and economic contribution of small towns.



Visitor Economy Opportunities

Increasing Value of Visitor Economy

Harness the increasing value (and growing average spend) of visitors to regional Victoria through contemporary tourism products, experiences and packaging techniques.

Major Events Attraction

Sustain and grow the major events calendar to promote visitor dispersal and increase the economic contribution of events. A seasonal approach to events will encourage dispersal and can take advantage of the seasonal strengths of the region.

Tourism Engagement

An engaged and cohesive industry provides the opportunity to achieve growth outcomes for industry, the community and visitor economy. This should be fostered at all levels and sectors of the industry.

Port of Echuca Activation

Ongoing activation of the Port of Echuca and Murray River foreshore areas to enhance access, increase utilisation (for residents and visitors) and drive local consumption.

Destination Awareness

Raise the profile of Campaspe Shire and key visitor nodes to improve destination awareness across target markets. There is significant product strengths that can be elevated such as nature and food and beverage.

First Nations product development

First nations stories are an opportunity to engage visitors in the world's oldest living culture. There is increasing demand for First Nations cultural experiences and traditional owner groups recognise tourism as an opportunity to share their culture and are in the process of developing visitor experiences.





Campaspe Shire's Value Proposition

"

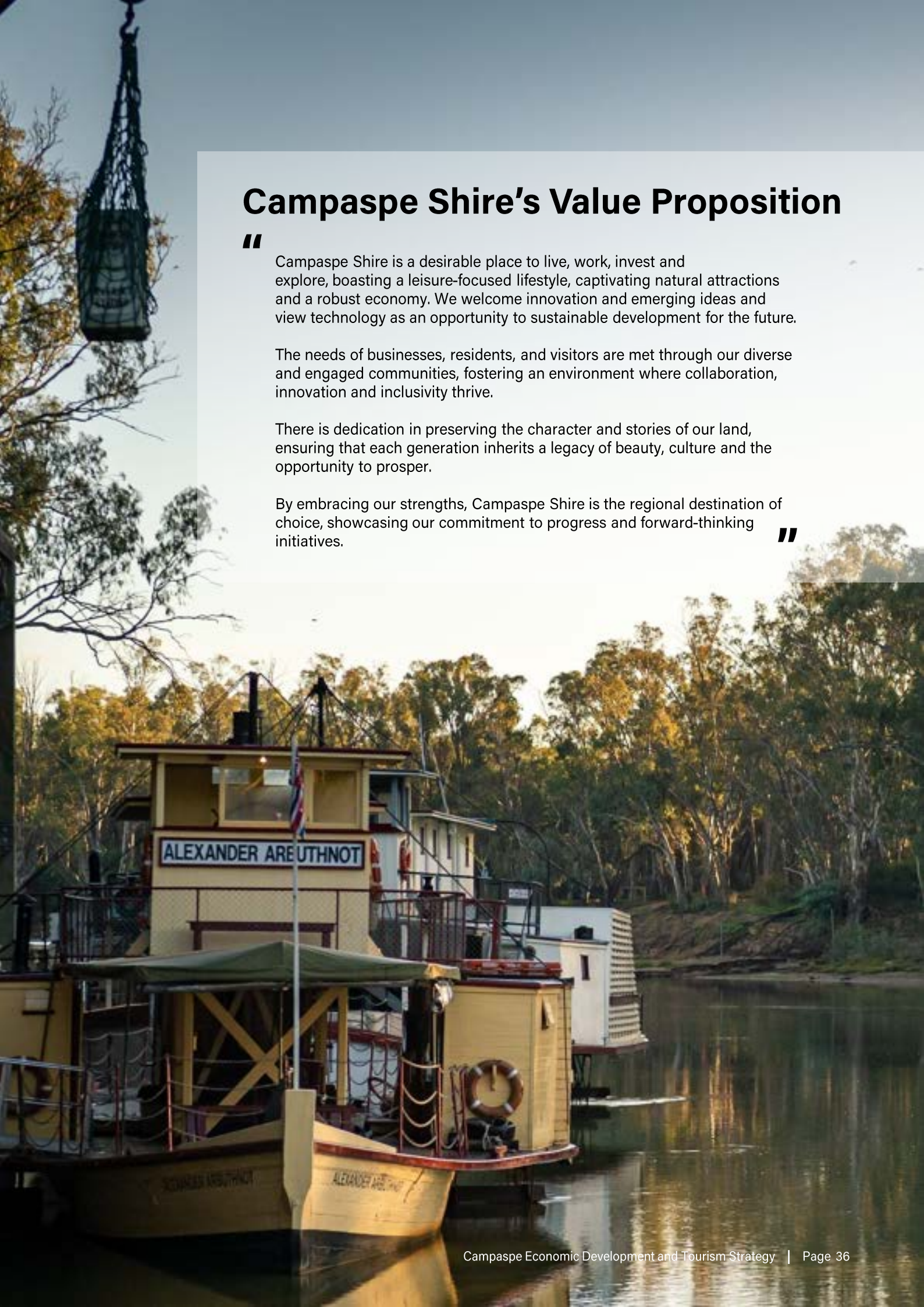
Campaspe Shire is a desirable place to live, work, invest and explore, boasting a leisure-focused lifestyle, captivating natural attractions and a robust economy. We welcome innovation and emerging ideas and view technology as an opportunity to sustainable development for the future.

The needs of businesses, residents, and visitors are met through our diverse and engaged communities, fostering an environment where collaboration, innovation and inclusivity thrive.

There is dedication in preserving the character and stories of our land, ensuring that each generation inherits a legacy of beauty, culture and the opportunity to prosper.

By embracing our strengths, Campaspe Shire is the regional destination of choice, showcasing our commitment to progress and forward-thinking initiatives.

"





Part B. Strategic Framework and Future Directions

5. Strategic Framework

Overview

The strategic framework guides the future directions for economic development and tourism in Campaspe Shire, informing the overarching vision, principles, themes and subsequent actions to guide Council and relevant stakeholders. This framework is illustrated below.

Vision
Defines the objectives and aspirations for economic development and tourism

↓

Principles
Underpins the strategy and frames the strategic directions and future actions

↓

Themes
The core pillars and focus areas for economic development and tourism, used to identify the project opportunities and future actions/priorities

↓

Actions
The projects or initiatives that are delivered and implemented by relevant stakeholders to achieve Strategy objectives (a list of relevant stakeholders and partners across Economic Development and Tourism is detailed in Appendix D)

Vision

The following vision and principles for economic development and tourism in Campaspe Shire is informed by the strategic considerations as follows:

> **"Campaspe Shire's economy is prosperous, diverse and resilient: A destination that supports a thriving population, workforce, business community and tourism industry."**

Strategic Principles

- Deliver economic growth that is **sustainable** (considers the impact on the community, environment and the economy)
- Focus on **localised and place based opportunities** that considers the specific role, function and needs of communities
- Utilise **new and innovative technologies** to support efficient and productive growth outcomes
- Adopt a **strategic and collaborative approach** with key stakeholders to achieve common goals and objectives
- Integrate **knowledge** and **skills development** in future activities to achieve ongoing positive change

Themes

The following identifies the key themes and relevant goals for the Campaspe Shire economy. These align with the overarching vision for the economy and include relevant project priorities and other opportunities for Council, which are explored throughout this section.



1

A Unique and Successful Visitor Destination

Create a unique and high-value visitor destination that leverages the Shire's competitive advantages and provides a high-quality experience for new and existing visitor markets.



2

A Productive and High-Value Primary Industry

Maximise the economic value of primary production and food processing, including supporting sectors, to grow its economic contribution to the Shire.



3

A Liveable and 'Job-Ready' Community

Develop high-amenity and liveable communities that promote the attraction (and retention) of residents and workers to the Shire, supporting local economic and social activity.



4

A Dynamic, Engaged and Diverse Business Community

Generate economic and employment outcomes through the growth and development of existing businesses, as well as attracting emerging and future industries.

Theme 1: A Unique and Successful Visitor Destination

Create a unique and high-value visitor destination that leverages the Shire's competitive advantages and provides a high-quality experience for new and existing visitor markets.

Overview

The visitor economy is an important component of the Campaspe Shire economy, providing substantial contributions to local consumption, output and employment. The benefits from tourism, which are derived from visitor yield, flow through the economy and impact retail, service, hospitality and transport sectors (amongst others).

With a variety of attractions and assets, the Shire is a recognised visitor destination for a range of visitor markets. However, there is significant opportunity to grow the visitor economy by building on existing strengths, developing new experiences and broadening the market penetration of the Shire.

What goals do we want to achieve?

Goal 1: Elevate Echuca as the Leading Regional Visitor Destination on the Murray River

Echuca has been known as a destination for many years and has become one of Victoria's leading regions. To elevate Echuca as the leading regional destination on the Murray River there are opportunities to share first nations stories, embrace Moama as part of the destination and leverage their attractions and events, raise the profile of the contemporary product offering in the region and encourage precinct improvements that facilitate a quality visitor experience.

Goal 2: Foster Shire-Wide Visitor Dispersal

Visitor dispersal to smaller towns and attractions plays a vital role in fostering inclusive and sustainable tourism development. While leading tourist destinations often receive the lion's share of visitors, dispersing visitors across smaller towns helps alleviate the pressure on overcrowded areas and distributes economic benefits more evenly. Tourism can revitalize local economies, create employment opportunities, and preserve cultural heritage. This dispersal needs to be considered both geographically and also seasonally.

Goal 3: Establish a Strong Major Regional Events Calendar

Major events are a key attractor of visitors to the region and provide high yield over a concentrated period. A dedicated and targeted approach to event attraction, accompanied by prospectus materials, is required to attract events that align with the region's strengths.

These major events may be suited primarily to Echuca, given the available infrastructure, but the rural townships can benefit from hosting satellite events and accommodating visitors when Echuca is at capacity.

Goal 4: A Visitor Economy of Excellence

A visitor economy of excellence refers to a thriving and well-developed sector focused on establishing a strong framework to build and grow visitation. This includes:

- Highly engaged Industry
- Delivering best practice visitor services
- A magnet for visitor investment attraction
- A diverse tourism product growth and development pipeline

Goal 5: To Establish a Recognised Brand and Destination Image

Brand development is crucial for destinations as it serves as the cornerstone of their identity and reputation. A strong brand communicates the unique value proposition of a destination setting it apart from competitors and resonating with target audiences. It creates a lasting impression in the minds of consumers, instilling trust, loyalty, and preference. Elements to be addressed in brand development:

- Develop a unique and visible brand;
- Seek to capture repeat visitation;
- Image consistency; and
- Destination awareness.

- Delivery of contemporary **products**, **experiences** and **accommodation** that leverages existing and emerging product strengths, drives visitation and yield, as well as expanding the visitor economy.
- Deliver a strong and diverse calendar of **major events**, which is a key component of the visitor economy, increases the profile of the Shire and attracts visitors and yield to the area.
- **Develop** and **activate** key precincts and visitor nodes to attract investment, drive visitation and generate visitor expenditure. This applies to existing precincts, town centres, river foreshore, nature-based assets and other popular visitor destinations.

How will we achieve our goals?

- Support the geographic and seasonal **dispersal** of visitors to spread the economic benefits of tourism and create a more sustainable tourism industry.
- Grow the **value** of the visitor economy through generating increased visitor yield, harnessing increasing spend rates across regional Victoria.
- Enhance **destination awareness** through consistent branding, marketing and promotion (in collaboration with external tourism partners), to expand the reach of Campaspe Shire to target markets.
- High-quality **visitor servicing** that caters to the contemporary needs of visitors through all stages of the visitor journey and enhances visitor experience.

How will we measure success?

- ✓ Increased visitation and expenditure from Council-led or supported projects
- ✓ Growth in tourism's contribution to output and jobs in the Shire
- ✓ Increased visitation to smaller towns
- ✓ Increase in the number of major events attracted by Council
- ✓ Increase in visitor satisfaction with tourism offerings measured by attendance numbers and steady visitation to the region

Project Opportunities

Goal 1: Elevate Echuca as the Leading Regional Visitor Destination on the Murray River

Project 1.1: Port of Echuca Precinct Plan

Enhancements to the Port of Echuca Precinct are required to elevate the role it plays in the visitor experience and enhance its contribution to the visitor economy. A contemporary approach that celebrates the past and embraces the future is needed to activate the precinct and provide and engaging destination for visitors. The plan should include:

- Defining the precinct vision;
- Visitor experience improvements;
- Wayfinding and Signage requirements;
- Accessibility audits and improvements;
- Parking – short and long term;
- Riverfront activation;
- Support of the impending Australian Star visitor experience; and
- Activation of key attractions (funding required):
    - Cargo shed;
    - PS Alexander Arbuthnot; and
    - The Aquatic reserve.

Project 1.2: Cross Border Collaboration

Connection with Moama is crucial to the continued success of Echuca from a tourism perspective. A collaborative working relationship needs to be fostered to make the best use of resources and capture visitors from the neighbouring region. Regular planning sessions and meetings would provide a formal structure to the relationship, providing and supporting:

- Unified strategic direction;
- Cross-promotion of events;
- Shared use of resources during peak visitation periods (i.e. accommodation and transport);
- Destination marketing campaigns;
- Packaged products and itineraries; and
- Joint advocacy for infrastructure and investment attraction.

Project 1.3: Bridge To Bridge Tourism Focused Priorities

Develop an integrated plan for the precinct between the two bridge crossings, focusing on engagement and integration of Echuca and Moama (and the Murray River) as a single visitor destination. This project should also consider future tourism opportunities with the Pump House Building, as well as connectivity between the Port precinct and the retail precinct on High Street.

Goal 2: Foster Shire-Wide Visitor Dispersal

Project 1.4: Capitalise On The Mobile Traveller

Growth in domestic caravan and campers is continuing to increase across Regional Australia. In order to take advantage of this growth market, investment is required in RV friendly infrastructure and wayfinding to encourage dispersal and yield across the region.

This should be based on an audit of existing infrastructure and assets used by caravan and camping visitors, identifying capital projects that require investment (e.g. signage and wayfinding, dump points, EV charging stations, signage and wayfinding, etc.).

Project 1.5: Tracks and Trails Development

Quality connectivity between townships is lacking for all modes of transport. To encourage and attract dispersal, investment in a comprehensive trail network is required. With a focus in multi-use, all accessibility tracks and trails existing and new markets may be attracted to the region.



Goal 2: Foster Shire-Wide Visitor Dispersal

Project 1.6: Connect The Region Through Arts

Further develop the arts trail and investigate the creation of other arts-based dispersal programs that can connect small rural townships with larger destinations. This project can tap into existing art projects such as silo art and the Girgarre Botanic Gardens. This should include collaboration with Murray River Council (MRC) to leverage the Bridge Art project and develop a wayfinding program that captures visitors from surrounding areas and disperses visitors across the Shire. Align this with the Arts precinct masterplan that will act as a dispersal hub for arts experiences across the Shire.

Project 1.7: Water-based Activation

Further develop and capitalise on the Murray River and other water-based assets such as Lake Cooper, Gunbower wetlands, Greens Lake and Waranga Basin, which are a primary driver of visitation. Engagement and interaction with the water assets is a key opportunity linked to the positive climate in the region. This requires infrastructure to be created and access to be improved across all assets to encourage safe and inclusive visitor engagement with the water from passive water activities such as kayaking and SUPing to fishing and motorised watercraft where appropriate.

Goal 3: Establish a Strong Major Regional Events Calendar

Project 1.8: Major Event Attraction

Major events are a key attractor of visitors to the region and provide high yield over a concentrated period. A dedicated and targeted approach to event attraction, accompanied by prospectus materials, is required to attract events that align with the region's strengths. Council should initiate a program to attract major events, in collaboration with neighbouring areas and industry.

The prospectus should also consider:

- Key location and destinations to leverage future events, including but not limited to: the Port of Echuca, Kyabram Fauna Park, Victoria Park and Echuca Station Precinct
- Attracting Business and Education (school camps) events to the region

Note: This project could align with the Event Sponsorship Fund (refer to project 1.10) and Enhance Existing Events with Packaging and Satellite Events (refer to project 1.11).

Project 1.9: Ignite the Night-time economy

Explore events as an instigator for activating the night-time economy. Events offer a platform for short term activations and trial activities. Develop a series of pilot night – time activations of various types that link to the event calendar. Measure the success of each event and use this to create an ongoing program of night-time activation.

Project 1.10: Events Sponsorship Fund

Develop a competitive event attraction fund that encourages major events to host their events in the region. Develop a criteria of assessment that ultimately benefits the visitor economy Shire wide.

Project 1.11: Enhance Existing Events with Packaging and Satellite Events

Work closely with event organisers to encourage to creation of multi day experiences and satellite events to encourage dispersal.

Project 1.12: Event Infrastructure Audit

Undertake an audit of current event infrastructure in the region to determine types of events that could be accommodated and supported by Council, as well as opportunities for infrastructure improvements and investments.

Goal 4: A Visitor Economy of Excellence

Project 1.13: Agritourism Development

Visitors have a strong desire to connect with local producers and gain in depth understanding of the 'paddock to plate' story. As a diverse agricultural region Campaspe has existing and emerging agritourism products for visitors to experience.

In order to grow this sector, Council should consider alignment with the *Destination Riverina Murray Agritourism Strategy* and the delivery of the four strategic directions:

1. Build capacity across the regions' local governments and agritourism sector.
2. Focus support for agritourism development and marketing on emerging agritourism hubs.
3. Develop lead agritourism products.
4. Lead the regions marketing with agritourism.

Key products to be developed include wineries, distilleries, farm gates and crops (e.g. canola and sunflowers). In order to build capacity and influence growth, Council should facilitate access to training and education for agritourism concepts in the region.

Project 1.14: Precinct Development and Activation

Identify opportunities to develop and activate key visitor precincts in the Shire, though strategic planning and investments. Key precincts identified for investigation include (but not limited to):

- A 'Cross River' Port precinct Plan (incorporating Echuca Moama river precincts, including the Bridge to Bridge project);
- A First Nations 'On Country' Tourism Plan (shire wide); and
- Echuca railway station precinct.

This project could be supported through external funding and grant opportunities, Council should aim to be investment ready for these projects establishing businesses cases, feasibility studies and design concepts where relevant.

Project 1.15: Visitor Servicing Strategy

A visitor servicing strategy is required to define the requirements of visitor servicing for Campaspe Shire. This strategy should consider visitor information centres, wayfinding and information hubs, as well as dispersal strategies. The actions from this strategy may not all be delivered by Council and will need industry buy-in to achieve a holistic approach to visitor serving across the various stages of the visitor journey. The strategy should explore:

- Future of an accredited VIC;
- Industry referral programs;
- Signage and wayfinding;
- Digital platforms; and
- A holistic visitor servicing network with physical and digital touchpoints.

Project 1.16: Foster a Cohesive and Collaborative Industry

Build an environment that supports and encourages industry engagement and partnerships through networking events, business drop-in sessions and information sharing channels. This would include delivering industry development programs that support businesses to become 'international ready'.

Project 1.17: Establish a Tourism Business Concierge Service

Take a proactive approach to tourism business investment and create a fast-tracked pathway for new and expanding tourism businesses. Council may consider incentives to encourage an increase in tourism businesses particularly encouraging high-value, internationally appealing experiences and diverse accommodation options.

Note: This project could align with the Business Concierge Service (refer to project 4.3).

Project 1.18: Focus on an Accessible and Inclusive Visitor Economy

To welcome all visitors, including those with accessibility needs, a review of accessible and inclusive tourism products should be undertaken and mapped to identify clusters and areas for opportunity to develop. All new tourism businesses should be encouraged to consider accessibility and inclusion as part of their business plan and site development.



Project 1.19: Accommodation Audit and Investment Attraction

Gaps in the current accommodation offering across the Shire include boutique accommodation, serviced apartments, conference/business centre and luxury accommodation.

A Shire-wide audit is required to identify the current accommodation stock, bed capacity, as well as opportunities for investment attraction. This audit will include assessment of all accommodation types, ranging from camping to luxury accommodation in the Shire.

Potential sites for development consideration may include the Echuca Station Precinct, Port precinct, as well as service centres such as Kyabram and Rochester. In addition, niche accommodation (such as Eco Cabins and Glamping) should be explored at sites that link to existing nature-based and outdoor attractions, including the Rushworth Rail Trail, Waranga Basin and Gunbower Wetlands.

Note: *This project could align with the Major Infrastructure Advocacy Document and Prospectus (refer to project 4.1), Industry Attraction Incentive Program (refer to project 4.4) and Investment Attraction Brand Development (refer to project 4.7).*

Project 1.20: First Nations Cultural Product Development

Campaspe Shire is positioned within the lands of three traditional owner groups – the Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta and Taungurung. This rich cultural history is an opportunity to share the story of the land and First Nations development of wayfinding and interpretation experiences to product development. Increased engagement and collaboration with traditional owner groups will ensure that the first nations story is shared in alignment with the Victorian First Peoples Plan.

Goal 5: To Establish a Recognised Brand and Destination Image

Project 1.21: Establish a Suite of Quality Marketing Materials

Invest in quality imagery and video content that can populate a library of tools that can be made available to Visit Victoria and industry to promote the region consistently.

Project 1.22: Dedicated Marketing Campaigns

Undertake dedicated marketing campaigns in partnership with Murray Regional Tourism and Visit Victoria that target interstate visitors particularly those from NSW and international independent travellers. These campaigns would speak to the product strengths of the region such as the Australian Star and Kyabram Fauna Park, link with seasonality and drive repeat visitation through itineraries, events and special offers.

Project 1.23: Partnerships with Other Tourism Bodies

Elevate the destination brand by working closely with Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia to participate in campaigns and host journalist familiarisation trips as part of the visiting journalist program.

In addition, undertake collaborative marketing projects with surrounding tourism organisations to capitalise on product alignment. This could include partnerships with the Heathcote Wine Growers Association and Bendigo Region Tourism, to elevate the profile of the Campaspe Shire vineyards and wineries, as well as the Goulburn Region Tourism Partnership to leverage the strength of food in the combined regions.

Project 1.24: Consistent Campaspe Area/Region Tourism Brand

Conduct a brand audit to review the existing brands in market and work to develop consistent, cross-border branding to be used for marketing the region to visitors. This should include a focus on Echuca, as well as other destinations and attractions across the Shire.

The subsequent development of a Brand Strategy, Brand guidelines and collaborative marketing plan will help deliver strong and consistent messaging to visitor markets.

Note: This project could align with the Population and Workforce Attraction Brand Development (refer to project 3.4) and Investment Attraction Brand Development (refer to project 4.7).

Theme 2: A Productive and High-Value Primary Industry

Maximise the economic value of primary production and food processing, including supporting sectors, to grow its economic contribution to the Shire.

Overview

The Campaspe Shire economy, as well as its diverse communities, are driven by primary industry (i.e. agriculture and manufacturing) – specifically dairy production and processing. This is sustained by the existing cluster of large employers in the sector including Australian Consolidated Milk, Kyvalley Dairy and Fonterra.

The food industry extends to other major fruit and vegetable processors, including Kagome, Greenhams, Symplot and Heinz.

As such, food production and processing are key competitive advantages for the Shire and Council should focus on leveraging this industry to achieve economic and employment growth. Importantly, rural industry also forms part of the social fabric of smaller communities, and a thriving sector will contribute to community outcomes.

What goals do we want to achieve?

Goal 6: Campaspe Shire is a Leader in Food Production and Processing

To sustain the value of agriculture and manufacturing and ensure it remains a key competitive advantage for the Shire, it is critical that industry remains competitive.

This includes the ability to identify, harness and adopt new technologies that positions the Shire as a leader in food production and processing.

Achievement of this goal will provide economic benefits by increasing production and water efficiency, diversifying industry practices and supporting investment, particularly in less water dependent businesses.

Goal 7: Leading the Response to Climate Change

With the ongoing threat of climate change impacting agricultural production, Campaspe Shire needs to position itself as a region that adopts best practices in mitigating the impact of bushfires, floods and other extreme weather events.

This includes measures that proactively prepares industry to deal with the threat, as well as effectively responds to an adverse event.

Additional approaches to meeting climate change threats include: exploring approaches to valuing, restoring and enhancing natural assets, Waste to Energy initiatives, less water dependent forms of production and the adoption of water efficient practices.

By safeguarding the industry against climate change, this will provide more certainty for producers and stimulate agricultural investment, which will help grow the food production industry.

Goal 8: Providing Value-Add to the Economy

Campaspe Shire has the opportunity to capitalise on its competitive advantages in food production and processing to add-value to the economy.

This includes leveraging the industry to assist supporting and complementary sectors that are both directly and indirectly influenced by primary industry.

This will increase the value of food production and processing and ensure it provides a greater range of economic benefits for the Shire.

How will we achieve our goals?

- Increase the **volume** and **diversity** of agricultural output maximise its value to the local economy through output generation, exports and creation of local jobs.
- **Future proof** rural industry and build **resilience** to external threats, including floods, bushfires and water availability, to maintain a productive sector that contributes to the economic and social fabric of the Shire.
- **Collaboration** with industry, as well as research and education institutes to adopt more innovative practices that increases the competitiveness of the sector.
- Support future **growth** and **innovation** in manufacturing, including high-intensity advanced practices that expands production and grows the knowledge-base.
- Promote **supply chain** efficiencies and access to **export** opportunities through supporting industries that add value to food production and processing, including transport and logistics activities.
- Support **value-adding** opportunities across primary industries and supporting sectors to increase their economic contribution (e.g. agri-tourism, consumer-facing food and beverage services)
- Reducing water dependence by **identifying, promoting and adopting Integrated Water Management** and water efficient practices in production.

How will we measure success?

- ✓ Growth in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors output and value add
- ✓ Increases in employment and business counts for agriculture, manufacturing and supporting sectors
- ✓ Increased participation of primary industries in business networks and forums



Project Opportunities

Goal 6: Campaspe Shire is a Leader in Food Production and Processing

Project 2.1: Advanced Manufacturing Research

Collaborate with the food processing sector, as well as higher education institutes, to identify research and development opportunities to support the growth of advanced manufacturing. This initiative should involve:

- Identification of constraints to business investment; and
- Identification of opportunities that facilitate the transition to advanced and innovative practices, including access to workers (through training and education), planning support, ensuring appropriate land supply, etc.

Project 2.2: Rural Industry Strategic Plan

Prepare an overarching strategic plan for rural industry to sustain the food production sector and ensure it remains a key driver of economic and employment outcomes for the Shire. This plan should consider the specific issues relevant to Campaspe as well as the key macro trends and challenges facing the industry, including:

- Adopting sustainable practices in response to climate change and extreme weather events;
- Reducing water dependence by identifying, promoting and adopting Integrated Water Management and water efficient practices in production;
- Identifying and adapting production to meet the contemporary needs of consumers;
- Ensuring efficient and effective supply chains to meet domestic and international market opportunities;
- Protecting farming land and interfaces with residential development; and
- Identifying value-add opportunities to strengthen Agriculture and supporting businesses; and
- Promoting support services provided across all levels of Government (e.g. Agriculture Victoria and AgBiz Assist), including advice to farmers on succession planning.

Project 2.3: Domestic and International Trade Partnerships

Collaborate with Government and industry to foster better relations and engagement with trade partners – both domestic and international. This could focus on:

- Council activities to facilitate trade relations and proactive opportunities (e.g. trade missions, manufacturing expos);
- Supporting government agreements to expand trade for food production and processing;
- Representing and supporting industry in expanding partnerships; and
- Enhancing the awareness of Campaspe Shire as a destination for food production and processing.

Project 2.4: Agricultural Research, Training and Education Hub

Explore the establishment of a Training and Education Hub for agriculture – in collaboration with industry, employment providers and tertiary institutions – which could enhance the sector through:

- Engaging in research and development of new technologies and innovative practices being used in food production;
- Delivering training to businesses and workers to adopt these practices;
- Identifying new agricultural opportunities suited to the region to diversify output (e.g. horticulture);
- Explore the potential of working with the tertiary sector, agricultural colleges and research institutions (e.g. CSIRO);
- Facilitate employment pathways for the sector by attracting and training workers.

Opportunities could include expanding the range of courses at Bendigo TAFE (Echuca Campus) and/or developing a private Registered Training Organisation in other towns (e.g. Kyabram, Rochester).

Project Opportunities

Goal 7: Leading the Response to Climate Change

Project 2.5: Agricultural Resilience Program

Provide ongoing and targeted support to rural industry to build resilience from external economic shocks and extreme weather events (e.g. floods, bushfires). The program, which can include online tools, manuals, as well as promoting access to grant funding, should focus on the following:

- Identify and employ approaches to valuing, regenerating and enhancing natural capital;
- Identify and promote optimal land use practices to safeguard against climate change and the ongoing threat of bushfires and floods, which will ensure agricultural land remains productive and output is maintained;
- Supporting producers to adopt biosecurity measures against biohazards; and
- Advocating for, and supporting, water security for growers to safeguard production.

Project 2.6: Resource Recovery Program

Investigate opportunities to create a more circular food production and processing industry that converts waste into resources.

Through collaboration with industry and Government, identify and action opportunities to recovery and re-use food waste, including:

- Using food waste as an energy source; and
- Convert food waste into other useable materials (e.g. protein recovery).

Goal 8: Providing Value-Add to the Economy

Project 2.7: Investigate Import Substitution Opportunities

Explore import substitution opportunities for agriculture and manufacturing, to reduce the reliance on supply chains and develop more sustainable and self-contained industry. To identify and deliver opportunities to produce goods locally, this will involve:

- Collaboration with local agriculture and manufacturing businesses to identify production gaps;
- Investigation of best practice techniques domestically and internationally (via expos and trade fairs); and
- Investment attraction initiatives to attract relevant businesses and producers to meet identified gaps in local production.

Project 2.8: Agribusiness Brand

Explore the feasibility of establishing a localised agribusiness brand for Campaspe Shire, leveraging the production of dairy products in the region. The branding will be used as a promotional tool for the region and local businesses and designed to enhance the market appeal of local produce.

The brand could be designed to align with established destinations in the area, including local (i.e. Kyvalley) or regional (i.e. Murray) labels.

Project 2.9: Food Production Export Opportunities

Support value-adding opportunities for food producers and processors, focusing on storing and exporting local goods via investment in the transport and logistics sectors. Key opportunities identified, in collaboration with industry and Government include:

- Attraction of transport and logistics businesses to grow the local supply chain, including investment in warehousing and freight;
- Advocate for upgrades in the road freight network, through mapping existing trade routes and identifying improvements, to support more efficient transport of locally produced goods to export markets;
- Explore the potential to better utilise Echuca Aerodrome to expand the reach to additional export markets;
- Explore the feasibility of an intermodal terminal in Campaspe Shire, that improves connectivity to freight networks – inc. road, rail and air – and expands export opportunities; and
- Explore the potential of leveraging the Echuca and District Livestock Exchange to expand export markets.

Theme 3: A Liveable and 'Job-Ready' Community

Develop high-amenity and liveable communities that promote the attraction (and retention) of residents and workers to the Shire, supporting local economic and social activity.

Overview

Campaspe Shire residents are dispersed across multiple communities, including the larger centres of Echuca, Rochester and Kyabram, as well as smaller rural townships.

Maintaining a high-quality of life for residents across all communities, as well as fostering community wellbeing, is a key enabler for economic development, through:

- Supporting the economic inclusion of residents, including increased access to employment opportunities and participation in local economic activity; and
- Attracting and retaining working-aged residents to support local businesses.



What goals do we want to achieve?

Goal 9: A Desirable Destination to Live and Work

The key to attracting a thriving population and workforce in Campaspe Shire is to establish the region as a desirable destination for residents and workers.

This is achieved through development of high-amenity and liveable communities, with provision of quality services and infrastructure.

This includes leveraging its competitive lifestyle advantages including access to nature-based assets (e.g. Murray River), capitalising on the role of the regional and service centre towns and supporting diversity in lifestyle options across the network of rural townships.

Goal 10: Establish a Skilled and Engaged Workforce

The development of a skilled and engaged workforce is critical for businesses to ensure appropriate access to labour.

This was identified as a key constraint for business activity and business growth in the Shire. Therefore, providing a suitable workforce will support business operations, promote investment and ensure local services have the capacity to meet the needs of communities.

How will we achieve our goals?

- Access to quality **services, amenity** and **infrastructure** across all townships to support resident liveability, as well as attract and retain residents and workers in Campaspe.
- Promote growth in community **health and wellbeing** to align with forecast demand and workforce growth in the sector, to ensure provision of whole-of-life healthcare and social assistance across the Shire.
- Foster opportunities for social **inclusion** and **engagement** to ensure residents have access to employment opportunities and contribute to the economic and social fabric of the municipality.
- Support the economic and social **contribution** of smaller townships, ensuring a more sustainable and productive economy and population base.
- Support the provision of affordable and diverse **housing** across the Shire, which meets the needs of varying household types, to attract new residents and workers to the area.
- Promote lifelong **learning and skills development** for residents, as well as new and existing workers, to create a 'job-ready' local workforce will help local businesses address workforce challenges and skills gaps.
- Create local education and workforce **pathways** for school leavers to promote youth retention.

How will we measure success?

- ✓ Population growth above current forecast rates
- ✓ Increase in labour force participation
- ✓ Increase in workers and residents completing training and education courses
- ✓ Increase in supply of housing stock
- ✓ Improvements in community satisfaction with Council activities and services



Project Opportunities

Goal 9: A Desirable Destination to Live and Work

Project 3.1: Settlement and Structure Planning

Adopt an Integrated Planning approach for the towns and settlements across the Shire, to ensure they coordinate and contribute to current and future liveability.

This involves the development of a **Settlement Strategy,** an overall hierarchy for the Shire's towns and settlements, setting out the role of each plays within the hierarchy, and how they connect to and interact with one another.

This will also incorporate **individual township structure or framework plans** that will involve a shared vision for the town. The township structure or framework plans will identify the nature of current and future changes within each town and how these might be addressed.

The structure or framework plans will provide direction regarding transport, retail, economic, social, environmental, and housing issues. They can also include directions for community facilities and infrastructure and consider the individual needs and circumstances for each town and how these needs can be met in a way that these integrates within the region and municipality as a whole.

Project 3.2: Community Grants Program

Continue the Community Grants Program that allows for community organisations and groups to deliver localised programs, projects and activities that benefit the residents of key towns within the Shire. This will support community engagement and inclusion, fostering wellbeing and contributing to improved liveability outcomes.

Project 3.3: Population Attraction Plan

Prepare a Population Attraction Plan that is designed to attract working-aged residents to the Shire, which will help create a more sustainable population base and increase the local workforce. The Plan should consider:

- The target markets for attraction (considering source markets and community groups);
- Strategic locations to accommodate new residents and workers;
- Advantages of re-locating to the Shire (highlighting local strengths);
- Potential incentives to support population growth (e.g. financial incentives, planning support, general support); and
- Marketing and promotional tools and campaigns to advocate for population attraction and reach target markets (e.g. a population attraction prospectus).

Project 3.4: Population and Workforce Attraction Brand Development

Develop an overarching Council brand that speaks to population and workforce attraction and promotes the benefits to 'live' and 'work' (and 'play') in the Shire.

This brand should support and inform marketing campaigns and physical/online collateral (e.g. dedicated website, social media) that:

- Outlines the career and lifestyle opportunities for residents and workers; and
- Highlights the competitive advantages of the Shire as a destination to live and work.

Note: This project could align with the Consistent Campaspe Area/Region Tourism Brand (refer to project 1.24) and Investment Attraction Brand Development (refer to project 4.7).

Project 3.5: Healthcare and Social Assistance Engagement

Regular collaboration between Council and the healthcare network in Campaspe Shire (including Echuca Regional Health, Kyabram District Health Service, Rochester and Elmore District Health Service, Goulburn Valley Health) to focus on:

- Issues relating to the health and social assistance sector; and
- Opportunities for Council to help support the sector, including workforce attraction, worker relocation, planning support, as well as advocacy for Government funding.

Project 3.6: Transport Infrastructure Improvements

Advocate for improvements in public transport infrastructure to enhance accessibility to – and within – the Shire, particularly connectivity to key employment and commercial areas for residents and workers.

Improvements should focus on attracting more regular bus and V/line train services across the Shire to meet demand.

In addition, investigate the staged installation of a Shire wide EV charging network and explore the opportunities to grow ride share services particularly in and around regional and service centres.

Goal 10: A Skilled and Engaged Workforce

Project 3.7: Campaspe Community Connector Program

Establish a Community Connector Program, in collaboration with existing business networks and major employers, to assist new local workers (and their families) relocate and settle into the Shire. This involves a relocation concierge service, as well as provision of tools and resources, that provides assistance in the following areas:

- Housing;
- Partner/spouse employment;
- School and childcare;
- Networking with community groups; and
- Raising awareness of local amenities, recreation product and community facilities.

This program is designed to attract (and retain) new workers and residents to the Shire, as well as promote community engagement outcomes. The connections could be made either directly with the new local worker, or via local businesses when recruiting for new roles.

Project 3.8: Key Worker Short-Term Housing Program

Identify the needs and opportunities to develop short-term (inc. temporary and mobile) worker accommodation. This should explore available land that is Council-owned, private land that is underutilised, and/or repurpose existing (unused) accommodation.

This could include repurposing caravan parks, provide mobile housing units, or other temporary accommodation options.

Project 3.9: Youth Retention and Career Pathways Program

Support youth retention by promoting pathways for education, training and careers, in collaboration with schools, tertiary institutes and employment providers. Implement initiatives that enhance youth understanding of career/training options, as well as connect with industry, including consideration of:

- Promoting available tools and resources online;
- Facilitating careers' days in high schools;
- Connecting school leavers with training and education institutes; and
- Connecting school leavers with industry.

Project 3.10: Migrant Worker Attraction

Collaborate with industry and government to support attraction of migrant workers to address specific workforce and skills shortages.

Council could provide assistance through promoting relevant programs (e.g. DAMA), identifying opportunities for farmers and manufacturers to access migrant workers, as well as support the application processes.



Project 3.11: Campaspe Skills and Workforce Audit

Prepare a skills and workforce audit, in collaboration with industry, Bendigo TAFE and employment providers, that identifies employment and skills gaps by industry, job type and location. This information should be used to undertake the following activities to support workforce attraction and skills development:

- Advocate for training organisations and learning institutes to provide relevant skills and courses to overcome identified gaps; and
- Connecting workers with employment providers and industry to meet industry needs and overcome skills gaps.

Project 3.12: Regional University Study Hub

Identify opportunities to establish a higher education presence in the Shire to help local students access post-school education without having to leave the municipality. This should consider appropriate partnerships with an institution, relevant model, location and delivery of courses to meet industry needs.

This program will support youth retention as well as help industry overcome workforce and skills shortages, including professional services, public sector and knowledge-based industries.



Theme 4: A Dynamic, Engaged and Diverse Business Community

Generate economic and employment outcomes through the growth and development of existing businesses, as well as attracting emerging and future industries.

Overview

Encouraging the growth and development of the business community, as well as supporting new business investment, is critical for economic development.

Undertaking these activities will help create a more productive and resilient business base, diversify the economy, grow the workforce and meet community and visitor needs.

Council plays a critical role in supporting the business base – through networking and training opportunities – and facilitating investment (including business attraction and public infrastructure investment). This is achieved through the establishment of a collaborative and 'investment ready' environment, through appropriate business engagement, enabling infrastructure, planning mechanisms and other incentives.

What goals do we want to achieve?

Goal 11: Establish the Shire as a Destination of Choice for Investment

The ability to create a conducive environment for investment and business attraction is critical to achieving economic development outcomes. This includes having appropriate settings to accommodate investment, through supply of activated zoned land, as well as enabling and public infrastructure to stimulate growth.

Goal 12: Develop an Innovative and Diverse Business Base

Identify and promote opportunities for business investment that capitalises on emerging and market trends. This will support growth in new and innovative industries suited to the Shire and complement the existing industry base.

Developing a more diverse industry will also expand the jobs base, create new investment opportunities and build economic resilience.

Goal 13: Create a Supported, Collaborative and Self-Reliant Business Community

Adopt best practices in business support and development, which is a core economic development function of Council. This is vital to the creation of a productive and thriving industry.

Importantly, this will help ensure businesses and have the tools and mechanisms in place to achieve long-term growth and support economic and employment outcomes for the municipality.



How will we achieve our goals?

- Encourage business **resilience** and **productivity** through ongoing training, collaboration and networking that supports business **expansion** and **development**.
- Develop a **sustainable** business base through circular economy practices, focusing on enhancing business efficiency, contributing to broader environmental targets and attracting support from new 'green industries'.
- Attract **emerging and diverse** industries suited to the Shire, including value-adding and complementary industries, as well as innovative, knowledge-based businesses, to create a more sustainable and future-focused economy, as well as expand the jobs base.
- Attract business investment and growth through effective **land use planning** and **development infrastructure** that activates employment land and catalyses commercial and industrial development.
- Ongoing **advocacy** with key industry and government partners to attract investment in strategic infrastructure that supports business growth and attraction.

How will we measure success?

- ✓ Increases in number of local jobs and/or job containment levels
- ✓ Decrease in vacancy rates for commercial properties in town centres
- ✓ Growth in the local business base
- ✓ Increase in the level of participation and attendance at business training and networking events
- ✓ Increase in industry peak body memberships
- ✓ Increase in infrastructure funding from the public and private sector



Project Opportunities

Goal 11: Establish the Shire as a Destination of Choice for Investment

Project 4.1: Major Infrastructure Advocacy Document and Prospectus

Prepare an advocacy document that identifies and prioritises major public infrastructure priorities to support business investment and foster economic development outcomes.

The document should include infrastructure projects by priority status, location, timeframes, funding requirements and sources. This could be developed through regional collaboration with MRC and/or the Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership. Investment priorities to be considered should include the following local and regional-scale projects:

- Transport infrastructure (e.g. Murray Valley Highway improvements, improved rail services, other public transport services, shared pathways/ trails);
- Development/enabling infrastructure (e.g. access to utilities to ensure land is 'investment ready');
- Community and recreation infrastructure; and
- Digital infrastructure.

Promote the prospectus, in collaboration with regional bodies, to reach government and private audiences and support funding advocacy.

Project 4.2: Campaspe Industrial Land Strategy

Deliver an Industrial Land Strategy that includes a supply and demand assessment of Industrial Land across the Shire to ensure there is sufficiently suitable land to enable future industry growth and investment in strategic locations.

Project 4.3: Business Concierge Services

Enhance the concierge service within Council to support business attraction and operations in the Shire. This service will act as the central point of contact with businesses, helping with the growth and/or relocation process through regulatory support, planning support, recruitment support and other forms of assistance to facilitate business investment and operations.

Note: This project could align with Establish a Tourism Business Concierge Service (refer to project 1.17).

Project 4.4: Industry Attraction Incentive Program

Develop an investment incentive package to attract new businesses and industry to the Shire, ranging from planning support (i.e. providing efficiencies in processing of approvals), financial incentives and accessing Council resources.

Project 4.5: Support Mining Investment Opportunities

Facilitate gold exploration and mining potential in Campaspe Shire, leveraging the *North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release.*

This could include engagement with industry and Government to support exploration licenses, providing planning approvals and undertaking community engagement to build social licence for exploration activities.

Goal 12: Develop an Innovative and Diverse Business Base

Project 4.6: Campaspe Shire Investment Prospectus

Collaborate with MRC to development an Echuca-Moama Investment Prospectus that focuses on the attraction of key industries suited to the Shire (including growth and emerging sectors), including consideration of the following:

- Advanced manufacturing (leveraging existing manufacturing strengths and supply chain);
- Tourism and hospitality (including accommodation, conference centres and contemporary food services);
- Retail (leveraging the role of Echuca as a regional centre);
- Transport and logistics (supporting and complementing food production and processing, as well as facilitating the movement of workers and visitors);
- Health services (supporting the growing population base);
- Training and education (including tertiary institutes and private training organisations to bridge workforce and skills gaps);
- Agri-business (building on strength of production in dairy);
- Green industries (renewable energy manufacturers and investors/proponents, including wind, solar and/or hydrogen);
- Professional services (capitalising on migratory trends to regions and providing services locally); and
- Creative industries (leveraging existing heritage, history and cultural assets in the area).

Promote the prospectus and advantages of investing in the Shire through existing marketing and communication channels, including the Greater Shepparton campaign, as well as through trade missions/expos attended by Council.

Project 4.7: Investment Attraction Brand Development

Develop an investment attraction brand for the Shire that promotes the benefits of investing and doing business in the Shire.

This should include physical and online marketing campaigns (e.g. dedicated website, social media) that details the opportunities for businesses and promotes the competitive advantages of the Shire.

Note: This project could align with the Consistent Campaspe Area/Region Tourism Brand (refer to project 1.24) and Population and Workforce Attraction Brand Development (refer to project 3.4).

Project 4.8: Business Incubator Program

Explore the feasibility of establishing a Business incubator Program in Echuca to support the small business community (including entrepreneurs, digital enterprises, start-ups). This could include the provision of dedicated office infrastructure and professional development/business training programs to support growth.

Project 4.9: Circular Economy Initiatives

Promote delivery of the Loddon Mallee *Circular Central Victoria* project by supporting delivery of relevant circular opportunities identified in the document. This should involve collaboration with industry and government to facilitate:

- Opportunities to improve circular flows of food systems;
- Opportunities to improve sustainability of construction; and
- Opportunities to improve circular flows of manufacturing.

Delivery could also be supported by promoting state-wide education and training programs (inc. online tools and resources), as well as providing case studies of successful implementation by industry.

Goal 13: Create a Supported, Collaborative and Self-Reliant Business Community

Project 4.10: Business Development and Training Program

Work in partnership with existing business networks to deliver an ongoing program of training, mentoring and networking activities across the Shire, focusing on business growth and development. This could range from shire-wide events, to localised opportunities for smaller townships that meet the needs of the business base, including:

- Promote business to business connections to facilitate information sharing;
- Promote business support resources and tools; and
- Provide training to build business capacity, including financial management, marketing and promotion, grant applications, etc.

Project 4.11: Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Database

Subscribe to an up-to-date CRM software that identifies all registered businesses in the Shire, facilitates ongoing communication and tracks the frequency of engagement with local businesses. This tool will be utilised across whole-of-government and increase Council's efficiency to engage with industry and monitor business performance.

Project 4.12: Emergency Management Program

Examine and adopt best practice management practices to support businesses to overcome the increased prevalence of extreme weather events (e.g. bushfires, floods). This program should formally adopt practices that promote business resilience and recovery, including consideration of:

- Promoting online tools and resources through a dedicated portal;
- Providing access to funding assistance; and
- Business planning strategies to ensure longer-term resilience against ongoing threats.

Project 4.13: Social And Indigenous Enterprise Support

Encourage the growth and development of social enterprises and Indigenous businesses in the Shire, to support community outcomes and cater to the needs of diverse communities.

This could be fostered through provision of dedicated office space, training support, access to funding and localised procurement policies.



Appendices



Appendix A:
Phase 2 Consultation Summary



Phase 2 consultation was conducted in early to mid-2024 to test strategy concepts and obtain an understanding of local opportunities and priorities for industry and the community. This included the following engagement:

Two Council Workshops
- Councillors
- Council Executives

Five Industry Workshops
- Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics
- Education
- Agriculture
- Health
- Tourism

Targeted Interviews with government agencies, major employers, business networks and First Nations groups



Appendix B:
Policy Drivers





National

- Thrive 2030 National Visitor Economy Strategy

State

- Plan Melbourne 2017-2050
- DJPR Strategic Plan, 2021-25
- Infrastructure Victoria 30-year Strategy
- Creative State, 2025
- Victorian Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan, 2021
- Victorian Visitor Economy Master Plan Directions Paper, 2022
- Experience Victoria 2033
- Victorian Skills Plan for 2023 into 2024
- Victoria Energy Jobs Plan consultation paper

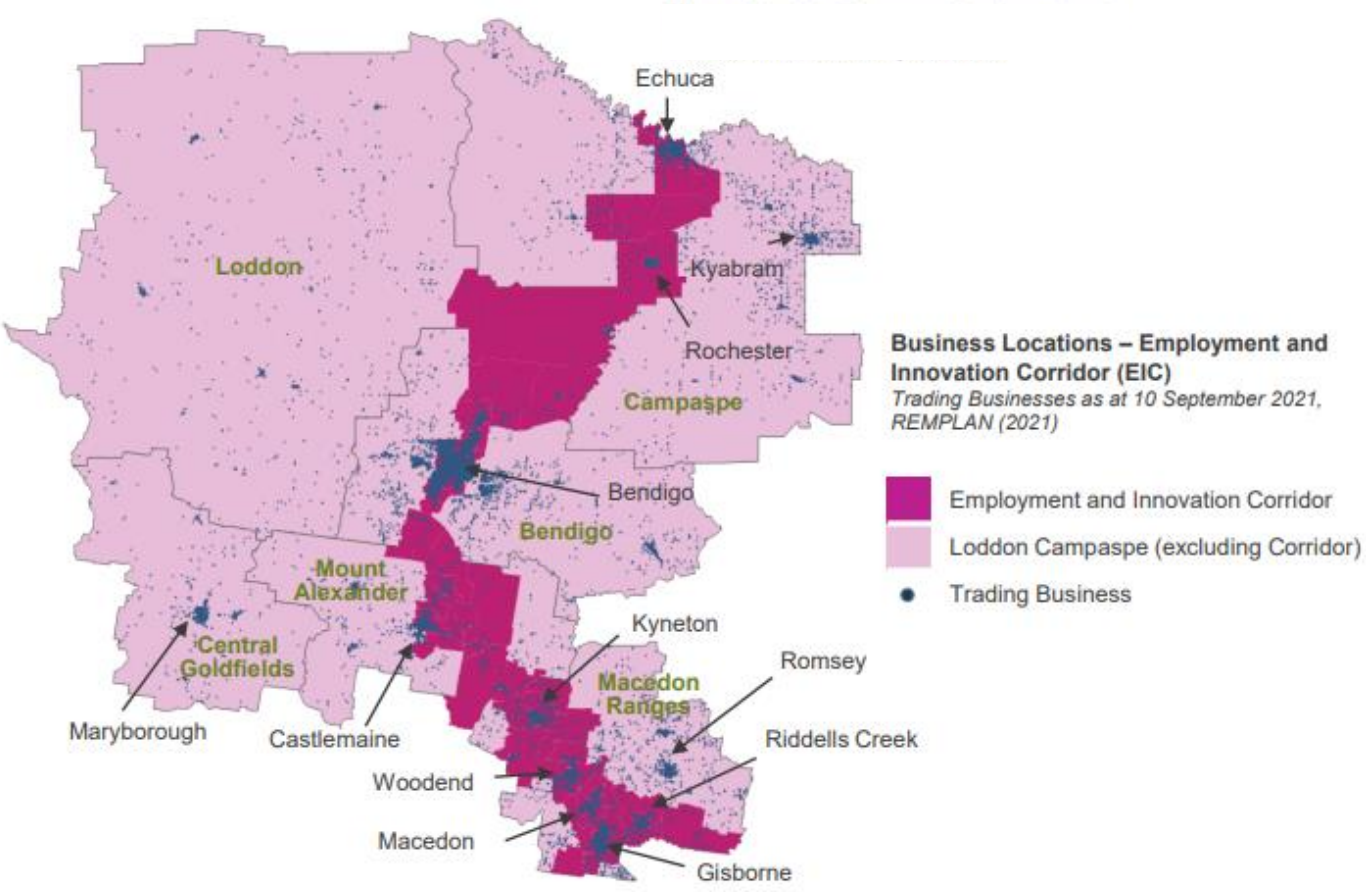
Regional

- Destination Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan
- Destination Riverina Murray Agritourism Development Strategy
- Murray Regional Tourism Strategic Plan 2021
- Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan (2014)
- Goulburn Murray Resilience Strategy (2020)
- Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan 2015-18
- Loddon Campaspe Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor Plan
- Echuca Moama Tourism Destination Activation Plan 2023-2028
- Murray River Council Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2024-2034
- Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan 2014-2034
- Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity Plan

Local

- Campaspe Shire Economic Development Strategy 2014-2019
- Creative Campaspe Arts & Culture Strategy 2021-2031
- Campaspe Shire Events Strategy 2019-2024
- Campaspe Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Program
- Campaspe Shire Advocacy Priorities Document 2021-25
- Campaspe Shire Environment Strategy 2022-2026
- Echuca Commercial Strategy (2017)
- Campaspe Port Enterprise Strategic Plan 2023-2028
- Tongala Place Based Plan 2023
- Colbinabbin Place Based Plan 2023
- Kyabram Place Based Plan 2021
- Stanhope Place Based Plan 2019
- Rochester Place Based Plan 2024
- Rushworth Place Based Plan 2023

Appendix C:
Loddon Campaspe Regional Employment & Innovation Corridor



Appendix D: Economic Development and Tourism Partners

The following tables outline the key stakeholders and partners that support economic development and tourism on a state, regional and local scale. Ongoing collaboration with these organisations is essential to support delivery of the CEDTS, as this will help promote local initiatives, as well as obtain political funding and support.

Table 3. Economic Development and Tourism Partners

State & Regional
Regional Development Australia (RDA) – Loddon Mallee
RDA Loddon Mallee coordinates the alignment of regional investment. It engages across agencies, industry bodies and the private sector to leverage and coordinate regional effort and influence state and Australian Government policy. It supports economic growth by facilitating access to data and knowledge, and creates regional alliances, partnerships and networks to support public and private investment.
Visit Victoria
The primary tourism and events organisation for the Victorian State Government and is involved in research and advocacy, as well as domestic and international marketing
Development Victoria
Designed to achieving social and economic outcomes for the Victorian community through property development and urban renewal – including investment in housing, and activity centres.
Invest Victoria
Invest Victoria is the State Government's investment attraction agency. It actively engages with local and international businesses, offering tailored support and guidance to encourage investment across various sectors, from industry promotion to investment attraction strategies.
Start Up Central
Start Up Central Victoria is an initiative dedicated to fostering the growth of startups and entrepreneurial ventures in Central Victoria. Its primary role is to provide a supportive ecosystem for startups through mentorship, resources, and networking opportunities, aiming to stimulate innovation and economic development.
Agriculture Victoria
Agriculture Victoria supports the growth and protection of farms in rural and regional communities across Victoria.
Regional Development Victoria (RDV) – Loddon Mallee
RDV supports the economic development of rural and regional areas within Victoria. RDV works with regional businesses and communities and all levels of government. RDV also provides infrastructure funding for tourism and supports advocacy efforts for industry and Council.
Invest Loddon Mallee
Invest Loddon Mallee is a regional economic development agency operating in the Loddon Mallee region of Victoria. Its primary role is to attract investment, stimulate economic growth, and create job opportunities by supporting businesses, facilitating partnerships, and promoting the region's assets
Circular Central Victoria
Circular Central Victoria is an organisation focused on promoting and implementing circular economy principles. It works to encourage sustainable practices by facilitating collaboration between businesses, government, and communities to reduce waste and optimize resource use.

State & Regional
Murray River Group of Councils
The Murray Region Group of Councils is a collective organization comprising local government authorities in the Murray region of Victoria and New South Wales. Its primary role is to facilitate collaboration and advocacy among member councils, working towards common goals such as regional development, infrastructure planning, and community services.
Murray Regional Tourism
Works to unite 13 local government areas along the Murray River. Established in 2012 in partnership with Destination NSW and Visit Victoria, Murray River Tourism helps provide member councils and the region's tourism industry with improvements in the supply and quality of tourism experiences and an increased awareness of destinations, products, experiences and events that occur within the region.
Murray Dairy
Murray Dairy is a regional dairy development program based in the Murray region of Victoria and New South Wales, funded by Dairy Australia. Its primary role is to provide support, research, and development services to dairy farmers, focusing on enhancing productivity, sustainability, and profitability within the dairy industry.

Local
Echuca Moama Tourism
The organisations key roles are to stimulate visitation to Echuca Moama & Districts and support the members. Support members to generate higher yield, drive visitation, inspire travellers to increase their length of stay, increase visitor expenditure, and ensure a sustainable visitor economy for the benefit all members, industry, and local communities.
Committee for Echuca Moama (C4EM)
The Committee for Echuca Moama is a membership based incorporated association who work together to advance issues of significance around population growth, economic development and social cohesion.
Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)
The principal objectives of Djaara is to promote the health and wellbeing of Dja Dja Wurrung People and to protect and promote the laws, Culture, property rights and human rights of Dja Dja Wurrung People.
Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation
This organisation was established to represent the members of the Family Groups who are descendants of the Original Ancestors of the Yorta Yorta Peoples; to make decisions and act on any matters of significance to the Yorta Yorta Peoples; and to enter into agreements with any person, Government agency or authority in relation to the protection of Yorta Yorta Country.
Taungurung Land and Waters Council
This organisation develops projects for the economic, social and cultural well-being of Taungurung people. We provide opportunities for engagement in cultural events by facilitating camps, activities, and educational workshops for Taungurung people and minimise the barriers to participation.
Various local community groups and business networks
Including but not limited to progress associations, chambers of commerce, local tourism associations and traders' associations that promote community development, tourism and support local businesses.


urban enterprise
planning economics+tourism
Campaspe
Shire Council