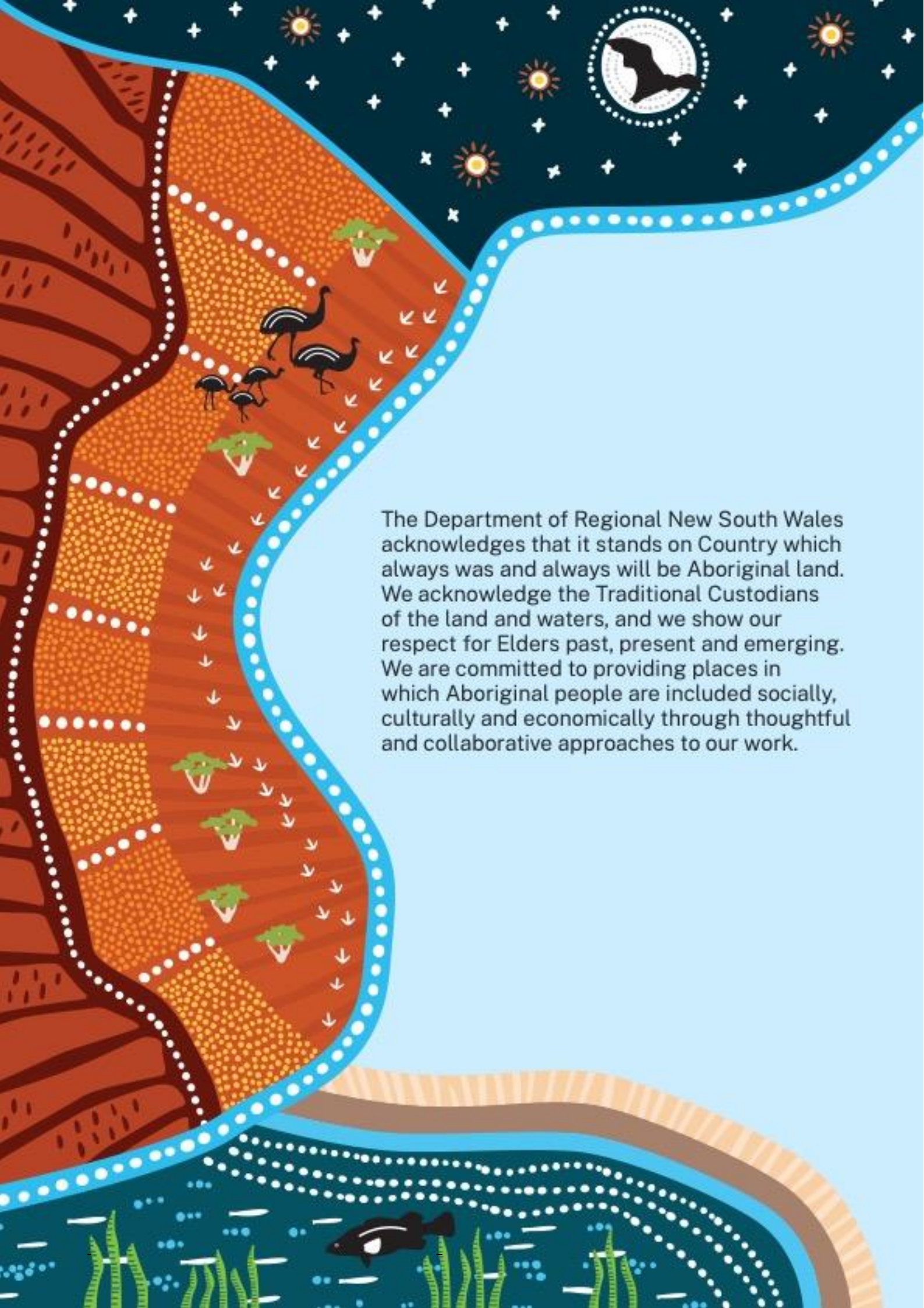


Albury-Wodonga Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update





The Department of Regional New South Wales acknowledges that it stands on Country which always was and always will be Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging. We are committed to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work.

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On Country – Artwork by Mumbulla Creative

‘On Country’ captures the many different countries located within the Department of Regional NSW footprint. Only part of the image is shown on the Acknowledgement of Country page. The regions included in this partial image are detailed below.

The Far West region of NSW is represented by red earth plains, mallee scrubs and an abundant emu population. Freshwater countries are referenced by the expansive network of rivers stretching through the regions. The Riverina Murray region is represented by the roots of a river redgum on the banks of a river, and a large Murray Cod can be seen in the river. The night sky features as it plays an important navigational and story-telling role in traditional life.

Cover image: North of the Murray River. Photo Credit: Federation Council.

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1. Executive summary

Changes in the Albury-Wodonga region since 2018

In 2018, the NSW Government developed Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) for 38 Functional Economic Regions (FERs) across regional NSW. Since publication, regional NSW has endured shocks including bushfires, floods, COVID-19 and the mouse plague, and significant new economic opportunities have emerged. The 2023 REDS Update provides an updated evidence base to guide governments in making policy and investment decisions to enhance resilience and drive sustainable, long-term economic growth in regional NSW.

The Albury-Wodonga region has seen significant investment delivered since 2018, with additional projects in the planning or delivery stages



Over **\$125 million** invested as part of the **Albury-Wodonga Regional Deal**.



More than **\$1 billion** in private investment to deliver major **renewable energy generation projects**.



\$558 million committed to redevelop **Albury Base Hospital**.



Investment of **\$32 million** in the **Albury Hydro-Powered Battery**.



Creation of the **Albury Regional Job Precinct (RJP)** leveraging the expanded **NEXUS Industrial Precinct**.

The region has recorded significant population growth since 2018, which has been accompanied by significant reductions in vacancy rates and sustained increases in house prices



+ **3.8 %** population growth since 2018



Housing vacancy rates sit at **1%**, with **median house prices** having risen by up to **84%** since 2018



34.7% of the region's population are aged over 55 years



The **unemployment rate currently sits at ~4%** accompanied by a record high job vacancies of 2,472 in the Riverina and Murray region

The region's key industries including forestry, healthcare, and tourism have remained resilient despite significant challenges from major shocks since 2018



Agriculture, forestry and fishing

+ 9.5% Year-on-Year (YoY) growth from 2011-2020

\$ 350 million Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2020

3,100 jobs supported in 2021



Healthcare and social assistance

+ 5.3% YoY growth from 2011-2020

\$ 487 million GVA in 2020

10,815 jobs supported in 2021



Tourism

+ 2.6% YoY growth from 2011-2020

\$ 339 million visitor spend in 2021

11,526 jobs supported in 2021



Manufacturing

- 2.1% YoY growth from 2011-2020

\$486 million GVA in 2020

6,326 jobs supported in 2021

Key themes from local consultation

Stakeholders from the Albury-Wodonga region have highlighted workforce and housing constraints, in addition to recovering from major shocks as priorities for the region.

Housing availability and affordability



Enhanced housing availability and affordability will be needed to support a growing population and to house workers associated with major project delivery.

Workforce constraints



Investment in major infrastructure and precinct-based developments has placed significant pressures on demand for labour across many sectors, especially skilled trades and the health and education sectors.

Impact of border closures



Pandemic related border closures created major challenges and uncertainty for businesses and the community, highlighting the ongoing need to focus on improving cross-border arrangements.

Competing land use challenges



Major projects and increasing demand for housing and industrial land development have resulted in heightened demand for land, which can place pressure on ensuring continued availability of prime land for agricultural use. Successfully managing competing land uses and striking an appropriate balance was highlighted as a key priority.

Albury-Wodonga REDS - 2023 Update strategies and enablers

Strategies	Enablers
<p>Support and grow agribusiness throughout the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support councils to use the Connectivity Index Tool following its 2023 release to review existing coverage and identify the areas of greatest need in the region for upgrades to telecommunications infrastructure.
<p>Support the softwoods industry throughout its bushfire recovery phase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support industry to adopt emerging technologies to enhance resilience and support value-add manufacturing activities. Support the continued presence of the softwoods industry through protecting existing and identified future locations from conflicting land uses.
<p>Maximise growth opportunities in advanced manufacturing and the circular economy, including through initiatives leveraging transport and logistics specialisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and facilitate opportunities to cluster industrial and manufacturing land uses along major road and rail corridors including the Inland Rail, where compatible with surrounding land use. Foster collaboration between the tertiary education sector, including Charles Sturt University, University of NSW and La Trobe University, and industry to translate research into commercial operation.
<p>Continue to develop and grow the visitor economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a diverse visitor economy through flexible land use planning, sustainable river management, and engagement with industries to develop a diverse visitor economy, including agritourism, adventure tourism, and facilities for cultural activities and the arts.
<p>Grow the healthcare sector through the development of a health precinct in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise and expand training opportunities for care economy roles, particularly early childhood and aged care workers.
<p>Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled workers by improving liveability throughout the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline processes relating to the mutual recognition of skills between NSW and Victoria. Develop a workforce strategy focusing on developing insights and actionable strategies, including attracting and retaining young workers and students.

2. About the 2023 REDS Update

In 2018, the NSW Government and local councils developed a series of REDS for 38 Functional Economic Regions (FERs) across regional NSW. FERs are made up of one or more Local Government Areas (LGAs) that work together to create smaller economies with strong economic links.

Supporting the *20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW*, the REDS set out a place-based vision and framework for economic development for each FER. The REDS identify each FER's endowments, industry specialisations and key vulnerabilities and opportunities, and outline economic development strategies and actions to leverage these strengths.

Since 2018, regional NSW has endured many challenges including drought, bushfires, floods, COVID-19 and the mouse plague. At the same time a range of broader state-wide trends and actions continue to change the economic landscape across regional NSW, including digital transformation, increased remote working and the shift towards net zero. These challenges and trends have altered the landscape of economic development in many regions and created new opportunities for growth.

The 2023 REDS Update provides an updated evidence base to guide governments in making policy and investment decisions to enhance resilience and drive sustainable, long-term economic growth in regional NSW. The objectives of the Update are to:

- 1. Highlight progress:** Reflect on significant initiatives and investments that have supported progress against the key strategies and actions in the 2018 REDS.
- 2. Capture major changes:** Identify and assess the impacts of major changes to regional economies since 2018, including the effect of recent shocks such as bushfires, droughts, floods, mouse plagues and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3. Identify strategic opportunities:** Identify key strategic opportunities and vulnerabilities for engine and emerging industries, as well as any changes to local endowments.
- 4. Set the foundation for the future:** Review, affirm and/or adjust the 2018 strategies, including consideration of new strategies to meet emerging priorities, to ensure they remain relevant.
- 5. Identify key enablers to guide future action:** Develop a non-exhaustive list of priority enabling actions that will support the 2023 REDS Update strategies.

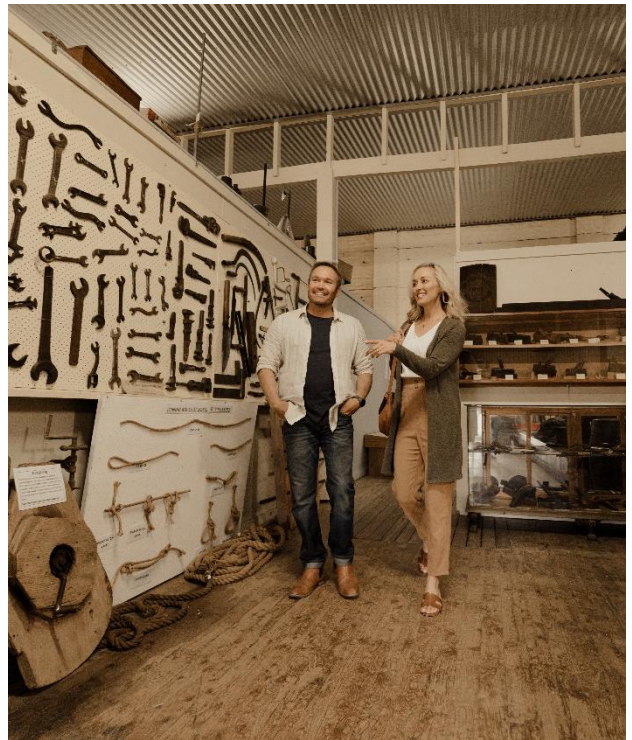


Figure 1: Federation Museum. Photo credit: Federation Council.



Figure 2: Jindera Industrial Estate. Photo credit: Greater Hume Shire Council.

3.About the Albury-Wodonga region

The Albury-Wodonga FER straddles the state border of NSW and Victoria and is part of the Murray River system. The region includes Federation, Greater Hume and Albury City Local Government Areas (LGAs) within NSW, and Wodonga and Indigo Shire Councils in Victoria. The twin cities of Albury and Wodonga on either side of the Murray River are the primary population centres, with Beechworth, Corowa, Culcairn, Holbrook, Mulwala and Rutherglen representing other significant towns in the region.

Total area covered (km ²)	14,210
Population (2021)	140,394
Albury	56,036
Federation	12,821
Greater Hume Shire	11,105
Indigo	17,249
Wodonga	43,183
Size of the economy (2020)	\$7.76 billion
NSW LGAs	\$5.04 billion
Victorian LGAs	\$2.72 billion
Total employment (2021)	64,981

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Estimated Resident Population 2021; REMPLAN 2020; National Institute of Economy and Industry Research 2020; ABS Census 2021.



Figure 3: Map of the Albury-Wodonga Functional Economic Region.

4. The 2018 Albury-Wodonga REDS and 2020 bushfire addendum

In the 2018 Albury-Wodonga REDS, the region was actively pursuing growth in its key engine and emerging specialisations, in particular manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, transport and healthcare. Endowments recognised in the document spanned natural, social and infrastructure assets, many of which were central to the strategy's approach to enabling economic development for the region.






Following the 2019-2020 bushfires, the NSW Government developed the 2020 Albury-Wodonga Bushfire Impact Addendum. The Addendum retained the strategic focus of the 2018 REDS but noted impacts to the forestry sector would continue to be felt for 12 to 18 months following the fires.

2018 Albury-Wodonga strategies

	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 in the region
	Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled workers by improving liveability throughout the region
	Capitalise on the region's opportunity to be a special economic zone.






























2018 Albury-Wodonga specialisations

The primary industry specialisations below were identified as comparative advantages for the Albury-Wodonga region in the 2018 REDS, based on employment concentrations in industry sectors.

	Manufacturing
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing
	Tourism
	Transport and logistics
	Healthcare and social assistance services

2018 Albury-Wodonga endowments

Albury-Wodonga is home to a wealth of physical, built, and human endowments. These endowments play a key role in enabling success and growth across its engine industry specialisations of manufacturing, tourism, health care and social assistance, agriculture, and road transport.

Endowment	Relevant 2018 specialisation
Location – major population and employment centre between Melbourne and Sydney	    
Natural resource endowment	 
Liveability and lifestyle appeal	  
Albury Airport	  
Education infrastructure	
Healthcare infrastructure and services	
Transport and logistic infrastructure	  
Military sector	 
Human capital	    
Local institutions and strong leadership	 
Strong branding for products	
Historical significance	

5. The big picture: Shocks and trends impacting the Albury-Wodonga region since 2018



Figure 4: A view across Albury. Photo credit: Albury City Council

Significant events impacting major industries

A sustained period of natural disasters, including bushfires and severe storms and flooding, have had environmental and economic implications for the region. The COVID-19 pandemic further challenged the region, with local businesses, particularly those in the visitor economy, suffering from the impacts of travel and operating restrictions. For the period between 2018 and 2022, the region had 10 disaster declarations,^[1] and has received \$28.27 million in disaster recovery grant funds.^[2] Recovering from these events and developing both industry and community resilience is a key priority for the region.

Bushfires

The 2019-20 bushfires had a significant impact on the Albury-Wodonga economy, with the most severe effects felt within Greater Hume Shire Council. While the physical area impacted was only a small part of the region (just 2.3% of total land area) key impacts included:

- 333 square kilometres of land burnt.
- 22 square kilometres of forestry plantation severely damaged, representing 30% of the region's NSW plantation and 10% of the Victorian plantation.
- 41 properties damaged or destroyed.
- Damage to the Woomargama National Park, and a section of the Hume Highway temporarily closed.

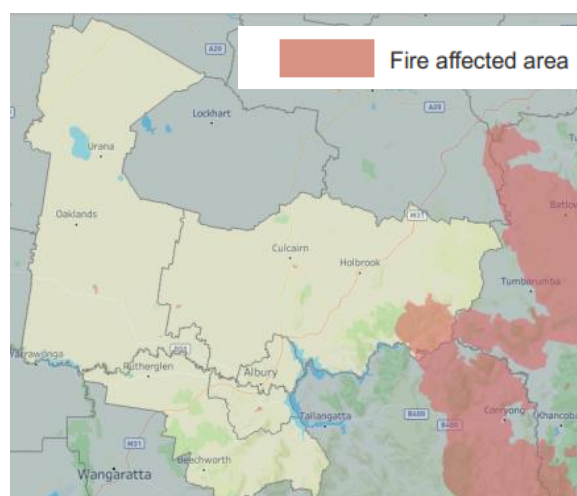


Figure 5: 2019-20 bushfire impacted parts of the Albury-Wodonga region

- 100% of vineyards impacted by smoke taint, which translated to a reduction in the 2020 vintage yield of approximately 45%.
- Tourism related businesses reporting a 50% earnings drop in some areas.^[3]

Given the significance of forestry to the region's economy, stakeholder feedback during consultation noted the sector remains largely in the recovery phase of returning towards business-as-usual.

Mouse plague

The Albury-Wodonga region was impacted by the mouse plague experienced in 2021. This abundance of mice across NSW caused substantial damage to newly planted and growing crops, destroyed stored grain and hay, and significantly damaged key infrastructure and equipment.^[4] This represented a significant cost impost and negative impact on the productivity of the agriculture sector, with some estimates putting the cost to agriculture across NSW as high as \$1 billion.^[5]

To support impacted communities, the NSW Government made available up to \$95 million for primary producers in financial need, and \$45 million for the Small Business and Household Mouse Control Rebate. In the Albury-Wodonga region's NSW LGAs, a total of \$1.04 million was paid to 2,137 households and small business recipients through the rebate program.^[6]

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on business activity with 48% of businesses reporting that the pandemic negatively affected their business.^[7] In the acute phase of the pandemic, there was a strong impact on the labour market, as shown by the increase in income support recipients after March 2020 - JobSeeker recipients in the Albury-Wodonga region rose by 51%, while Health Care Card recipients rose by 26% from March to June 2020.^[8]

The shock of the pandemic was exacerbated by prolonged NSW/Victoria border closures, which had a significant impact on the many cross-border communities and the broader economy that crosses the state border. The closures impacted communities for an extended period, with a range of business operations, access to goods, services and infrastructure, and community ties impacted.

Analysis of 2021 census data indicates that more than 20,000 workers in the region cross the border for work daily, with more than 5,000 people of this cohort living outside of the border permit zone during border closures and unable to cross the border unless they were classified as critical workers.^[9] The impact was also significant for the visitor economy, given a significant proportion of overnight travellers to the region come from regional Victoria and Melbourne. More than 70% of businesses operating in the tourism sector in the Murray River region identified a substantial reduction of turnover and cancellations as the key impacts of the lockdowns.^[10]




Floods

Floods and storms have also had a significant impact on the Albury-Wodonga region in recent years, causing property and infrastructure damage and impacting the agricultural sector. Flash flooding around Lavington in January 2022 caused significant damage to roads and associated infrastructure,^[11] while sustained rainfall caused flooding during late 2022 resulted in Albury and Wodonga experiencing some of the worst flooding recorded in almost 50 years.^[12] In January 2022, Corowa was also impacted by major storms, with 182mm of rain received in 4 hours, with 50 homes severely impacted, along with significant damage to infrastructure, roads and caravan parks in the region.^[13]

The extreme weather events of 2022 also impacted other parts of the Albury-Wodonga region, with significant increases in the Murray River level and localised flooding causing closure of a range of roads and bridges, and sustained inundation of low lying agricultural property.^[14] The tourism sector was again significantly impacted, with recreational use of the Murray River restricted on health grounds and many riverside caravan parks and accommodation sites badly damaged by extended sustained flooding.^[15]

Macroeconomic trends shaping the region’s future

Macroeconomic trends related to climate and migration have played a significant role in the development of the Albury-Wodonga region since 2018 and are likely to continue to have a strong influence on its future. With a growing population of remote workers, the impacts of successive natural disasters and an important role in the shift towards net zero, the region faces both opportunities and challenges associated with these key trends.

Trend	Opportunities and risks	
 <p>Digital transformation</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has bolstered the ability for remote working, which allows people to take advantage of the regional lifestyle while still maintaining metro-based employment.^[16] This is evident in the population shift in 2020-21, with regional NSW gaining an additional 26,800 residents while Sydney declined by 5,200.^[17]</p> <p>Investments in improved telecommunications infrastructure since 2018, such as those made through the Connecting Country Communities program including a new mobile phone tower in Burrumbuttock to address connectivity, have helped enable this digital transformation. However, additional investment will be needed to address mobile blackspots and continue to upgrade key digital connectivity infrastructure.</p>	<p>An accelerated digital transformation opens up online opportunities for businesses in the region to scale up e-commerce capabilities and expand their potential markets.</p> <p>Increased demand for data and reliable connections puts pressure on telecommunications infrastructure, creating potential reliability and service quality issues.</p>
 <p>Changing migration patterns</p>	<p>Increased COVID-19 pandemic related migration to the region has been noted by local stakeholders as a contributing factor to increased demand for enabling infrastructure, in particular housing.</p> <p>Local stakeholder feedback highlighted the competitive nature of migration in the post COVID-19 pandemic world, particularly in relation to filling local jobs as residents can work in higher paying jobs that are not based in the region.</p> <p>Retaining young workers and building a skilled workforce, especially in hospitality and other in demand population serving roles typically requires high-quality placemaking and amenity,^[18] as well as a need for employment opportunities which can compete with out-of-region offerings.</p>	<p>A boost in population can attract new businesses and industries to the region and support ongoing economic growth.</p> <p>Population growth is contributing to pressure on enabling infrastructure such as housing, and population servicing sectors such as health and care economy services.</p>
 <p>Towards net zero</p>	<p>The Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 identifies renewable energy generation as a priority growth sector for the region.^[19] The ability for the region to leverage its water and sun resources to encourage growth in renewable energy supply provides an opportunity to capitalise on this trend.</p> <p>It can also assist with achieving goals under council plans aligned with the state’s net zero emissions targets - for example Albury City Council is</p>	<p>Opportunity for the region to leverage its natural endowments to drive investment in new renewable energy generation.</p> <p>A core challenge is how the region ensures long term local benefit from</p>










	<p>committed to achieving net zero by 2040 and a 50% reduction on 2017 levels by 2030.^[20]</p> <p>The focus on the shift towards net zero also highlights possibilities in the circular economy processing sector, which could provide significant support for future economic growth.</p>	<p>new energy generation, especially following the investment-intensive construction phase.</p>
 <p>Rising uncertainty</p>	<p>With the frequency and intensity of natural disasters projected to increase in coming decades,^[21] there is a need to enhance climate and economic resilience in the region.</p> <p>Local stakeholders emphasised that building community and infrastructure resilience will be crucial to the region’s future. Such initiatives bring significant investment and employment opportunity to the region.</p> <p>However, there is a need to manage the impacts of major infrastructure projects on local amenity, plus flow-on impacts of housing availability and affordability. Applying a future-focused lens during the planning and delivery phase of major projects can help ensure long-term benefits can accrue to the community.</p>	<p>Rising uncertainty presents an opportunity to invest in improved supply chain resilience in key sectors such as agriculture and energy, which can promote opportunities for local economic growth.</p> <p>Rising uncertainty places upward pressure on inflation, which drives up input costs for key industries.</p>



Figure 6: Aerial view of Jayfields Nursery near Holbrook. Photo credit: Mark Jesser Photography.

6. Responding to change: Initiatives and investments since 2018

Since 2018, local councils, the NSW Government and other key organisations have delivered new and updated strategic documents and plans that help guide economic and community development in the region. These documents support the development of local enabling actions that contribute towards progress against REDS priorities and strategies.

Strategies and plans	Relevant 2018 strategies
The Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 sets out a strategic vision for how the region will grow over the long-term, with growth strategies focused on agribusiness, forestry, value-add manufacturing, health, education and training, transport and logistics and renewable energy generation.	
Complementary to the Regional Plan are planning statements at the local level, with each of the NSW LGAs having developed Local Strategic Planning Statements which guide the area's approach to development and growth.	
Each of the NSW LGAs have developed Community Strategic Plans , which outline the community's vision for the future of the LGA. Similarly, the Victorian LGAs have both developed a Council Plan , which sets out their key priorities.	
Some councils have developed economic development strategies for their LGA, and in some cases the surrounding region. These include the Victorian Ovens-Murray REDS , the Federation Council Economic Development Strategy 2021-2025 , the Indigo Shire Economic Development Strategy , and the Draft Albury Economic Development Strategy .	
The Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018 , Murray Region Destination Management Plan (DMP) 2023-2027 and the Albury-Wodonga DMP 2019-2023 build on the visitor economy strategy in the 2018 REDS. Together, these plans set out a collaborative approach to enhance the broader region's visitor economy, increase visitor numbers and spend, and highlight the region as a premier destination for waterways, nature and culture.	
The Riverina Joint Organisation Regional Freight Transport Plan , Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) Regional Freight Plan and the Albury-Wodonga Integrated Transport Strategy aim to improve the operation of the transport and logistics sector given its importance to the region's economy.	
The Albury Housing Strategy , Wodonga Housing Strategy and the Riverina Joint Organisation Eastern Riverina Housing Strategy (Greater Hume Shire) focus on how the region and/or constituent LGAs can deliver sufficient diverse, well-designed and affordable housing to support the region's ability to attract and retain skilled workers and enhance liveability.	
The RAMJO Regional Energy Strategy 2022-2032 identifies actions focused on assisting councils to reduce energy use and costs, take advantage of the emerging trends associated with renewable energy and position councils to take advantage of emerging opportunities.	

The **Draft Murray Regional Water Strategy** will help deliver healthy and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous region.



The **Albury Regional Job Precinct – Draft Master Plan** provides the strategic planning framework for an expanded NEXUS Industrial Precinct, aimed at creating a hub of advanced manufacturing, circular economy and recycling, agribusiness, freight and logistics services.



Significant investments since 2018

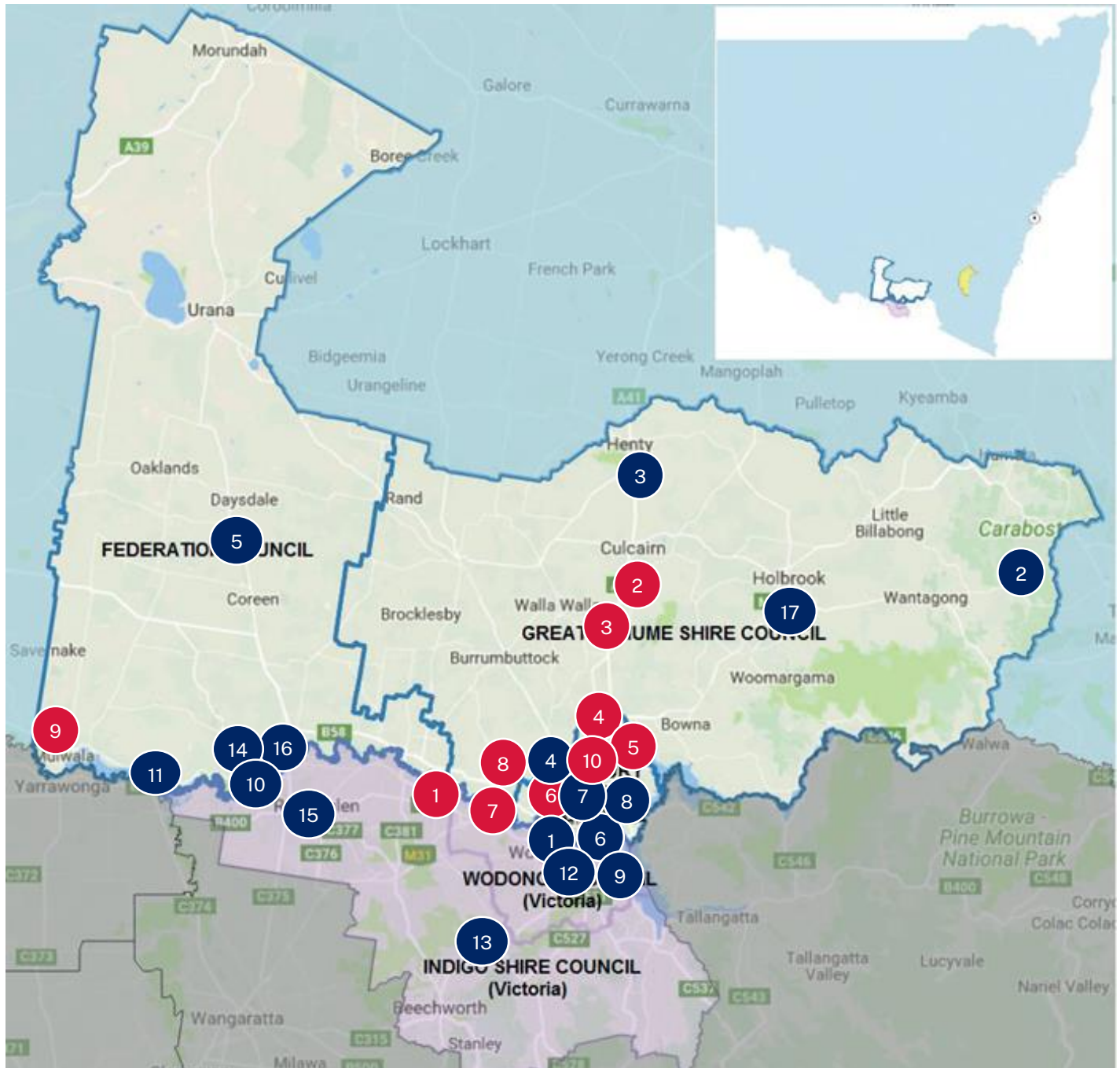






















Figure 7: Map of significant investments in the Albury-Wodonga region since 2018.













As shown in Figure 7, since 2018 the region has received significant local, state and federal funding, as well as private investment. These investments are at varying stages of progress, with some delivered, some underway, and some still in the planning stage.

Public investments include major projects under the Albury-Wodonga Regional deal, alongside major health infrastructure investment and a range of transport projects. Grant funding has played a key role in the delivery of many of these projects.

Major private investment since 2018

Investment	Estimated total project value(s)	Relevant 2018 strategies
1 Hydrogen Park Murray Valley ¹	\$44 million	  
2 Culcairn Solar Farm	\$636 million	 
3 Walla Walla Solar Farm	\$400 million	 
4 Glenellen Solar Farm	\$218 million	 
5 Jindera Solar Farm	\$168 million	 
6 Albury Hydro-Powered Battery	\$32 million	  
7 Staughton Group Pet Food factory upgrades ²	>\$7.4 million	 
8 Howlong Industrial Estate and Export Precinct ³	\$15.35 million	
9 Mulwala Water Ski club upgrade ⁴	>\$2 million	 
10 Trinity Anglican College expansion	\$31 million	

Major public investment since 2018

Investment	Estimated total project value(s)	Relevant 2018 strategies
1 Albury-Wodonga Regional Deal infrastructure - Albury Entertainment Centre Upgrade, NEXUS Industrial Precinct, Albury Regional Job Precinct	\$128.3 million	     
2 Coppabella Road reconstruction	\$7 million	  
3 Henty railway crossing	\$7.9 million	  

¹ Project also supported by funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency

² Project supported by a NSW Government grant through the Regional Job Creation Fund.

³ Supported by funding from Federation Council and the Commonwealth Government.

⁴ These upgrades have been supported by funding through the NSW Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund.

4	Davey Road interchange upgrade	\$8.6 million	
5	Federation Way Renewal	\$2.1 million	
6	Albury Hospital redevelopment and Emergency Department upgrade	\$594 million	
7	James Fallon High School upgrade	Not available	
8	Lavington Sports Ground	\$19.6 million	
9	Baranduda Fields Sporting Complex Stage 1	\$24 million	
10	Corowa Aquatic Centre	\$10.2 million	
11	Murray River Regional Experience Projects - Albury Riverside Precinct and Corowa-Mulwala cycle trail	\$12.3 million	
12	Wodonga Library and Arts Space	\$10.2 million	
13	Beechworth to Yackandandah Rail Trail	\$6.2 million	
14	Corowa Saleyards upgrade	\$10.6 million	
15	Rutherglen revitalisation project	\$1.84 million	
16	Corowa Foreshore Activation Project	\$2.6 million	
17	Holbrook Levee banks project	\$4.6 million	

Regional grant programs

The region has received \$97.1 million in grant funding since 2018. Key programs in the region have included the Growing Local Economies Fund, with \$18.98 million committed to projects including the NEXUS Industrial Precinct and Coppabella Road reconstruction project.

Grant category	Approved funding
Community	\$31.84 million
Economic	\$36.99 million
Disaster recovery	\$28.27 million

Note: Total grant funding outlined above only includes programs managed by the Department of Regional NSW, accurate as at January 2023.

7. Albury-Wodonga region 2023 economic snapshot

The region’s population has continued to grow strongly since 2018, but a higher proportion of the population in the older age cohort presents challenges for maintaining a strong working base to support industry growth.

Although the region has seen consistently strong population growth since 2016 there is a need to focus on developing social infrastructure which can support attraction and retention of workers to meet increased demand. This need is compounded by the pressures of workforce needs associated with major projects, such as Albury-Wodonga Regional Deal project, large-scale renewable energy generation projects and the Albury-Wodonga hospital redevelopment.

Population growth

The region recorded an average population growth rate of 1.3% between 2018 and 2021, with total growth in the period of 3.8% (see Figure 8). The peak yearly growth rate of 1.41% was in 2018.

Population growth has remained broadly consistent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period, with growth continuing to sit above the regional average in 2020-21. This translates to a net increase of 5,202 residents between 2018 and 2021, with the population growing from 135,192 to 140,394.

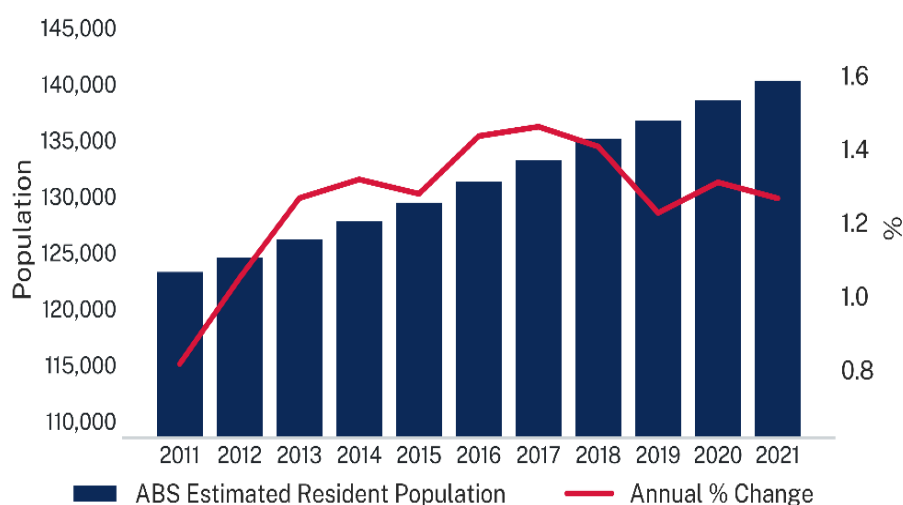


Figure 8: Albury-Wodonga FER population growth, 2011-2021 (ABS ERP, July 2022).

Demographic profile

In 2021, the proportion of the region’s population over 55 years was 4.1% higher than the NSW average (see Figure 9). The proportion of people within the 20-49 age group was 5.8% lower than the NSW average. This demographic profile indicates a structural ageing population challenge for the region.

This trend highlights a key challenge of attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to fill the increasing demand for population serving roles, especially in the health sector as demand for residential care and allied health services grows and major investments in the sector progress in the region. This key need was identified in the 2018 strategies, and will require a continued focus to ensure there is a highly skilled workforce to fill demand for jobs across the economy.

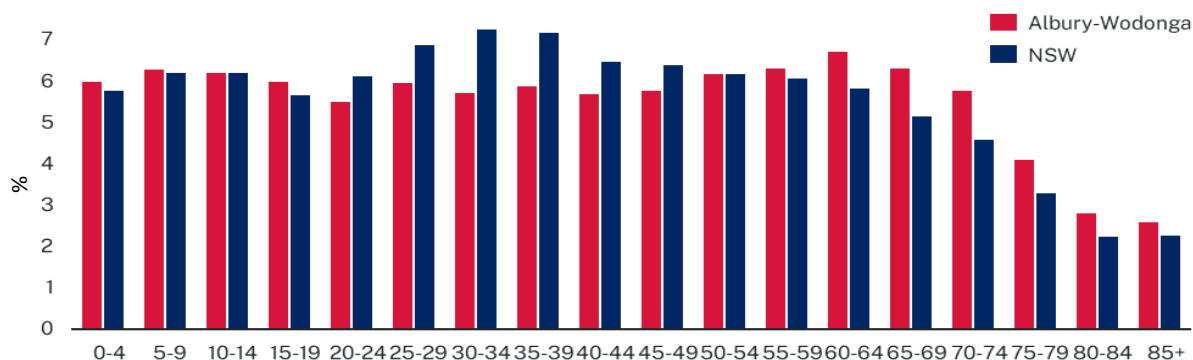


Figure 9: Albury-Wodonga FER population by age, 2021 (ABS ERP, July 2022).

Housing supply in the Albury-Wodonga region has tightened but housing affordability remains a relative comparative advantage for the region

The region has experienced a decline in housing availability since 2018. This represents a challenge, given ongoing population growth and major projects that will attract workers to the region.

Housing availability

As shown in Figure 10, residential vacancy rates in the region have dropped from a peak of 2.6% in March 2020 to 1% in August 2022, with COVID-19 related migration of remote workers to the region likely a factor, alongside the ongoing strong population growth experienced for several years. The impact of Victorian-NSW border closures during the pandemic can also be seen in the data, with the vacancy rate falling to below 0.5% for an extended period in 2020 and 2021.

Residential building approvals in the region have remained relatively stable since 2018, with some increased levels in 2021 that were followed by a return towards longer-term average levels in 2022. This indicates that while demand for housing is increasing and is likely to remain high given projected population growth, housing supply will need to scale up to meet demand, given its role as an enabler for population and economic growth.

Housing affordability

Between June 2018 and June 2022, median dwelling prices in Albury increased by 44% to \$490,000, by 71% in Federation to \$428,000, by 94% in Greater Hume to \$368,000, by 40% in Wodonga to \$490,000 and by 56% in Indigo Shire to \$500,000.^{[22][23]}

While this represents significant increases in house prices across the region in recent years, the price to income ratio in July 2021 for the NSW LGAs was estimated to be 5.12, well below the NSW average of 8.12.^[24] This highlights a relative cost advantage compared to other regions, but ongoing population growth and low property availability may continue to put upwards pressure on prices in the region and reduce overall housing affordability.

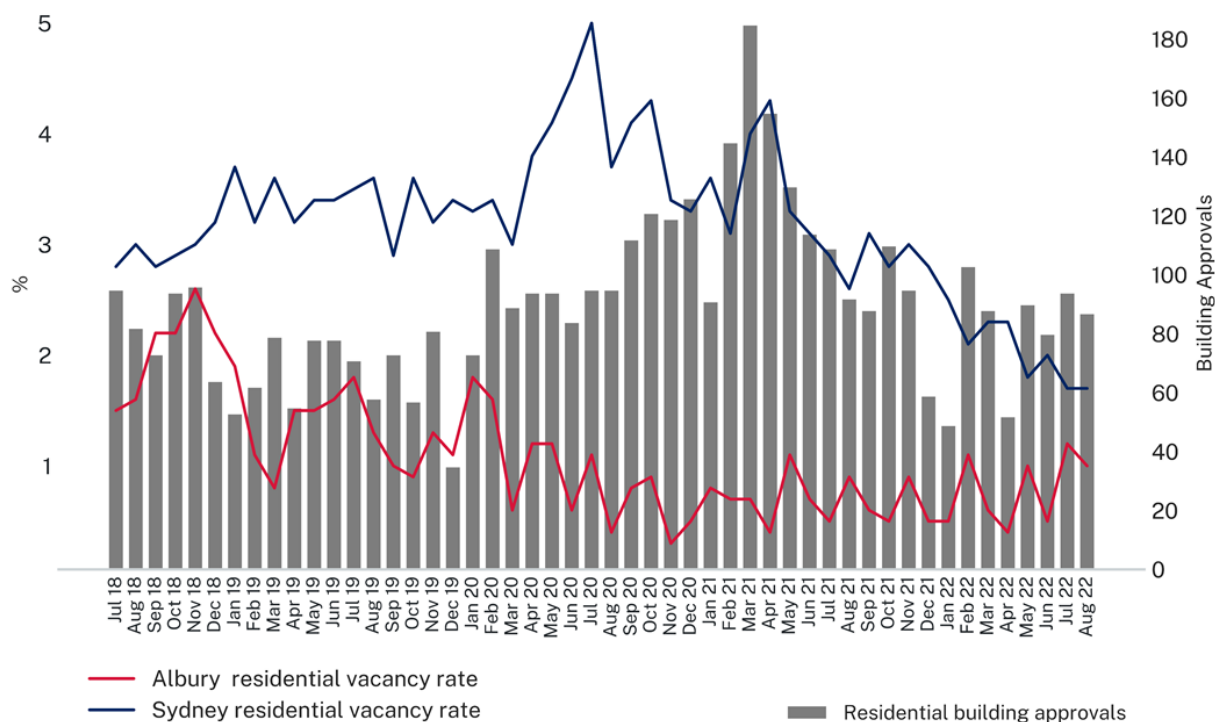


Figure 10: Albury-Wodonga FER vacancy rate and building approvals, 2018-2022 (Real Estate Institute of NSW (REINSW), 2022).

Note: REINSW vacancy data collection is not aligned with the FER boundary map, resulting in an overlap with other FERs. These results are therefore intended to provide an indication of housing vacancies in the region.

Decreasing unemployment rates combined with a record surge in job vacancies highlights a tightening labour market in the Albury-Wodonga region

An increasingly constrained labour market has been emerging since 2018, with job vacancies tripling across this period and reductions observed in unemployment rates. In the 2018 REDS, a need was identified to develop skilled workforce attraction and retention initiatives, and this will need to remain a priority for the region.

Employment

As at June 2022, there were some differences in unemployment rates across the Albury-Wodonga region (see Figure 11). Wodonga (3.2%) and Federation (3.3%) had unemployment rates similar to the NSW (3.3%) and Victorian (3.2%) benchmarks. The Albury rate at 4.6% was higher than the NSW rate, while both Indigo Shire (1.5%) and Greater Hume (2.3%) were sitting below the respective benchmarks. After an uptick in unemployment in 2021 across most parts of the region, during a period impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns, all LGAs have recorded decreases in unemployment rates since September 2021, with significant improvements in the rate recorded in Albury, Federation and Greater Hume.

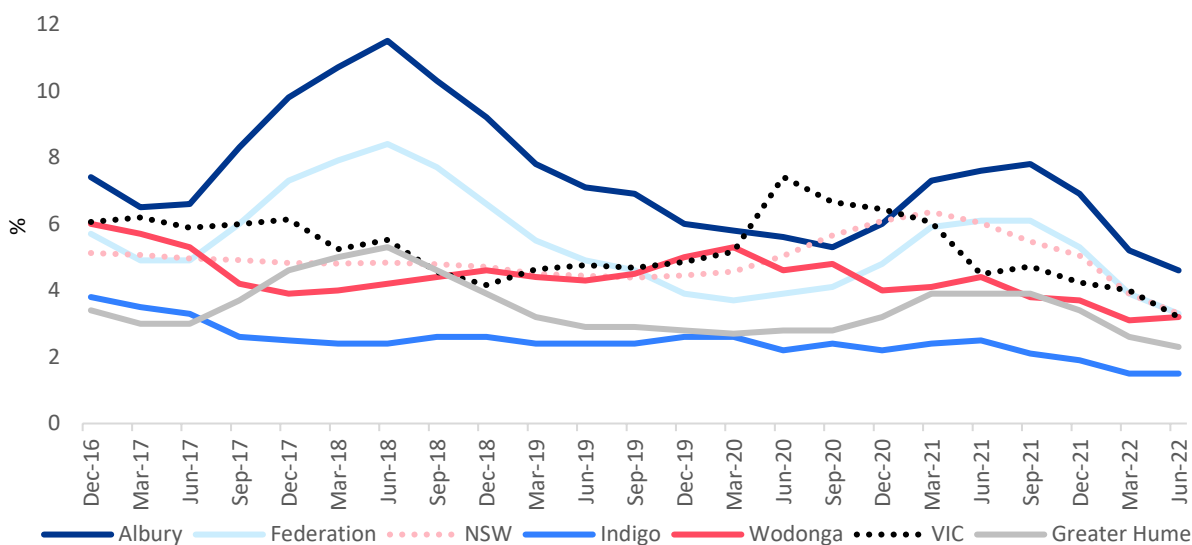


Figure 11: Albury-Wodonga unemployment rate (%), 2016-2022 (National Skills Commission, 2022; ABS Labour Force, 2022).

Job vacancies in the broader Riverina and Murray region climbed to a record of 2,472 in August 2022, from a low of 846 in May 2020 shortly after the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 12). Medical practitioners and nurses (237 vacancies), administrative staff (182) and carers and aides (184) represent the top 3 occupation vacancies in the region. Other roles in demand include automotive and engineering trades workers (122) and retail sales roles (131).



Figure 12: Job vacancies, Riverina and Murray region (2018-2022) (Regional IVI, National Skills Commission, 2022).

The regional IVI - National Skills Commission job vacancy data collection is not aligned with the FER boundary map, resulting in an overlap with other FERs. Job vacancy data only includes online job vacancies. These results are therefore intended to provide an indication of job vacancies in the region.

Aboriginal employment

Aboriginal employment outcomes in the Albury-Wodonga region have improved significantly over the past decade. In August 2021, the Aboriginal unemployment rate in the region was estimated to be 10%, a substantial decrease from 15.1% in 2016 and 18.5% in 2011. However, the unemployment rate remains higher than the 9.8% NSW Aboriginal unemployment rate and the NSW unemployment rate of 4.9%.

While this outcome reflects a significant positive trend, an ongoing collaborative approach between stakeholders, including Aboriginal community representatives, local government, business and industry is needed to ensure that increasing Aboriginal economic participation continues to be a key economic development priority across the region.

Aboriginal unemployment rate: Albury-Wodonga	2011	18.5%
	2016	15.1%
	2021	10.0%
NSW Aboriginal unemployment rate	2021	9.8%
NSW unemployment rate	2021	4.9%

Source: ABS Census, 2021.



Figure 13: Forestry operations in the Greater Hume LGA. Photo credit: Greater Hume Shire Council.

Albury-Wodonga 2023 engine and emerging industries

The NSW LGAs within the Albury-Wodonga region have a \$5 billion economy. Despite the significant shocks experienced since 2018, the relative strength of each industry is measured using location quotient (LQ) analysis¹ as displayed in Figure 14, where industry size correlates with bubble size.

Engine industries

Agriculture (LQ of 3.32) remains a core engine industry for the region, generating \$350 million in GVA in 2020, having grown by an average annual rate of 9.5% between 2011 and 2020. The sector is driven largely by the sheep, grains, beef and dairy sector (LQ of 4.6) and poultry and other livestock (LQ of 7.6), which collectively generate 89% of the industry’s output in the region.

Manufacturing (LQ of 1.57) is a key driver of economic output for the region, with a GVA of \$486 million in 2020. The sector includes a number of specialisations, including chemical manufacturing (LQ of 8.1), food product manufacturing (LQ of 2.7), pulp, paper and paperboard manufacturing (LQ of 23.8), fabricated metal products (LQ of 5.3) and domestic appliance manufacturing (LQ of 7.9). The closure of a major manufacturer may partially explain the sector’s slightly negative average annual growth between 2011 and 2020, but future growth can be supported by advanced manufacturing opportunities, including those associated with the Albury RJP.

Healthcare (LQ of 1.33) represents the largest industry in the region by nominal GVA, contributing \$487 million in 2020. Its continued key role in the region will be enhanced in coming years by the recently announced major upgrade of the Albury-Wodonga Hospital, alongside the upgrade to emergency facilities currently underway.

Tourism remains a specialisation in the region (LQ of 1.46), with visitors spending an estimated \$339 million in the region in 2021,^[25] while **road transport** (LQ of 1.8) continues to reflect the region’s key strength centred around transport and logistics specialisations.

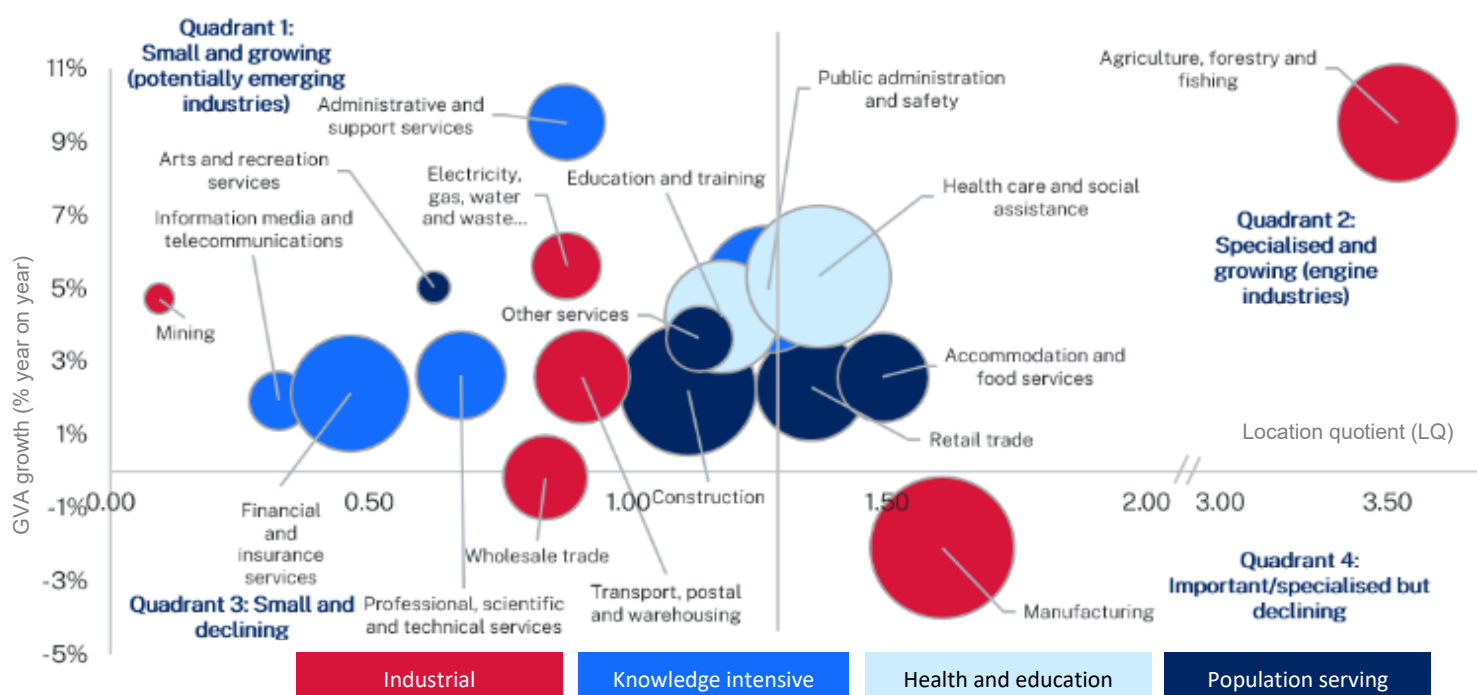


Figure 14: Location Quotient (LQ) Analysis by GVA, 2011-2020 (REMPLAN, 2020).

While the 2018 REDS used employment data as the basis for LQ analysis, the 2023 Update has used Gross Value-Add (GVA) data. This allows for a clear demonstration of the changing economic impact of both engine and emerging industries across the regions. The analysis presented above only incorporates consideration of the NSW LGAs in the Albury-Wodonga region.

¹ LQ analysis is used to measure industry specialisation by comparing the relative size of an industry in the region versus the whole of NSW.

Emerging industries

Energy supply (including renewables) is an emerging industry in Albury-Wodonga, reflected by its above trend growth between 2011 and 2020. The industry has grown by an average annual rate of 5.6% in the region compared to the state-wide average of 3.2%. Electricity generation (GVA of \$58 million in 2020) and water supply, sewerage and drainage services (GVA of \$34 million) are key subsectors. The growth path for the industry remains sound given the renewable energy project pipeline including the Hydrogen Park Murray Valley, a range of solar farm projects and the Albury Hydro-Powered Battery.

Another emerging sector in the region is **professional, scientific and technical services**, with an average annual growth rate of 2.6% between 2011 and 2020. This growth is well above the average growth rate across NSW. Stakeholders noted that major accounting and consultancy firms have recently established in the region, and opportunity exists to build on this by taking advantage of the increased trend of skilled workers considering migration to the regions after the COVID-19 pandemic.

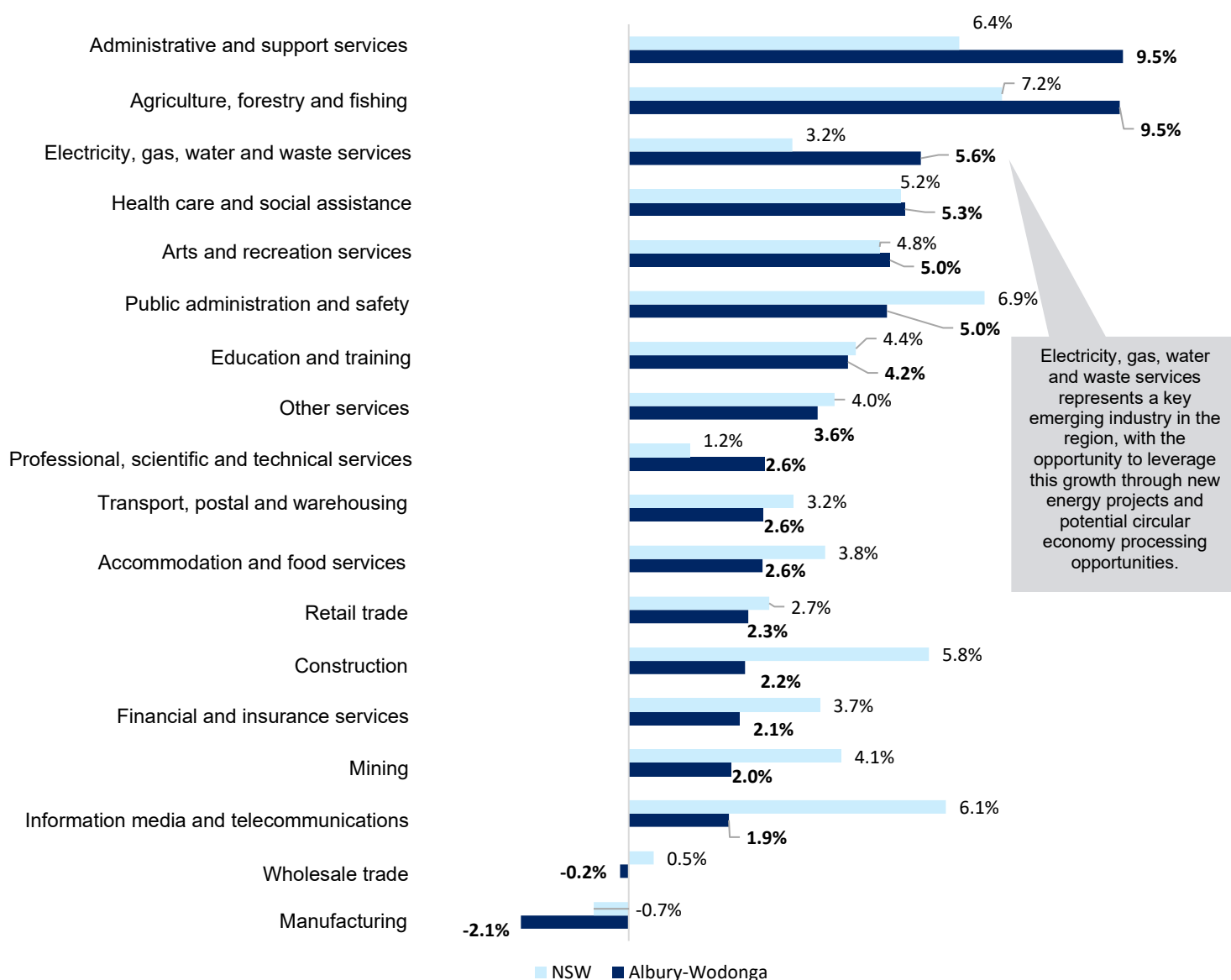


Figure 15: Change in Gross Value-Added by Industry (% YoY), 2011-2020 (REMPAN, 2020).

Albury-Wodonga 2023 endowments

Review of the 2018 endowments

The 2018 REDS identified a diverse range of endowments underpinning Albury-Wodonga's economy and regional competitiveness (see page 11 for the complete list from the 2018 REDS). Despite recent shocks impacting key endowments, consultation affirmed the following endowments remain valid:

- Transport, logistics, healthcare and education infrastructure,
- Location – between Melbourne and Sydney,
- Liveability and lifestyle appeal,
- Military sector,
- Human capital,
- Historical significance.

New endowments

While not yet reflected in the employment and industry specialisation (LQ) analysis, recent investments and policy efforts have led to the creation of new endowments associated with the arts and culture sector, which can underpin new economic opportunities and support ongoing growth in sectors such as tourism. The significant water assets in the region of the Murray River and Lake Hume are also being added to the list of endowments as part of the 2023 REDS Update, reflecting their critical role in the region's economy.

+	Murray River and Lake Hume	Critical part of the region's natural assets, and vital to amenity and tourism offerings, as well as underpinning water security in the region.
+	Cultural infrastructure and arts sector	Addition of the Albury Entertainment Centre, Murray River Experience investments and expansion of the events calendar adds to the historical significance endowment.

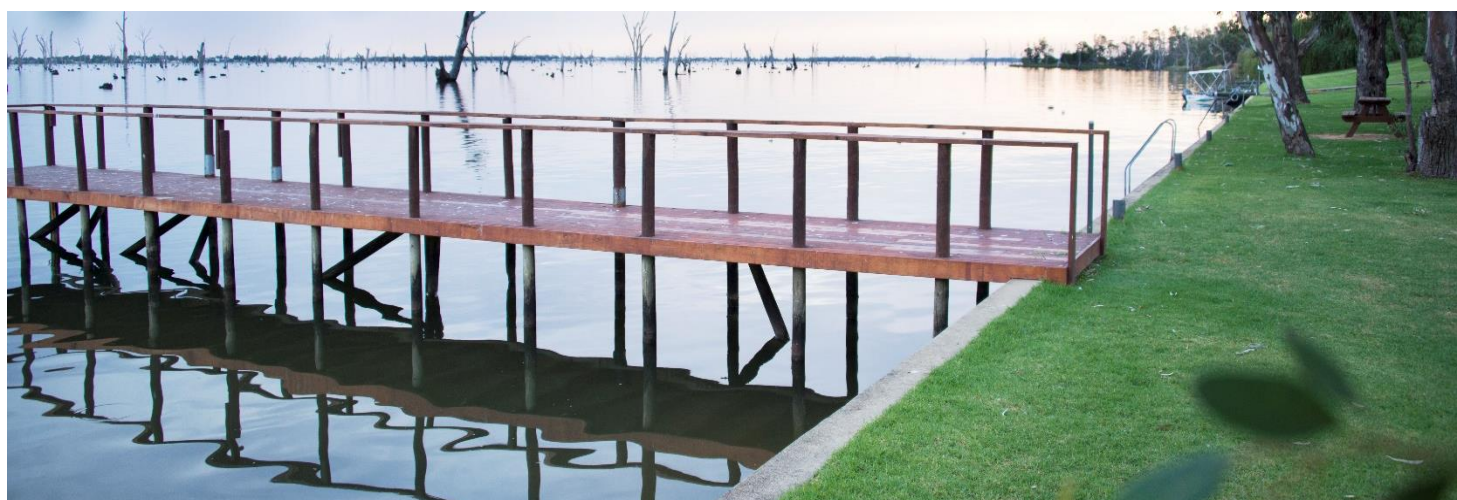


Figure 16: Reflections of a jetty over the Murray River. Photo credit: Federation Council.

8. Looking ahead: Strategic opportunities for growth, resilience and liveability

Opportunities and vulnerabilities in engine and emerging industries

Healthcare

The Albury-Wodonga region has successfully leveraged its specialised infrastructure to record strong ongoing growth in the healthcare and social assistance industries. Ongoing growth will require a focus on proactive planning to manage cross-sector and cross-border issues such as workforce development and housing availability.

GVA (2020, \$m)	487
Employment (2021)	10,815
LQ score (2020)	1.33
LQ residential care and social assistance (2020)	1.4

Strengths

- Albury-Wodonga’s specialisation in healthcare, and social assistance spans both sub-sectors in residential care, social assistance services and healthcare services, highlighting significant progress being made towards the 2018 goal of growing a world class health precinct for the region.
- The region has multiple healthcare assets, including the Albury and Wodonga Hospital campuses, and the Regional Cancer Centre which supports a local health specialisation in cancer research.
- The recently announced major investment to redevelop the Albury-Wodonga Hospital campus in Albury will provide significant support for future growth in the region’s specialisations.

Vulnerabilities

- Healthcare and social assistance in the Albury-Wodonga region faces significant resourcing challenges, given significant population growth in the region, a relatively older population demographic driving increased service demand, and a wide health network catchment of approximately 300,000 people.
- Attracting skilled professionals, from medical practitioners and nurses to carers and aides is a central challenge to meet the growing demand for healthcare and social assistance services that an ageing population requires, and the region is no exception to broader workforce challenges being faced across regional NSW.

Opportunities

- The redevelopment of the Albury Emergency Department will more than double capacity compared to the current emergency department, which will improve access to emergency healthcare for the region, in advance of the significant broader redevelopment of the hospital in coming years.^[26]
- There is opportunity to further build on the emerging precinct offering by leveraging its education infrastructure to help increase alignment with care economy jobs (e.g., carers, aides and disability sector workers). This could involve further collaboration with TAFE NSW and the UNSW Rural Clinical Campus training hub.

Agriculture and forestry

The Albury-Wodonga region has been able to leverage its significant natural endowments and specialised infrastructure to continue to grow the agriculture industry. The forestry sector is continuing to recover from the impact of the 2019-20 bushfires on supply.

GVA (2020, \$m)	350
Employment (2021)	3,100
LQ score (2020)	3.32
LQ poultry and other livestock (2020)	33.8
LQ sheep, grains, beef, dairy (2020)	13.6

Strengths

- Albury-Wodonga's specialisation in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry is broad-based. The sector continues to experience high growth, averaging 9.5% growth per year between 2011 and 2020.
- The region benefits from a good supply of high value agricultural land and high-quality water resources that underpin sustained growth in the industry.
- The key sub-industries in the region include sheep, grains, beef and dairy cattle and other livestock, which contribute to a strong level of diversity in this specialisation.
- Forestry also remains an important sector in the region.
- The interlinkages in the local supply chain with key transports assets and logistics precincts such as NEXUS and Wodonga Logic provide a competitive advantage for local producers and manufacturers.

Vulnerabilities

- Externalities have impacted the industry since 2018, evident in the multiple environmental shocks in the form of drought and floods, in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Around 30% of the NSW plantation and 10% of the Victorian forestry plantation in the region were badly damaged or destroyed during the 2019-2020 bushfires.
- Recent inflationary pressures have placed upward pressure on costs such as production and freight costs (4.7% jump increase in 2021-22).^[27] Freight costs represent a significant share of Gross Value of Farm Production, with grains (27.4%), fruit and vegetables (21%) and beef (6.4%) high-cost sectors.^[28]
- The sector continues to face significant workforce challenges, reflecting skilled labour shortages and flow-on impacts of COVID-19 related border closures reducing availability of seasonal workforces.

Opportunities

- Significant investment in productivity focused projects such as the upgrade and expansion of the NEXUS Industrial Precinct, Coppabella Rd reconstruction and Corowa Saleyards upgrade.
- A focus on supporting the forestry industry during its recovery phase and taking steps to protect availability of land for the sector can help ensure its sustained role in the region's economy.
- Expansion of agritourism offers opportunity for the region to support growth in the visitor economy alongside offering opportunities for additional income for primary producers in the region.
- Ongoing investment to improve digital connectivity across the region can help support the ability for increased uptake of agtech, which can help drive future productivity and output gains.

Manufacturing

Enhancing collaboration between the region's agricultural, transport and logistics and manufacturing sectors offers potential for future growth, alongside opportunities associated with advanced manufacturing.

GVA (2020, \$m)	486
Employment (2021)	6,326
LQ score (2020)	1.57
LQ pulp, paper and paperboard manufacturing (2020)	23.8
LQ chemical manufacturing (2020)	7.5
LQ food product manufacturing (2020)	2.7

Strengths

- Albury-Wodonga's manufacturing specialisations are closely linked to the region's strength in agriculture and its significant transport and logistics hubs.
- The region has a highly diversified manufacturing sector, with subsectors including chemicals (LQ 7.5), food product manufacturing (LQ 2.7), pulp, paper and paperboard, construction materials such as fabrication, iron and steel, and advanced manufacturing including aircraft and motor vehicles.

Vulnerabilities

- Manufacturing has experienced a decline in output greater than the NSW average during the period 2011 to 2020. This reflects a broader trend across Australia and other developed economies. However, the industry remains an important sector in the region, and strong appetite remains for new investments, including a range of potential advanced manufacturing opportunities.
- Inflation in input prices, including freight and energy costs, represent a continued challenge for the sector, although the expansion of renewable energy generation capacity in the region improves reliability and security of energy supply for the sector.

Opportunities

- Opportunities associated with increased emphasis on sovereign capability and onshoring of value-add components of the supply chain. This can drive local growth and improve stock guarantees and product turnaround following external shocks.
- Given the alignment between the agricultural, transport and logistics and manufacturing sectors in the region and the investment in the Albury RJP, the region is well placed to capture food processing, recycling and advanced manufacturing opportunities to achieve greater efficiencies and output.
- Opportunities to better connect the region's research and development capacity with its advanced manufacturing capability, including in fabrication, food product and plastics manufacturing.
- Opportunities exist to improve logistics access into Albury from the west, to ensure access to B Double heavy vehicles and increase the region's freight capacity.
- Supporting industry to adopt emerging technologies (both in the sector and in related supply chain industries) can enhance resilience and support increased opportunities for value-add manufacturing.
- The local focus on developing and enhancing circular economy processing capability can also open up significant opportunities for future growth in the manufacturing sector.

Tourism

The region's many endowments support a successful tourism industry. Future opportunities lie in diversifying the region's tourism offerings to support value creation and enhance industry resilience.

Visitor spend (2021, \$m) ^[25]	339
Employment (2021) ^a	11,526
LQ score (2020) ^b	2.03
LQ accommodation (2020)	1.8
LQ food & Beverage services (2020)	1.4

^a Summation of ANZSIC 1 digit retail trade, accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services.

^b LQ score is for the accommodation and food services industry.

Strengths

- Albury-Wodonga's range of significant high-quality nature-based assets including Lake Hume, the Murray River, Lake Mulwala, the Wonga Wetlands, and state forestry lands makes the region an ideal location for nature-based tourism and adventure tourism.
- The region is home to multiple cultural and historical tourism assets including the Albury Cultural Precinct (including Murray Arts Museum and the Bonegilla Migrant Experience), Federation Museum, Corowa Courthouse and Oddfellow Hall, Robert O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum, Old Beechworth Gaol, the goldfields, high country in Indigo Shire and multiple Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.
- Major recent investment in tourism infrastructure is supporting growth in the visitor economy, including the redevelopment of the Albury Entertainment Centre, Lauren Jackson Sports Centre, activation of the Murray River Experience and Gateway Island, Hanel's Lookout upgrade and expansion of the Flying Fruit Circus.
- The agriculture and produce sector is forming an increasingly important part of the regional visitor economy offering, as demonstrated by the wine district around Rutherglen and Beechworth.

Vulnerabilities

- The region's visitor economy is exposed to external shocks. The visitor economy was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular with border closures, and major natural disasters.
- Key shocks have seen domestic travel, international visitors and total tourism spending drop substantially on 2019 levels.^[25] However, the sector has continued to be a major part of the regional economy, even as the recovery phase from these shocks continues.

Opportunities

- Significant investment since 2018 to diversify and grow the visitor economy offering in the region provides opportunities for the region to expand its offering and improve resilience in the sector.
- Cultural and events-based tourism is an identified area for continued growth that can leverage established events such as Henty Agricultural Field Days, Winery Walkabout and the Borderville Circus Festival, as well as new events in the region.
- Agritourism presents a key opportunity for the region that can be further developed to be a significant drawcard as part of the region's visitor economy offering, as well as provide opportunities for operators in the agricultural sector to increase and diversify income streams.
- Opportunities exist to support expansion of eco-tourism and adventure tourism, such as activation of Lake Hume and continued development of the Murray River Experience and Gateway Island.

Key themes in stakeholder consultation

The Albury-Wodonga region is experiencing strong and sustained population growth and economic activity. Major investment into health infrastructure, energy generation projects and growth of advanced manufacturing were highlighted by stakeholders as key future opportunities for the region. Continued investment in population serving sectors, workforce and skills development initiatives, and actions to support enhanced liveability were highlighted as critical enabling actions for future growth.

Housing availability

As reflected in analysis of housing supply and prices in the region, consultation revealed concerns among stakeholders that the current tight housing market conditions and availability shortages will worsen in the face of a growing population and a need to house workers associated with major project delivery in the region.

Workforce constraints

While stakeholders acknowledged the economic opportunities provided by investments in major infrastructure and precinct-based developments in the region, it was noted that this has placed pressures on demand for labour across sectors, especially in the industrial (trades) and health and education (health professionals and educators) sectors.

Stakeholders highlighted the continued need to focus on workforce and skills development, as well as actions to support workforce attraction and retention, which will need to remain a key priority for the region.

Impact of border closures

Stakeholders noted the negative impact of border closures on consumer and business confidence in cross border communities. It was noted that the lack of certainty and inadequate consultation severely impacted business operations and the operation of the education and health sectors, as well as workers' ability to travel between towns.

Stakeholders highlighted the need for a renewed focus on streamlining and improving cross border arrangements, in particular around mutual recognition of qualifications and skills.

Competing land use challenges

With major investments into renewable energy projects and other significant projects in the region, and increasing demand for land for housing and industrial development, stakeholders highlighted the long-term challenge for land use planning. A focus on managing competing uses and striking an appropriate balance was highlighted by stakeholders as a key priority.

Albury Wodonga REDS - 2023 Update strategies

During consultation, stakeholders highlighted that the 2018 strategies remain broadly relevant to the Albury-Wodonga region. However, some changes to the strategies have been made to reflect the changed context since 2018 and updated regional priorities.

Updates to the strategies have been made to:

- split the agriculture and softwoods strategy into separate strategies, reflecting that the forestry sector remains in a period of recovery and renewal after the 2019-2020 bushfires, while the agriculture sector is currently experiencing a period of economic prosperity and strong growth,
- expand and shift the scope of the transport and logistics sector strategy to include a focus on advanced manufacturing development and circular economy processing opportunities in the region,
- remove the strategy focused on special economic zone precinct, given the progress achieved under the Albury Wodonga Regional Deal since 2018.

Reflecting the changes outlined above, the 2023 REDS Update strategies for the Albury-Wodonga region are listed below (amendments made to existing 2018 strategies are highlighted in **bold**):

Amended	Support and grow agribusiness throughout the region.
New	Support the softwoods industry throughout its bushfire recovery phase.
Amended	Maximise growth opportunities in advanced manufacturing and the circular economy, including through initiatives leveraging transport and logistics specialisations.
Amended	Continue to develop and grow the visitor economy.
Existing	Grow the healthcare sector through the development of a health precinct in the region.
Existing	Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled workers by improving liveability throughout the region.

Key enablers of economic growth

A number of key enablers have been identified to assist with delivering each of the strategies. This list is non-exhaustive, with a focus on identifying priority short- to medium-term enablers. Responsibility for implementation of these enablers sits with various levels of government, and in some cases may also include business, industry or non-government bodies. Collaboration across these entities at a local level will be key to achieving results.

Strategy	New enablers		Lead and support	Rationale
Support and grow agribusiness throughout the region.	Infrastructure	Support councils to use the Connectivity Index Tool following its 2023 release to review existing coverage and identify the areas of greatest need in the region for upgrades to telecommunications infrastructure.	NSW Telco Authority , local councils, the Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW).	Maximise benefits from Inland Rail and opportunities in ag tech.
Support the softwoods industry throughout its bushfire recovery phase.	Government and regulation	Support industry to adopt emerging technologies to enhance resilience and support value-add manufacturing activities.	Department of Primary Industries (DPI) , local councils.	Support growth in pulp and paper product manufacturing.

Strategy	New enablers		Lead and support	Rationale
	Government and regulation	Support the continued presence of the softwoods industry through protecting existing and identified future locations from conflicting land uses.	Local councils, Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), DPI.	
Maximise growth opportunities in advanced manufacturing and the circular economy, including through initiatives leveraging transport and logistics specialisations.	Land use	Identify and facilitate opportunities to cluster industrial and manufacturing land uses along major road and rail corridors including the Inland Rail, where compatible with surrounding land use.	Local councils, NSW DPE, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (Commonwealth).	Maximise productivity gains from industrial investments and reduce land conflicts.
	People and skills	Foster collaboration between the tertiary education sector, including Charles Sturt University, University of NSW and La Trobe University, and industry to translate research into commercial operation.	Local councils, local businesses, universities.	Improve value-add opportunities through research and development facilitated by the university sector.
Continue to develop and grow the visitor economy.	Government and regulation	Support a diverse visitor economy through flexible land use planning, sustainable river management, and engagement with industries to develop a diverse visitor economy, including agritourism, adventure tourism, and facilities for cultural activities and the arts.	Local councils: Destination Riverina Murray, Murray Regional Tourism, Destination NSW, DPE Planning, DPE Water, Create NSW: Regional Arts Development Organisations.	Support growth and diversification of the visitor economy and reduce burden on local housing stock without reducing visitor accommodation capacity.

Strategy	New enablers		Lead and support	Rationale
Grow the healthcare sector through the development of a health precinct in the region.	People and skills	Prioritise and expand training opportunities for care economy roles, particularly early childhood and aged care workers.	Training Services NSW , local councils, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs); NSW Health; Investment NSW.	Ensure sustainability of growth in health and education cluster.
Attract and retain talent to sustain the supply of skilled workers by improving liveability throughout the region.	Government and regulation	Streamline processes relating to the mutual recognition of skills between NSW and Victoria.	NSW Treasury , Victorian Government, Office of Cross-Border Commissioner, local councils.	Improve pipeline of industry ready skills to fill demand for labour across the region.
	People and skills	Develop a workforce strategy focusing on developing insights and actionable strategies, including to attract and retain young workers and students.	Training Services NSW , local councils, Office of Regional Youth, TAFE NSW.	



Figure 17: A caravan park in Federation LGA. Photo credit: Federation Council.

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Figure 18: A highway passes fields of crops in Albury LGA. Photo credit: Albury City Council.