

# LODDON MALLEE NORTH



# REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

SUMMARY



This document is a summary of the Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan. **The full plan is available at [www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans](http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans)**

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May 2014

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## MINISTER'S MESSAGE



In 2011 the Victorian Government, through the \$17.2 million Regional Centres of the Future Program, advanced work across the state to support councils, communities and government authorities in planning for the future growth of their regions.

The Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan is one of eight prepared across the state to help guide a coordinated regional response to population growth and regional change over the next 30 years.

In the May budget I announced a commitment of \$12.3 million for regional Victoria towards the implementation of regional growth plans and continuation of the Rural Council Planning Flying Squad that plays such a valued role in assisting councils with major projects, developments and statutory planning support.

Victoria's population has been projected to grow by around three million people between 2011 and 2041. It is projected that 20 to 25 per cent of that growth will be in regional Victoria – more than double the amount of growth over the previous 30 years.

In order to accommodate this growth, provide lifestyle choice and share job opportunities, we need to become a 'state of cities'.

In developing these growth plans, councils have worked with their regional counterparts and the State Government to identify key environmental, cultural, recreational, economic, tourism and natural resources of value, which will be preserved, maintained or developed.

The work has already assisted councils in providing strategic information and mapping. The plans will deliver immediate outcomes, while also providing a planning framework to assist rural and regional councils to plan for population growth and ensure long-term regional land supply.

The regional growth plans will be key instruments in helping to identify future infrastructure investment needs to support local education and health services and employment opportunities.

I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of the Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan including our local government partners and the Project Steering Committee that put the plan together. I look forward to the plan helping to shape a more prosperous future for the region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Guy' with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Hon Matthew Guy MLC  
Minister for Planning

## WHY WE NEED A PLAN

The Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan has been developed over two years in partnership between local government and state agencies and authorities. The plan covers the municipalities of Buloke, Campaspe, Gannawarra, Mildura and Swan Hill.

Uneven growth is forecast across the region, mostly centred on major centres and throughout the Murray River corridor. Growth and change need to be carefully managed to strengthen the economy, help people thrive and protect the region's rich natural and cultural heritage.

The plan considers a range of land uses including agriculture, tourism, environmental assets, commercial and residential. It recommends checks and balances that need to be applied when considering future growth.

As areas change over time infrastructure and service needs also change. Long-term planning is the best way to ensure these needs are met. A regional approach to planning enables coordinated responses across municipal borders.

The plan's key land use planning directions will be implemented through the state planning system. This will provide a regional context to guide and inform councils in planning for their municipalities and support decision making at a local level.

“The Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan provides a vision for long-term prosperity and sustainable growth.”

### **The Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan:**

- establishes a framework for strategic land use and settlement planning that can sustainably accommodate growth
- identifies important economic, environmental, social and cultural resources to be preserved, maintained or developed
- provides direction for accommodating growth and change including residential, employment, industrial, commercial, agriculture and other rural activities
- shows which areas of land can accommodate growth and which are to be maintained for other uses
- identifies opportunities for supporting regional level infrastructure, providing an essential contribution to the long-term sustainability of the region.

## STATE OF CITIES

“We will maximise the growth potential of Victoria by developing a state of cities which delivers choice, opportunity and global competitiveness.”



The State Government’s new metropolitan planning strategy, *Plan Melbourne*, provides a land use and transport plan to 2050.

The regional growth plans are aligned with *Plan Melbourne* through the following directions.

### **Plan Melbourne directions:**

- 6.1. Deliver a permanent boundary around Melbourne
- 6.2. Rebalance Victoria’s population growth from Melbourne to rural and regional Victoria over the life of the strategy
- 6.3. Integrate metropolitan, peri-urban and regional planning implementation
- 6.4. Improve connections between cities

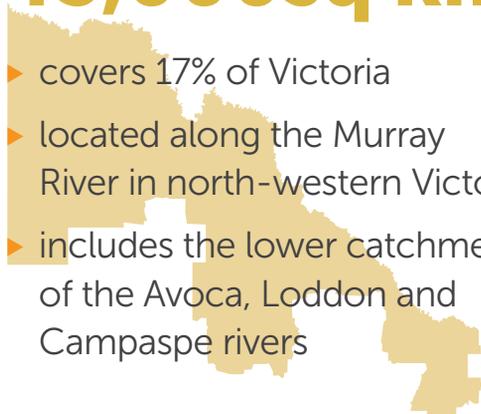


# SNAPSHOT OF LODDON MALLEE NORTH

## The region

**45,000sq km**

- ▶ covers 17% of Victoria
- ▶ located along the Murray River in north-western Victoria
- ▶ includes the lower catchments of the Avoca, Loddon and Campaspe rivers



## Employment (top 5)

**18%**

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

**13%**

Retail Trade

**11%**

Health Care and Social Assistance

**10%**

Manufacturing

**10%** Construction



## Employment

Over **49,000**

**JOB**S IN THE REGION

Over **19,000**

**JOB**S IN MILDURA RURAL CITY

and over **2400**  
**BUSINESSES**

## Quiz questions

1. Which Murray River town was Australia's largest inland port during the late 1800s and is known as the 'paddlesteamer capital of Australia'?
2. Where is Victoria's only inland lifesaving club located?

Answers page 4



## Living in the region

**Around 134,000 people live in the region. Almost 48,000 people live in Mildura\*.** Swan Hill and Echuca are other major centres. **158,681 people are expected to live in the region by 2041.**

The region has a relatively diverse population, with a strong Aboriginal community, many people with Mediterranean heritage, and more recent immigrants from Polynesia and the Middle-East.

*\* Including Irymple, Merbein and Red Cliffs*

## Amazing fact

The Murray is the third longest navigable river in the world, after the Amazon and Nile. Its total length is 2520 km from its source in the Upper Murray and the Kosciusko National Park. It spans three states - Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. Along with its tributaries, **the Murray is part of the third largest water catchment on earth.**

## Amazing fact

Murray-Sunset National Park is Victoria's second largest national park and contains four designated wilderness zones. The park is one of the few remaining semi-arid regions in the world where the environment is relatively untouched and is home to Victoria's largest flower, the Murray Lily, and Australia's rarest bird, the Black-Eared Miner.



Images: Apex Beach, Murray River / Murray Sunset National Park / Echuca Port, Peter Charlesworth / Carwarp Solar Plant, Solar Systems

## Environment

**3 INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED WETLAND COMPLEXES**  
Hattah-Kulkyne Lakes, Kerang Wetlands and Gunbower Forest Ramsar sites

## Tourism

The Murray River is a great destination for a water-based holiday. Popular activities include: houseboats, paddle steamer cruises, fishing, canoeing, swimming and water skiing.

## Transport

6 rail corridors connect the region to Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton and South Australia.

There are 6 major highway corridors within the region: Calder, Sturt, Mallee, Murray Valley, Sunraysia and Henty.

**MILDURA AIRPORT IS THE THIRD BUSIEST PASSENGER AIRPORT IN VICTORIA.**

## Industry and Business

**#1 \$1.9 billion**  
THE GROSS VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN 2012 - THE HIGHEST VALUE PRODUCTION OF ANY REGION IN VICTORIA

The Iluka Murray Basin Stage 2 Project is expected to produce about 2.4 million tonnes of dry, heavy, mineral concentrate over 7 years, employing 160 people.

### Grain

30% of the state's production - mainly in the Buloke and Gannawarra shires and Swan Hill Rural City.

### Fruit

40% of Victoria's fruit is produced in the region

### Mineral sands

## Wine grapes

**80%** OF THE STATE'S WINE GRAPES ARE GROWN IN IRRIGATION DISTRICTS ALONG THE MURRAY RIVER.

**Quiz answers**  
1. Echuca  
2. Mildura - Apex Beach on the Murray River

## Solar energy

The region is positioning itself to be the centre of Australia's solar industry through existing and proposed facilities near Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang.

## THE VISION FOR LODDON MALLEE NORTH

In 2041, Loddon Mallee North has built on its strengths to become a thriving Australian region. It has cultivated its environmental credentials to emerge as a prosperous place of choice for people to live, work, visit and invest.

It has become renowned for:

- its produce and innovation in areas such as renewable energy
- custodianship of distinctive environmental and cultural heritage assets
- being a contributor to national pride in a healthy, iconic and celebrated Murray River.

## PRINCIPLES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION



## ABOUT LODDON MALLEE NORTH

Loddon Mallee North is a renowned food bowl for Australia. Rich fertile soils, warm climate and access to irrigation from the iconic Murray River system give the region its competitive advantage in food production and manufacturing. Up to one third of the region is made up of public land and contains many areas of cultural, indigenous and heritage significance.

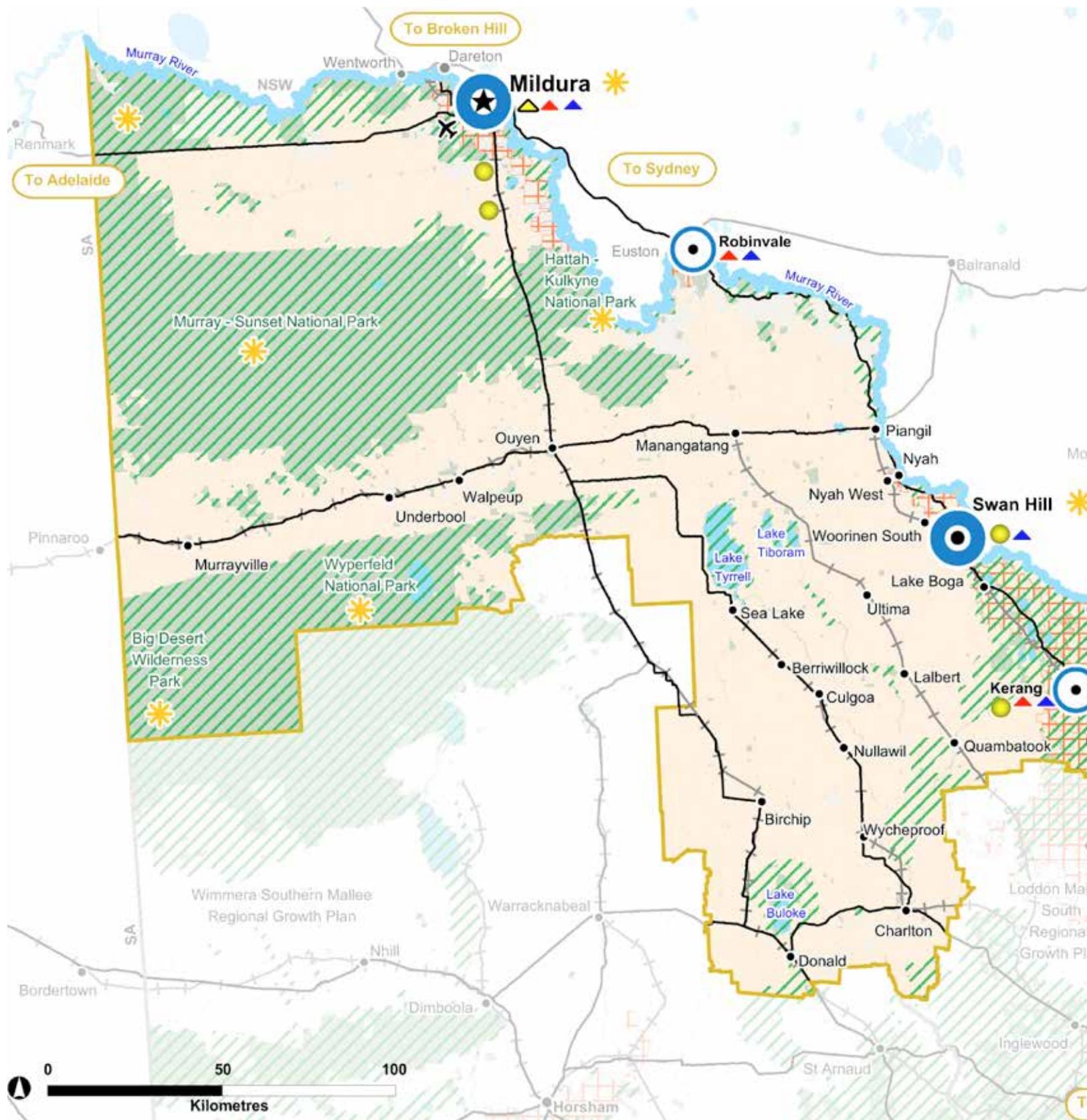
The main population centres are Mildura, Swan Hill and Echuca, followed by the smaller regional centres of Kerang, Robinvale, Kyabram, Rochester, Donald and Birchip. The three large regional centres are expected to see the bulk of growth over the next 30 years.

Water policy reform and climate change, will continue to impact on the region's economy. The focus of regional growth planning will be to facilitate land uses that generate sustainable economic growth.

### **Key features:**

- the region directly borders two states: New South Wales to the north and South Australia to the west and has economic and social links to these adjoining states
- home to the iconic Murray River corridor known for its Aboriginal cultural heritage, historic heritage and environmental assets and is important to the agricultural industry and communities that it supports
- major producer of fruit, nuts, wine, vegetables, cereals, meat, wool and dairy products
- the regional city of Mildura is a strategic place for business, located at the border of Victoria and New South Wales and the intersection of major transport routes
- strategic assets include significant irrigation infrastructure and natural resources, such as mineral sands deposits, salt deposits, solar reliability and geothermal resources
- the region has significant national parks, including the Murray-Sunset, Hattah-Kulkyne, Wyperfeld and Gunbower.

# THE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN MAP





The regional growth plan map illustrates where growth is anticipated to occur in the region and the major transport, economic and social relationships between cities, centres and towns.

## LEGEND

### SETTLEMENT NETWORK

- ★ Regional city      ● Regional centre      • Town
- ◉ Promote growth      ○ Support growth

### ECONOMIC

- ★ Significant tourist area - includes some significant cultural heritage places and landscapes
- Cropping, grazing and/or mixed farming
- ◻ Irrigation district      ● Solar generation facility

### CONNECTIVITY

- Highway      + + Active railway line      ✈ Airport

### ENVIRONMENT

- ▨ Areas containing high value terrestrial habitat
- Public land      ● Lakes      — Rivers
- ▲ Urban flood considerations<sup>(1)</sup>
- ▲ Urban bushfire considerations<sup>(2)</sup>
- ▲ Urban salinity considerations<sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> Urban flood and salinity considerations are based on existing overlays  
<sup>(2)</sup> Bushfire considerations may be based on one or more of the following: existing overlays, advice from CFA or Regional Bushfire Planning Assessments. Does not include Bushfire Prone Areas.

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

The region is facing a number of challenges and opportunities that will affect the future of the economy, environment and its communities.

### Challenges for growth

- ▶ the uneven distribution of both population and economic growth across the region, and the need to support smaller communities
- ▶ ensuring land supply for employment and housing in appropriate locations
- ▶ adapting to the potential risks and opportunities associated with climate change
- ▶ protecting and enhancing the environmental, cultural heritage, social assets and natural resources of the region to grow the economy
- ▶ recognition and protection of the environmental values of Ramsar wetlands
- ▶ ensuring growth is supported where appropriate by sustainable reticulated or independent infrastructure services, such as water, power and waste disposal – recognising the historic diversity, transitioning of the economy and uneven growth distribution
- ▶ encouraging residential and commercial growth in centres throughout the region enabling residents to access employment, education and services, including from dispersed settlements
- ▶ encouraging and supporting diversification of the economy, including agriculture and overcoming skills shortages
- ▶ renewing irrigation infrastructure and responding to the associated restructure and social changes
- ▶ cross-border planning to achieve efficient provision of land and infrastructure for settlements and industry
- ▶ safeguarding transport routes to support efficient freight and people movement and economic diversification
- ▶ maintenance and replacement of ageing infrastructure
- ▶ meeting the housing needs of a changing demographic profile in the context of low development demand and poor returns on housing investment, and the needs of a mobile and seasonal workforce
- ▶ managing the risks to settlements from natural hazards such as flood and bushfire.

## LIVING IN LODDON MALLEE NORTH

Loddon Mallee North is currently home to 134,000 people, with the majority living in and around Mildura, Echuca and Swan Hill.

Growth is uneven across the region with modest increases projected in and around the major centres and throughout the Murray River corridor. Kerang, Robinvale, Kyabram and Rochester play an important role in providing sub-regional services to surrounding communities.

Communities located along the Mallee Highway and in Buloke Shire are separated by long distances from Mildura, Echuca and Swan Hill. Wycheproof, Ouyen, Manangatang and Birchip provide higher level services, including health, education and local government administration than would normally be expected of towns of similar population.

Bendigo and Shepparton are key cities outside the region that attract people from the southern part of Loddon Mallee North for jobs, services and facilities. People in the Mallee also travel to Adelaide and Melbourne for higher order services, using air and road transport.

### Future directions

- ▶ direct major population and housing growth to existing regional cities and centres where infrastructure and services can be used in the most efficient, cost-effective and sustainable manner
- ▶ improve linkages within and between Loddon Mallee North's network of settlements
- ▶ anticipate and respond to changing community needs to support growth and demographic change.



# KEY TOWNS – FUTURE PLANS OVER THE NEXT 20-30 YEARS

## Rural City of Mildura

Year	Population
2011	54,666
2021	60,325
2031	64,288

### MILDURA

*Regional City*

**Promote growth** – As the regional city for Loddon Mallee North, Mildura will have an expanded role as a major service provider, recreation centre and tourism destination. Expansion of the city’s health and education sectors will be encouraged, and attracting new businesses and employment into the area will also be important. The city will see industrial and residential growth, as will nearby Irymple, Merbein and Red Cliffs. Through Mildura’s continued growth, Ouyen’s role as a service provider for rural industries and remote settlements will be reinforced.

## Campaspe Shire

Year	Population
2011	38,981
2021	40,305
2031	45,541

### ECHUCA

*Regional Centre*

**Promote growth** – Major urban, industrial and commercial growth in the Campaspe region will be focused in the regional centre of Echuca. Future growth will be accommodated by infill development and new residential land releases through the

expansion of Echuca West. The local economy will continue to rely on agriculture, related manufacturing, food processing and services. Growth in transport, health services and tourism will be critical for the town’s future as a regional centre.

### KYABRAM AND ROCHESTER

*Towns*

Kyabram and Rochester, along with Tongala and Rushworth, will accommodate some growth in the future and will continue to provide services to surrounding rural settlements. These towns will also offer affordable living opportunities for commuters to Bendigo, Shepparton and Echuca.

## Rural City of Swan Hill

Year	Population
2011	22,275
2021	23,524
2031	24,448

### SWAN HILL

*Regional Centre*

**Promote growth** – Swan Hill, as a regional centre, will see future infill and new residential development to accommodate its growth. Nearby commuter towns Nyah, Nyah-West, Woorinen South and Lake Boga will offer further housing choices and diversity in the area. Agriculture and related services and manufacturing will continue to drive the local economy. Future planning will encourage further diversification into health services, transport logistics and tourism.

**Promote growth** – means the cities and towns with the greatest capacity to accommodate growth, in terms of land supply, infrastructure and services, e.g. the regional cities like Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Latrobe City, Wodonga and Mildura

**Support growth** – means the cities and towns that have the infrastructure and services that can support additional growth subject to addressing planning constraints such as bushfire and flood hazard

## ROBINVALE

*Town*

**Support growth** – Robinvale will continue to service a large catchment, housing growth along the northern part of the Murray River corridor. Education, health, retail, medical and recreation services will continue to support nearby agricultural and horticultural districts. Employment opportunities in horticulture, tourism, renewable energy and food processing will be encouraged.

## Gannawarra Shire

Year	Population
2011	11,467
2021	11,479
2031	11,288

## KERANG

*Town*

**Support growth** – Kerang is a vital centre for retail, employment, health and business services. There is sufficient land to accommodate future growth and provide diverse housing for the area's ageing population. Agriculture and manufacturing will continue to drive the local economy with the maintenance and upgrade of transport networks. Nature-based tourism and solar energy have been identified as opportunities to diversify the economy.

## COHUNA

*Town*

Cohuna will grow through development close to existing services and utilities. The area will also offer high quality semi-rural settings in areas like Gunbower Creek. The local service, agriculture and manufacturing industries will continue to be the focus for the local economy and fulfil the town's role as a service centre for surrounding rural communities.

## Buloke Shire

YEAR	POPULATION
2011	6925
2021	6779
2031	6519

## BIRCHIP, CHARLTON, DONALD, SEA LAKE AND WYCHEPROOF

*Towns*

The Buloke Shire community consists of a network of towns and smaller rural settlements. The region has innovated and adapted, with a strong economy based on agriculture, research and significant manufacturing. Addressing the region's falling total population will be a planning focus. Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof will remain key service centres for the surrounding smaller rural settlements.

## REGIONAL ECONOMY

The region's economy is driven by its competitive advantage in agriculture, the needs of a changing population and its strategic location on national freight routes linking the capital cities of south-eastern Australia.

The agricultural industry has demonstrated resilience and capacity to adapt to climatic, economic and policy challenges. Irrigation infrastructure renewal and modernisation have been completed and the region has sought to increase agricultural productivity while enhancing environmental sustainability.

While agriculture continues to be the backbone of the region's economy, new technologies have reduced jobs in the sector. Local jobs need to come from the growth of labour-intensive sectors and economic diversification.

The major Calder, Mallee, Murray Valley, Henty and Sturt transport corridors offer opportunities in transport logistics and freight. Upgrading freight and transport infrastructure can enhance primary production, including agriculture and mining. The region currently has skills shortages in the health, education, manufacturing, agriculture and construction sectors. An ageing population will see growing demand for service and health professionals.

### **Future directions**

- ▶ facilitate vibrant and prosperous commercial centres and industrial hubs in the region's major urban centres that respond to changing population and markets
- ▶ further diversify the primary production, service, manufacturing and tourism industries to support job creation and investment and value add to local products
- ▶ protect key regional assets to ensure future prosperity, including that arising from strategically important rural land uses
- ▶ maximise the local and regional benefits of emerging economic opportunities associated with future growth in mining, food production, energy and tourism.

## ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Loddon Mallee North is well known for its environmental assets and has a rich cultural heritage. The regional growth plan aims to enhance the environmental and cultural heritage assets of the region, retain healthy waterways and floodplains, achieve sustainable, water-efficient farming, and develop a diverse and robust economy broadening its strong agricultural base. The plan recognises that the Murray River is the lifeblood of the region.

Environmental assets underpin the economic strengths of the region and present opportunities for tourism and other economic diversification, such as carbon farming. Balancing growth with the protection of the environment and cultural heritage is a key challenge for this plan, as is managing the risks from natural hazards in some areas.

### Future directions

- ▶ manage risks to the Loddon Mallee North region's community and economy from natural hazards
- ▶ protect and improve the condition of the region's environmental and cultural heritage assets to achieve the best outcome for the region's environment, economy and community
- ▶ plan for and manage potential risks and opportunities arising from climate change and initiatives that support national and global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



## REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The transport network and other infrastructure will be critical in catering for projected growth and population change. Freight movement supporting agriculture, particularly grain growing, food processing, mineral sands extraction and other industries will be vital.

Social infrastructure includes community and cultural facilities, services and networks. High quality social facilities and living environments that meet education, healthcare and lifestyle needs will support communities and tourism.

Growth of the region's cities and towns will increase demand for water, energy and utility infrastructure. Irrigation infrastructure underpins the success of many agricultural activities in the region, including horticulture and dairying, and is critical to the ongoing success of the region's economy and its contribution to Victoria's food bowl production.

### Future directions

- ▶ support health, education, cultural and sporting facilities to meet local needs and promote social inclusion and community cohesion
- ▶ work with utility and service agencies to optimise access to gas, electricity, drainage, water, waste, sewerage and telecommunications to cater for the population and economic needs of the region
- ▶ support road, rail and logistics improvements to support economic growth and accessibility.



# DELIVERING REGIONAL GROWTH

The Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan has identified a range of actions that, over the next 30 years, will help realise the vision for the region. Some of these things will happen almost immediately, others will evolve over time.

## Outcomes

- ▶ the development of Mildura as a regional city, through planned development incorporating nearby settlements of Red Cliffs, Irymple and Merbein
- ▶ Echuca and Swan Hill providing higher order services and strong support to surrounding regional communities
- ▶ improved linkages with and between Loddon Mallee North's five communities of interest
- ▶ well planned growth in and around major urban centres to ensure access to services and infrastructure
- ▶ accessible health, education, cultural and sporting facilities that meet local needs
- ▶ more diversity in primary production, service and manufacturing industries
- ▶ advanced innovation in food production, with a focus on export markets and local food processing
- ▶ businesses and communities that are well-prepared and protected from natural hazards and climate change
- ▶ improved cross border and inter-regional relationships which have harnessed emerging economic development opportunities
- ▶ accessible infrastructure that meets the region's growing needs for transport, utilities and community services
- ▶ road and rail upgrades that support efficient transport and access to markets
- ▶ a range of commercial and industrial precincts located within the regional city, regional centres and towns which recognise each settlement's role in supporting and servicing their community of interest
- ▶ well managed environmental, cultural and heritage assets that are adding to the region's environment, economy and community.



## FURTHER READING AND INFORMATION

[www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans](http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans)

Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan

Loddon Mallee North Regional Growth Plan Background Report

Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan – Northern Region (2010)

Cover images (clockwise from top left)

1. Paddle boats and wharf, Echuca, image by Peter Charlesworth, photographer
2. Solar farm, Mildura, image courtesy of Carwarp Solar Plant
3. Girl with icecream, Swan Hill, image courtesy of Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement
4. 'Eat Street' Langtree Avenue, Mildura, image courtesy of Mildura Rural City Council
5. Ibis rookery, Kerang lakes, image courtesy of Parks Victoria
6. Birchip Quarterhorse Cup, Buloke Shire, image courtesy of the ABC
7. Arrivals entrance at new Mildura Airport, Mildura, image courtesy of Mildura Airport
8. Cellar door, Robinvale Organic Wines, image courtesy of Robinvale Organic Wines

