

Albury – Wodonga

Regional Economic Development Strategy | 2018 – 2022



VISION

The Albury – Wodonga region will leverage its endowments, building on its economic strengths and specialisations to grow the transport and logistics, manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare and social assistance and tourism sectors, growing the population and creating prosperity to set the region on a path for sustainable development supporting business development and enhancing quality of life for its residents.



PREFACE

The NSW Government has assisted local councils and their communities to develop 37 Regional Economic Development Strategies across regional NSW. Each strategy is designed around one or more local government areas that form a functional economic region as defined by economic data and community input. While the strategies have been developed using consistent methodology, each is a product of detailed data analysis and local community consultation to ensure ownership through a ‘bottom-up’ process: it sets out a vision for the region, the strategies, and early stage actions required to achieve the vision.

Regional Economic Development Strategies articulate a framework for identifying actions crucial to achieving the regional vision. Projects listed within this strategy should therefore be viewed as example projects that have emerged from the initial application of the framework, rather than a comprehensive list of all potential projects. Adoption of these projects would be subject to further evaluative processes.

The power of the strategy is its ability to be used on an on-going basis to identify additional high value projects over time. By complementing existing funding processes, these strategies present new opportunities to strengthen and increase investment in regional development across NSW.



Importantly, the strategy should be viewed as the first stage of a process that will assist those with an interest in the economic development of the region, particularly councils, communities and local businesses, in planning their future economic activities. It provides a vehicle for engaging the community in a ‘conversation’ about regional needs and priorities, assists in bringing together key stakeholders and mobilising resources, and in so doing, can facilitate faster access to dedicated NSW Government funding, such as the Growing Local Economies Fund, as well helping to capitalise upon other economic opportunities.

This Strategy, prepared by Sensing Value on behalf of the region, was formed in collaboration with Albury City, Wodonga City, Greater Hume Shire, Federation, and Indigo Shire Councils, key stakeholders and the broader regional community, which benefited from economic analytical assistance from the NSW Government’s Centre for Economic and Regional Development (CERD).

It is presented in two documents, the Albury – Wodonga Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018–2022 which allows the reader to quickly and easily determine key content, while the accompanying *Albury – Wodonga Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018–2022 – Supporting Analysis* details the Strategy methodology, evidence and the strategy development process.

For further information about the Regional Economic Development Strategies program please contact the CERD on 02 6391 3025 or CERD@dpc.nsw.gov.au.



INTRODUCTION

The *Albury – Wodonga Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018–2022* (the Strategy) sets out a long-term economic vision and associated strategies for the Albury-Wodonga Functional Economic Region (Albury-Wodonga or the region), which encompasses the five local government areas (LGAs) that form the region to implement. Specifically, these are Albury City, Wodonga City, Greater Hume Shire, Federation and Indigo Shire. It builds on the endowments and economic strengths and specialisations of the region to guide investment over the next four years.¹

Economic principles suggest that endowments and specialisations play a key role in regional economic development.²

The Strategy aims to leverage the region's endowments. These include its key strategic location along the NSW major east coast transport corridor; liveability and lifestyle appeal; productive climate, soils and water for food production; major service infrastructure in hospitals, airports and intermodal freight hubs; strong local institutions and businesses; excellent educational institutions and skilled workforce; and marketable product branding. These endowments are the basis of the region's specialisations in manufacturing, healthcare and tourism. The endowments and specialisations have been identified through a process of data analysis and community consultation.

The Strategy builds on the region's endowments, specialisations and economic strengths to ensure long-term sustainable development in the future. It includes a number of key elements:

- support and grow Agribusiness and Softwoods industries throughout the region
- grow the Transport and Logistics sector
- continue to develop and grow the Tourism sector and the visitor economy
- grow the Healthcare sector through the development of a Health Precinct
- attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled workers
- capitalise on the region's opportunity to be a special economic zone.

The Strategy also takes account of regional risks and how they might be addressed.

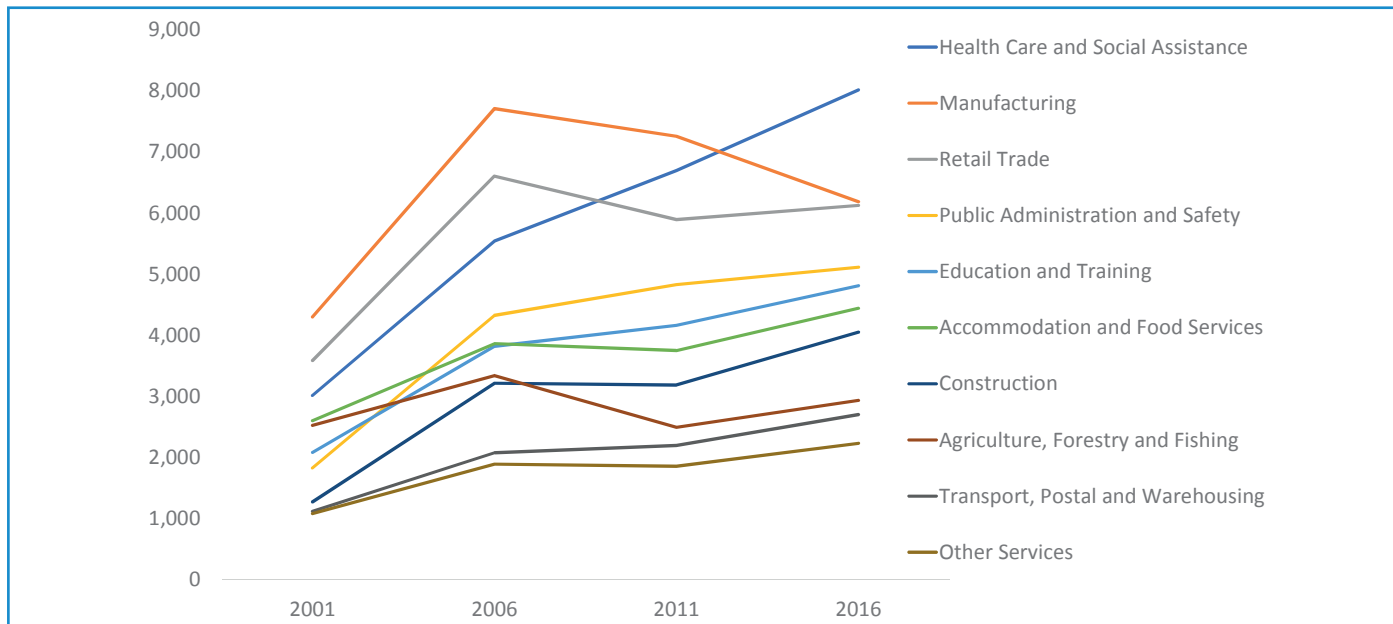
While the order of these goals reflects the current opportunities and challenges, each should be considered as part of an holistic package that will be important for the overall future growth of the regional economy.

This Strategy is the culmination of collaboration between the councils of Albury City, Wodonga City, Greater Hume Shire, Federation, Indigo Shire, their respective communities, and the NSW Government's Centre for Economic and Regional Development (CERD).

- 1 [Regional Economic Development Strategies, Centre for Economic and Regional Development \(https://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/programs_and_services/centre_for_economic_and_regional_development/projects\)](https://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/programs_and_services/centre_for_economic_and_regional_development/projects)
- 2 [Regional Economic Growth Enablers Report \(2017\), Centre for Economic and Regional Development.](#)



Figure 2: Employment in the Region, 2001–2016



Trends in employment in the region’s industry sectors are shown in Figure 2.

Health Care and Social Assistance is the region’s major employing sector, with employment having significantly increased over the past 15 years (see Figure 2). This has been driven by consistent growth in the portion of the population 65 years and older, with urban Albury – Wodonga acting as a regional hub for services to a number of surrounding areas. While Manufacturing employment in general has declined over the past decade, the region recently has seen employment in some Manufacturing subsectors continue to grow, such as Beverage Product Manufacturing, which grew by close to 50 per cent between 2011 and 2016.

Agriculture Forestry and Fishing (predominantly sheep, beef cattle and grain farming) also has a major role in the regional economy, particularly outside of Albury – Wodonga. Employment declines in these sectors are consistent with broader industry sector trends seen across Australia, but the sector is showing trends that suggest future employment growth potential, having experienced increased employment between 2011 and 2016.

Tourism is also a major employer in the region, which is a combination of business and health travel to Albury – Wodonga, and more traditional tourism offerings to places such as Beechworth, the Rutherglen wine region and Lake Mulwala. While Tourism employment is not formally captured in the same manner as other sectors by the ABS, the importance of the industry can be seen by the high number of workers employed in the Accommodation and Food Services and Retail Trade sectors.

Economic indicators, in this instance employment trends, represent one aspect of the approach to identifying key sectors. Other types of information, such as community consultation and online surveys, provide qualification and context that can be used in conjunction with these indicators to identify the sectors which represent the region’s competitive advantage.



ENDOWMENTS

Endowments are strengths that a regional economy possesses and can capitalise on. Economic principles suggest that endowments play a key role in the economic development of each region. The CERD in its *Regional Economic Enablers Report (2017)* found that:

*the future of individual regional economies is inexorably linked to their natural endowments and attempts to retain or establish industries without an underpinning endowment are unlikely to succeed.*⁴

A region seeking to encourage economic development should concentrate on the factors that enable the growth of endowment-based industries, as well as building local leadership capacity, to capitalise on the opportunities that the region's endowments present. Endowments can lead to opportunities from which commercial and industrial interests may leverage and develop specialisations.

Endowments of the region identified through analysis and community consultation.

Location

Albury – Wodonga is located on the major transport route between Sydney and Melbourne and is a major population and employment centre between the two cities. This creates a natural competitive advantage for the transport and logistics sector in the region, which in turn can act as an enabler for sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture. The region also enjoys a location along the Murray River, which provides opportunities for tourism and agriculture industries, as well as proximity to the Victorian High Country.

However, there are also a number of issues and complications that come with being a cross-border region, including regulatory inconsistencies and competition between states.

Natural resource endowment

The region has a significant land endowment and forestry assets, with high levels of water security and sunshine exposure that provide the basis for competitive advantages for the agricultural and softwoods industries in the region.

For Albury – Wodonga, these assets have direct linkages to food manufacturing businesses that source many of their inputs from local producers and pulp and paper product manufacturers, who enjoy connections to major forestry assets in Tumbarumba and Tumut. The region also contains a number of key environmental endowments such as Lake Hume, the Murray River, Lake Mulwala, the Wonga Wetlands and state forestry lands.

Liveability and lifestyle appeal

The scale of Albury – Wodonga allows for the provision of high-quality services and facilities, together with a lifestyle offering that would be expected of major metropolitan cities, but with a lower cost of living. This provides a point of competitive advantage as a potential migration destination for those looking to move out of the major cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra.

Albury Airport

Albury Airport is a major regional airport with daily connections to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. This provides a significant access corridor to the region and planned expansion of services and facilities are expected to increase the appeal of the region for visitors, businesses and potential migrants.

Education infrastructure

The region is home to a range of education facilities, most notably the three universities in Albury – Wodonga (Charles Sturt University, UNSW Medical School and La Trobe University), as well as TAFE campuses in both Albury and Wodonga, which offer courses responsive to local industry needs.

Healthcare infrastructure and services

The region contains a number of assets that can benefit the healthcare and social assistance sector, including two major healthcare assets in the Albury Base Hospital, which is the largest and most well-equipped hospital in the region and the Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre, which offers a unique research capability.

There are also a number of other hospitals in the region which provide healthcare and social assistance services, including hospitals in Wodonga, Holbrook and Beechworth.

Transport and logistic infrastructure

The region's strategic location means a number of major freight routes run through the region, both by road and rail. This includes assets such as the Ettamogah Rail Hub, Hume Highway, Olympic Highway, Riverina Highway, as well as major future assets such as the fully developed NEXUS Precinct and Wodonga Logic.

Military sector

Albury – Wodonga is home to the Australian Army Barracks located at Bandiana, which is one of the major employers in the region. The presence of the Defence sector in the region creates a significant source of local demand in other industries throughout the region, such as Thales in Federation LGA.

4. [Regional Economic Growth Enablers Report \(2017\)](#), Centre for Economic and Regional Development

ENDOWMENTS CONTINUED

Human capital

Albury – Wodonga region has a highly skilled labour force, with a higher proportion of individuals holding post-school qualifications than the Regional NSW average.

The region also enjoys a highly varied workforce as a result of the diversity of the economy, which is atypical for a regional area.

Local institutions and strong leadership

The region is well supported by an array of education, health, tourism and business institutions, with mature relationships with the community and local businesses.

These institutions include a range of joint organisations which work to further the specific strategic objectives of the region such as the *Two Cities, One Community committee*.

Strong branding for products

The Rutherglen region is a famous wine producing area, which can act both as a drawcard for visitors into the region, as well as a competitive advantage for exported products that are produced from Indigo Shire. Beechworth is also recognised as a premium wine growing region, boasting some of Australia's most sought-after wine labels. Within the domestic market these brands have some of the highest per bottle wine prices in Australia.

Historical significance

A number of places across the region have historical significance that can act as a tourism drawcard for visitors. These include famous historical sites in Federation Shire, such as the Federation Museum, Corowa Courthouse and Oddfellow Hall, Robert O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum, Old Beechworth Gaol, the goldfields and high country in Indigo Shire and a number of cultural heritage sites of traditional land-owners across the region.



SPECIALISATIONS

A simple form of analysis that can be used to gain an understanding of a region's comparative advantages⁵ is the Location Quotient (LQ), which measures the employment concentration in industry sectors within a regional economy, compared with the same sectors across NSW. The higher the LQ, the more specialised a region is in that industry relative to NSW. For the purpose of this analysis, specialisations as defined by LQs are in turn used as a proxy measure for those sectors and industries that represent a region's true comparative advantages.

Importantly, while LQs are used in this document for that purpose, they are only a partial measure of those comparative advantages. Hence, they have been considered alongside additional qualitative evaluations and data analysis, such as Input-Output analysis, to arrive at the findings for the Strategy.

Location Quotient Analysis

While Healthcare and Social Assistance is the largest sector in the region, employing 14.3 per cent of the workforce⁶, a more granular analysis may identify specific sectors in which Albury – Wodonga has a regional specialisation. In this analysis, key sectors fall into one of three categories:

Important sectors where employment is growing

In assessing the LQ of sectors in the region, a number were identified as important and growing sectors and thus likely to be sectors of regional specialisation (coloured blue in Figure 3). Pulp, Paper and Converted Paper Product Manufacturing, Primary Metal and Metal Product Manufacturing, Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing, Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing, Residential Care Services, Repair and Maintenance and Road Transport were all sectors identified as having high LQs and employment in each of these sectors grew at a faster rate in the region than it did across NSW between 2011 and 2016.

Potentially emerging sectors

Emerging sectors are sectors with a LQ lower than the state average, but where employment growth nonetheless grew faster than the NSW state average over the period between 2011 and 2016 (coloured green in Figure 3). In Albury – Wodonga, these include Administrative Services, Public Order, Safety and Regulatory Services, Food and Beverage Services and Preschool and School Education. If growth in these sectors can continue to be encouraged and cultivated, they could eventually develop into regional specialisations.

Important where employment is declining

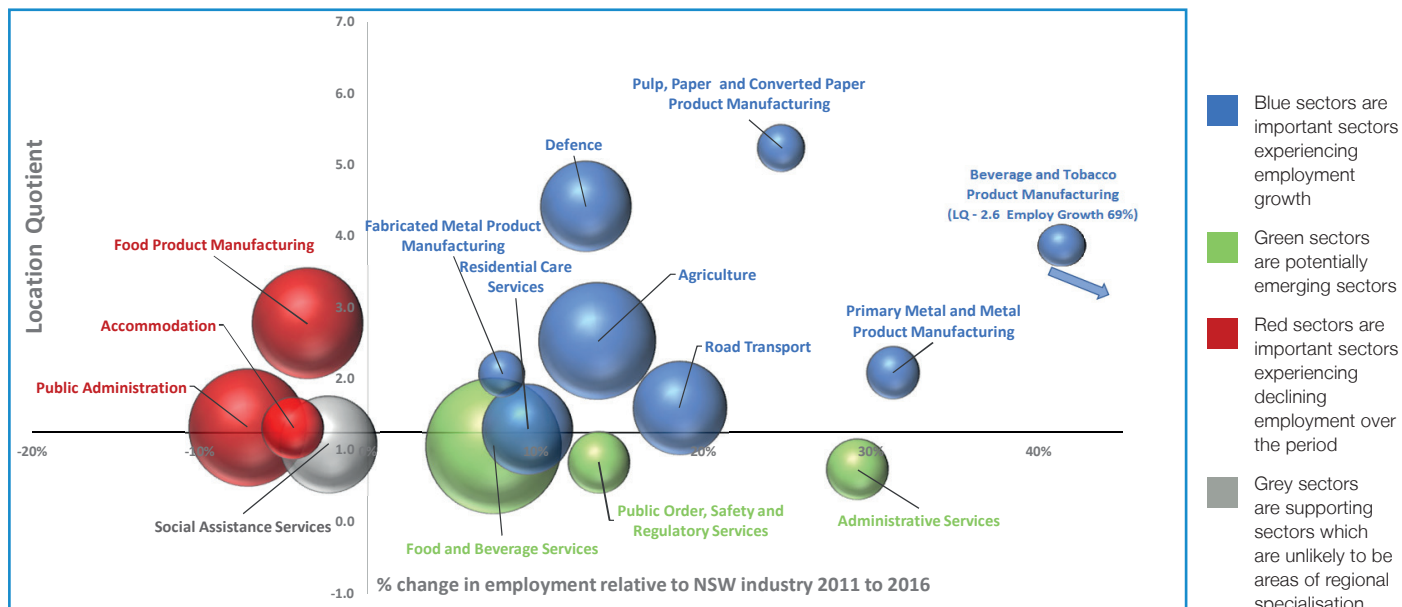
There were also a number of key sectors that had high LQs, but whose employment grew by less than the state average for that sector (coloured red in Figure 3). In the Albury – Wodonga, these include Food Product Manufacturing, Accommodation and Public Administration. However, the inclusion of these sectors in this classification may be due to the significant growth of these sectors across NSW (particularly in metropolitan areas) rather than the decline of these sectors in the region. Notably, the Public Administration sector increased in absolute employment between 2011 and 2016 but was outpaced by the overall state average.

- 5 A region's competitive advantage for an industry includes its ability to produce goods and services at a lower cost or differentiate its products from other regions, along with access to external factors which enhance business and operations/ minimize risk (Stimson, Stough and Roberts, 2006).
- 6 Australian Bureau of Statistics census data, August 2016.



SPECIALISATIONS CONTINUED

Figure 3: Location Quotients and Employment Growth for Industries in the Region



Source: ABS Census 2016 and Sensing Value analysis.

Figure 3 charts selected industries in the regional economy in 2016:

- industries with a larger ‘bubble’ employed more people;
- industries further above the horizontal line are more specialised when compared to NSW (i.e. an LQ greater than 1.25⁷); and
- industries to the right of the vertical line grew faster between 2011 and 2016 than comparable industries across NSW, industries on the left grew more slowly.

Input-Output Analysis

LQ analysis can provide insight into regional specialisations, particularly for employment, but this measure may not fully capture the growth occurring in less labour-intensive sectors. An analysis of the value of outputs generated from industry sectors can provide another indication of economically important sectors.

The estimated Gross Regional Product (GRP) of Albury – Wodonga was estimated to be \$7.1 billion in 2015-16. Some of the major sectors which were the big contributors to GRP included (but are not limited to) Sheep, Grains, Beef and Dairy Cattle Farming (\$739.1 million), Other Food Product Manufacturing (\$484.8 million), Basic Chemical Manufacturing (\$443.9 million), Road Transport (\$440.7 million) and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (\$411.9 million). These sectors reflect the diversity of major sectors within the region, as well as the importance of the wider manufacturing, agriculture and transport and logistics sector in the region from a value-add standpoint.

It is particularly important to identify the major export sectors which also provide an indication of a potential regional specialisation. The region’s major exporting sectors include Sheep, Grains, Beef and Dairy Cattle (\$304.5 million), Basic Chemical Manufacturing (\$212 million), Wholesale Trade

(\$109.7 million) and Road Transport (\$105.1 million). Road Transport and Wholesale Trade are notable sectors with high export values, as they reflect the major role of Albury – Wodonga as the key freight connection between Melbourne and Sydney. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (\$49.5 million) was also a major exporting sector, which suggests the region acts as a major service hub with a reach that extends beyond the boundaries of the region.

Identifying regional specialisations

The region’s existing specialisation sectors identified above, along with the potentially emerging specialisations, have a reliance on local endowments with their outputs being traded outside the region (i.e. exported). Some of these may be termed the region’s ‘engines of growth’, with others in the category of ‘enabling industries’ which are crucial for servicing the ‘engines of growth’ sectors. These represent the sectors key to the region’s development and may be considered major generators of GRP.

The ‘engines of growth’ sectors for the region’s economy include Manufacturing, Agriculture and Forestry, and Tourism. Meanwhile, Transport and Logistics is acknowledged by the region as an important ‘enabling industry’. This is one of the most important sectors for the region’s future, as establishing the region as the premier transport and logistics hub on the eastern seaboard represents one of most significant ‘enablers’ which can unlock growth across the region’s other major industries. Health Care and Social Assistance (notably Residential Care Services), which is a population-serving sector, is also an important regional specialisation.

A number of these sectors form the basis of the key elements of the Strategy in the next section.

⁷ An LQ of 1.25 is identified in the literature as denoting a specialisation.

STRATEGY

The Strategy for the economic development of the region builds upon the opportunities presented by its endowments and the industry specialisations discussed above, and it also aims to address some of the key regional risks.

The six elements to the Strategy are derived from analysis of the existing endowments that enhance the region's competitive advantages. This was followed by examination of current industry specialisations, which then progressed to the identification of potential emerging specialisations that have been identified through data analysis in consultation with the community and five councils within the region.

Each element of the Strategy is accompanied by a set of early actions, which should be interpreted simply as example actions derived from the preliminary application of the Strategy framework. It is therefore expected that there will be other actions capable of contributing to the attainment of the region's vision that are yet to be identified. Consequently, an action's alignment with the Strategy is the primary strategic consideration, rather than it being listed in this document, and all proposed actions will be subject to further qualitative and quantitative evaluative processes.

The Six Elements of the Strategy

1 Support and grow **Agribusiness and Softwoods industries** throughout the region

2 Grow the **Transport and Logistics sector**

3 Continue to develop and grow the **Tourism sector** and the **visitor economy**

4 Grow the **Healthcare sector** through the development of a **Health precinct** in the region

5 Attract and retain talent to **sustain the supply of skilled workers** by improving liveability throughout the region

6 Capitalise on the region's opportunity to be a **special economic zone**

1 | Support and grow Agribusiness and Softwoods industries throughout the region

Albury – Wodonga has a competitive advantage in several agricultural industries, based on the region's significant natural resources as well as the proximity of food and fibre manufacturing firms. There is a strong agribusiness sector that supports these industries and provides additional economic growth through value-adding, services and employment. The region also has a growing Softwoods industry, anchored by a major manufacturer in Norske Skog in Albury, which draws inputs from forests across southern NSW.

These industries are important drivers of the region's economy, and future growth can be assisted with improvements to key infrastructure. In particular, the Transport and Logistics sector requires efficient transport infrastructure to link agriculture and forestry with manufacturing and markets. Improved business connectivity will help productivity growth. Growth in the above industries will require a highly skilled future workforce.

Infrastructure Priorities

- **Transport infrastructure:** improve the accessibility and ease of travel to, from and throughout the region for freight vehicles.
- **Telecommunications:** decrease mobile reception blackspots for greater business connectivity.
- **Access to land:** better utilise existing land for growing and logging softwoods.
- **Increase skills capacity:** investigate options to address issues relating to skills needs and ageing population within the agriculture sector in the region.

Early Stage Priority Actions

- Upgrade a 5km section of Holbrook-Culcairn Road to support Higher Mass Limit (HML) vehicles use by agribusiness and forestry sectors.
- Construct a highway and railway crossing at Henty to facilitate improved B-Double Access to the major grain retrieval facility in Henty.
- Undertake upgrades to Coppabella Road to accommodate the haulage of softwood timber.
- Upgrade a 10km section and widen four bridges on Jingellic Road (MR 331) to enable efficient freight linkages between Holbrook and Jingellic.
- Undertake an assessment of the extent of digital connectivity problems across the region.
- Allow more streamlined applications for utilising lands for growing and logging softwoods.
- Expand the softwood plantations to ensure suitable fibre supply within an economic transport distance to processors.
- Investigate options for provision of reliable and affordable energy at industrial sites to support expansion and growth of food and fibre processors.

2 | Grow the Transport and Logistics sector

An assessment of the region's competitive advantages identified transport infrastructure and the region's strategic location as major endowments which underpin the performance of key 'engines of growth' industries. These engines of growth are the manufacturing, agriculture and forestry, and tourism sectors. Good transport links and efficient logistics help reduce freight and handling costs and increase productivity in these industries. Other industries in the region, including retail trade and professional, scientific and technical services, will also benefit from growth and improvement of the transport and logistics sectors.

The NEXUS and Wodonga Logic industrial precincts provide a significant opportunity for growth of major transport and logistics hubs in the region. These hubs also provide opportunities for industries that locate around these hubs.

Infrastructure Priorities

- **Sector assets:** investment to a range of infrastructure to bolster and leverage the region's strategic location and key role in the NSW/Victoria freight network.
- **Road infrastructure:** upgrades and improvements to major highways and bridges to and from the region to improve efficiency, reduce impact of heavy vehicles, travel times and time to market.
- **Regional airport development:** to improve access to the region and the accessibility of the region for tourists and potential residents.

Early Stage Priority Actions

- Complete Nexus Precinct Stage 1 enabling infrastructure projects including gas reticulation, completion of southern access ramps at the Davey Road interchange and extension of rail siding at Ettamogah Rail Hub.
- Install gas gate connection and storm water retention facility at Logic industrial estate.
- Conduct a feasibility study and identify possible routes for Mulwala Alternative Freight Route.
- Develop design documents for Federation Way Freight Upgrade Route.
- Continue to develop the Mulwala Industrial Estate.
- Identify options for the Rutherglen heavy vehicle deviation.

3 | Continue to develop and grow the Tourism sector and the visitor economy

Albury – Wodonga has a significant tourism sector which predominantly caters for domestic visitors. These visitors come to the region for a variety of purposes. Albury City, Wodonga City and Greater Hume Shire tend to attract visitors who come for business and health purposes, and to visit friends and relatives. Federation and Indigo shires tend to attract holiday tourists.

The business, health and family segments of the tourism market will likely grow in line with economic and population growth. However, the region has a number of endowments that can be major drawcards for more 'traditional' tourism. These include the Murray River, Lake Hume, Lake Mulwala, Rutherglen wineries and a number of historic locations.

Infrastructure Priorities

- **Sector assets:** Investment to a range of infrastructure to develop tourism products and assets that can drive further visitation into the region.
- **Road upgrades:** Improve the accessibility and ease of travel to, from and throughout the region.
- **Greater access to natural assets:** Provision of critical infrastructure to maintain and strengthen accessibility for visitors, such as walking paths along river banks, safe swimming zones, picnic, boating or camping facilities.

Early Stage Priority Actions

- Undertake projects identified in the Murray Region Destination Masterplan including the Wagirra Trail Extension, establishment of the Wonga Wetlands Education and Experience Centre and upgrades to Riverside Parks.
- Construct a new bridge between Yarrawonga and Mulwala to provide a new route for tourism, agribusiness and manufacturing.
- Expand the Albury Entertainment Centre to increase capacity of the Convention Wing to attract convention event tourism.
- Upgrade the Lauren Jackson Sport Centre to enhance the venue as an attraction for large scale sporting, entertainment and conference events.
- Upgrade the Henty – Coorkarinia Road from Henty township to the Henty Machinery Field Days site to expand the number and range of the events at the location.
- Establish a new Federation Museum in Corowa to develop a stronger tourism product.
- Implement planned upgrades identified in the Mulwala Foreshore Redevelopment Masterplan including additional boat launching facilities and fishing wharfs and jetties.
- Commence restoration works of the Dexter Horizontal Windmill to develop it into a tourist attraction.
- Construct Beechworth to Yackandandah link of the off-road rail trail cycling link on the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail.
- Upgrade Albury Airport Terminal to accommodate future passenger growth to support tourism and business travel.

4 | Grow the Healthcare sector through the development of a Health Precinct

A priority for the region is the significance of the Healthcare sector. Already a major employer, the demand on the Healthcare sector will be increased as the region's ageing population continues to grow, particularly outside of the cities of Albury and Wodonga. Additionally, the major hospitals in Albury – Wodonga, as well as first class medical facilities such as the Regional Cancer Centre, will attract new residents to the region for healthcare services. These institutions are expected to form the basis of a wider Health Precinct, which aims to increase both the quality and variety of healthcare services in the region.

Infrastructure Priorities

- **Health precinct:** Investment to a range of infrastructure to increase and diversify the range of services offered by the health sector.
- **Local roads:** Planning and investment to roads to enhance traffic flow and management around the growing health precinct.

Early Stage Priority Actions

- Create a masterplan to establish a health precinct around Albury Base Hospital to drive consolidation of health services to maximise sector productivity.
 - Seek amendments to Albury Local Environment Plan to facilitate precinct establishment.
 - Upgrade infrastructure to improve traffic management and pedestrian connectivity in and around the health precinct.
 - Upgrade the Emergency Department at the Albury Base Hospital to meet growing regional community demand.
-

5 | Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled labour by improving liveability throughout the region

As business and industry continue to grow, Albury – Wodonga may be faced with the challenge of sustaining the supply of skilled workers to meet growing demand. The region is expected to have a significant ageing population through to 2025, and it will be vital for the region to undertake efforts to bring in new workers to support the economy as people in the current workforce retire. Stronger linkages between educational institutions and local industry could help better align the local workforce to the needs of businesses, but it will be important for the region to position itself as an attractive destination for any potential workers who may choose to move to the region.

There are a number of factors that will have an impact on the decision of skilled workers to relocate to the area. Affordable housing, lifestyle blocks, access to services, strong communities, and vibrant local settings are factors that can make a location more appealing to a skilled workforce. Initiatives aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the region in any of these ways should be given consideration.

Infrastructure Priorities

- **Amenity improvements:** Improvements to the lifestyle amenities in the region to increase the attractiveness of the region to skilled workers.
- **Digital connectivity:** Provide fast and reliable internet access (NBN rollout) as well as improve mobile reception in parts of the region to enable a variety of employment opportunities.
- **Transport infrastructure:** Improve the accessibility and ease of travel to, from and throughout the region.

Early Stage Priority Actions

- Implement Stage 3 of Lavington Sports Ground Redevelopment to improve amenity offering and enhance its capacity and appeal as a major event venue.
- Develop and implement annual marketing campaign and maintenance of Evojobs platform as part of the Evocities Program to attract residents from metropolitan cities.
- Undertake works as part of Albury Cultural Precinct Masterplan Implementation to enhance activation and major event opportunities for the QEII Square.
- Undertake upgrades to Wodonga Community Cultural Precinct including the expansion and upgrade of cultural assets and galleries.
- Implement projects identified in the Wodonga Hilltops Strategy including the establishment of Federation Hill lookout, upgrades to Huon Hill lookout and the development of new trails and signage.
- Undertake subdivisions of new residential land in Walla Walla to address accommodation constraints limiting the ability of businesses in the region to grow their workforce.
- Undertake an assessment of the extent of connectivity problems across the region.

6 | Capitalise on the region's opportunity to be a special economic zone

As a combined entity, Albury – Wodonga is recognised as Australia's 20th largest city with a population of almost 100,000 residents. Given its unique strategic position along the major freight corridor connecting Melbourne and Sydney, the region will play a major economic role for NSW, Victoria and Australia in the future. However, the region also faces a number of unique economic issues created by the cross-border environment, adding additional costs to planning and construction, significant delays in consultation and therefore delivery of some infrastructure/services that non-border locations do not face.

To maximise the benefits that could be leveraged from this position, it may be worth investigating the possibility of establishing a 'Special Economic Zone' across the region that spans across both NSW and Victoria. This would allow a greater level of autonomy for the region to make adjustments to business and trade laws to drive investment, job creation and more effective administration within the region. This is seen in the *Two Cities One Community Strategic Plan* for Albury and Wodonga, but cross-border issues have impacts across the region, including at the Corowa – Wahgunyah and Mulwala-Yarrowonga borders.

This strategy does not feature any major infrastructure actions at this stage – however, implementation of a number of projects identified in the *Two Cities One Community Implementation Plan* will work towards addressing similar issues.

Infrastructure Priorities

None at present.

Early Stage Priority Actions

- Implement major actions identified in the *Two Cities One Community Action Plan* to incorporate initiatives that may lead to shared infrastructure and facility development.
-

Strategies and Early Stage Actions

Enablers	Grow the Transport and Logistics sector	Continue to develop and grow the Tourism sector and the visitor economy	Grow the Healthcare sector through the development of a Health precinct	Support and grow Agribusiness and Softwoods industries throughout the region	Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled labour by improving liveability throughout the region	Capitalise on the region's opportunity to be a special economic zone
People and skills						
Government, regulation and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conduct a feasibility study and identify possible routes for Mulwala ➤ Develop design documents for Federation Way Freight Upgrade Route ➤ Identify options for the Rutherglen heavy vehicle deviation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create a masterplan to establish a health precinct around Albury Base Hospital to drive consolidation of health services to maximise sector productivity ➤ Seek amendments to Albury Local Environment Plan to facilitate precinct establishment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop and implement annual marketing campaign and maintenance of Evojobs platform as part of the Evocities Program to attract residents from metropolitan cities ➤ Undertake subdivisions of new residential land in Walla Walla to address accommodation constraints limiting the ability of businesses in the region to grow their workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement major actions identified in the Two Cities One Community Action Plan to incorporate initiatives that may lead to shared infrastructure and facility development
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Complete Nexus Precinct Stage 1 enabling infrastructure projects including gas reticulation, completion of southern access ramps at Davey Road interchange and extension of rail siding at Ettamogah Rail Hub ➤ Upgrade a 5 km section of Holbrook-Culcairn Road to support HML vehicle use by agribusiness and forestry sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake projects identified in the Murray River Experience Masterplan ➤ Expand the Albury Entertainment Centre to increase capacity of the Convention Wing to attract convention event tourism ➤ Upgrade the Lauren Jackson Sport Centre to enhance the venue as an attraction for large scale sporting, entertainment and conference events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Upgrade infrastructure to improve traffic management and pedestrian connectivity in and around the health precinct ➤ Upgrade the Emergency Department at the Albury Base Hospital to meet growing regional community demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Construct a highway and railway crossing at Henty to facilitate improved B-Double Access to the major grain retrieval facility in Henty ➤ Undertake upgrades to Coppabella Road to accommodate the haulage of softwood plantations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement Stage 3 of Lavington Sports Ground Redevelopment to improve amenity offering and enhance its capacity and appeal as a major event venue ➤ Undertake works as part of the Albury Cultural Precinct Masterplan Implementation to enhance activation and major event opportunities for the QEII Square 	

Strategies and Early Stage Actions

Enablers	Grow the Transport and Logistics sector	Continue to develop and grow the Tourism sector and the visitor economy	Grow the Healthcare sector through the development of a Health precinct	Support and grow Agribusiness and Softwoods industries throughout the region	Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled labour by improving liveability throughout the region	Capitalise on the region's opportunity to be a special economic zone
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Construct a new bridge between Yarrawonga and Mulwala to provide a new route for tourism, agribusiness and manufacturing ➤ Continue to develop the Mulwala Industrial Estate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Upgrade the Henty – Coorkarinia Road from Henty township to the Henty Machinery Field Days site ➤ Establish a new Federation Museum in Corowa to develop a stronger tourism product ➤ Implement planned upgrades identified in the Mulwala Foreshore Redevelopment Masterplan ➤ Commence restoration works of the Dexter Horizontal Windmill to develop it into a tourist attraction ➤ Construct Beechworth to Yackandandah link of off-road rail trail cycling link on the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail ➤ Upgrade Albury Airport Terminal to accommodate future passenger growth to support tourism and business travel 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Upgrade a 10km section and widen four bridges on Jingellic Road (MR 331) to enable efficient freight linkages between Holbrook and Jingellic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake upgrades to Wodonga Community Cultural Precinct including the expansion and upgrade of cultural assets and galleries ➤ Implement projects identified in the Wodonga Hilltops Strategy 	
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Install gas gate connection and storm water retention facilities at Logic industrial estate 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake an assessment of the extent of connectivity problems across the region 	

IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategy will need to be implemented by all five member councils as well as state government agencies and local entities.

The completion of this document is intended to be the first stage of an ongoing process where new specific actions aligned with the Vision are identified through application of the framework. It is suggested that an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from each council be established to progress the actions listed in this Strategy, apply the Strategy's framework to identify new actions to be added to the Action Plan, develop key performance indicators and evaluate outcomes. The Advisory Committee would meet every three months and would report progress on actions to each council. The Advisory

Committee could also meet every six months with the Regional Director, Albury – Wodonga, NSW Premier and Cabinet. These meetings could also be used to check the Strategy's progress and review current grant opportunities.

After two years, the Advisory Committee will conduct a formal review of the Action Plan and produce a brief report card to be published as an addendum to the Regional Economic Development Strategy. This will also provide an opportunity to update the Action Plan for new or modified actions.

After four years, the Advisory Committee will also begin the process of updating or refreshing the Regional Economic Development Strategy.



Disclaimer

The Crown in right of the State of New South Wales acting through the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Department) does not guarantee or warrant, and accepts no legal liability whatsoever arising from or connected to, the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any material contained in this publication.

Information in this publication is provided as general information only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a qualified professional. The Department recommends that users exercise care and use their own skill and judgment in using information from this publication and that users carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance of such information. Users should take steps to independently verify the information in this publication and, where appropriate, seek professional advice.

Nothing in this publication should be taken to indicate the Department's or the NSW Government's commitment to a particular course of action.

Copyright

This publication is protected by copyright. With the exception of (a) any coat of arms, logo, trade mark or other branding; (b) any third party intellectual property; and (c) personal information such as photographs of people, this publication is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>).

The Department of Premier and Cabinet requires attribution as: © State of New South Wales (Department of Premier and Cabinet), (2018).

First published: June 2018

© Photography courtesy of:

Albury City Council
Wodonga Council

Developed with the support of the NSW Government as part of the Regional Economic Development Strategies program to assist local councils and their communities in Regional NSW.

