
**Strathbogie Shire Council
Economic Development Strategy
and Action Plan 2023-2027**

APPENDICES

June 2023

CONSULTATION FINDINGS – EUROA

What do you hope the strategy will achieve?

- Boost the visitor economy through investment in contemporary visitor product and experience.
- Explore opportunities to leverage Strathbogie Shire's unique natural environment to drive visitation and economic growth.
- Support infrastructure investment, including for transport and digital and mobile connectivity.
- Achieve jobs growth and support the expansion of existing businesses.
- Address housing shortages to support resident and workforce attraction.
- Address the lack of commercial land and define an industrial zone.
- Better market the region and articulate its unique selling proposition to potential visitors.

What are the competitive strengths of the economy and key assets for the Shire?

- A unique tourism product and experience offering all within two hours' drive of each other.
- Central location in regional Victoria with great connectivity.
- Liveability assets such as recreation facilities, parks and garden and education.
- Access to transport infrastructure including major roads and Mangalore Airport.
- Close proximity to Melbourne.
- A diverse and prosperous agriculture sector.
- Picturesque natural landscape and nature-based assets.

- Diverse employment opportunities including in agriculture, health and construction.

What are the key issues and barriers for economic growth in the Shire?

- Lack of state and federal government recognition of regional and rural needs.
- Need for planning scheme to be reviewed and the reduction of 'red tape' to support investment and development.
- Lack of retail and amenity diversity in the town centre.
- Housing shortages act as a barrier to population and workforce attraction.
- Insufficient Council response time for planning issues.
- Workforce shortages causing issues for existing businesses.
- Need to provide services and infrastructure that meet the needs and expectations of remote workers to encourage population attraction.

- Poor and unreliable freight and passenger transport infrastructure.

- Public transport is poor and lacking, which affects commuting residents and visitors.

- Unreliable power supply is a major barrier to business growth.

- Poor digital connectivity and telecommunications infrastructure.

What are the opportunities for economic development in the Shire?

- Improve electricity infrastructure to support residents and businesses

and promote investment and population attraction.

- Opportunity to establish an education hub to allow university students to study within the region.
- Leverage the agricultural industry to grow the visitor economy through agri-tourism related products and experiences.
- Improve visitor information and signage to attract travellers passing by on the Highway.
- Expand the provision and diversity of events to attract new visitors to Euroa and Strathbogie Shire generally.
- Prioritise the development of the agriculture industry, including agribusiness and niche, speciality agriculture.
- Explore opportunities for circular economy investment.
- Capitalise on the decentralisation of government agencies to attract residents and increase the number of job opportunities.
- Build and support a resilient workforce to support businesses.
- Establish Euroa as a hub for community health and aged care, and maintain liveability and health outcomes for residents.
- Better market the region's assets, including nature-based assets and recreation facilities.
- Encourage development that is appropriate and promotes the key attributes currently enjoyed by residents.

CONSULTATION FINDINGS – NAGAMBIE

What do you hope the strategy will achieve?

- Improvements to streetscape and local amenities
- Explore opportunities to provide an education offering in Nagambie.
- Focus investment on the agricultural sector, leveraging the competitive strengths of the Shire.
- Create a framework to encourage and enable private investment.
- Grow the visitor economy and increase the provision of visitor accommodation.
- Prioritise infrastructure investment, including in telecommunications, roads and services (water, gas, energy).
- Support employment growth and the development of local skillsets.
- Leverage the natural environment, including the Goulburn River and Strathbogie Ranges.

What are the competitive strengths of the economy and key assets for the Shire?

- Natural assets such as Lake Nagambie, Goulburn River, nature trails and wildlife.
- Close proximity to Melbourne.
- Attractive lifestyle attributes, which have the potential to drive population attraction from metropolitan Melbourne.
- Strong existing arts community that contribute to the Shire's vibrancy.
- Existing railway and major road infrastructure providing connectivity to Melbourne and regional Victoria.
- Existing hospitals which support the local community

and provide local employment opportunities.

- Cluster of equine-related industries.
- Prime agricultural land and access to water supporting the agricultural sector.
- Rowing infrastructure at Lake Nagambie that has the potential to drive further event visitation.
- Diverse employment opportunities including in agriculture, health and construction.
- Locational attributes that are ideal for the development of an industrial precinct.

What are the key issues and barriers for economic growth in the Shire?

- Lack of east-west public transport offering within the Shire.
- Need for updated strategic planning work and faster planning processing times to facilitate development and business investment.
- Unattractive streetscapes, including a high number of vacant shops.
- Digital connectivity is poor and cannot accommodate periods of high visitation.
- Need for infrastructure upgrades, including gas, power and digital connectivity.
- Lack of diverse sporting and recreational infrastructure to support liveability outcomes.
- The lack of childcare or secondary education is a barrier to achieving liveability outcomes and population retention.
- Need for a greater number of professional services businesses to support existing industry.

What are the opportunities for economic development in the Shire?

- Attract new and emerging sectors to diversify the industry base and address broader economic trends (e.g. climate change).
 - Increase the supply of accommodation in Nagambie, including for residents, short-term workers and visitors.
 - Leverage the agricultural industry to grow the visitor economy through agri-tourism related products and experiences.
 - Improve electricity infrastructure to support residents and businesses and promote investment and population attraction.
 - Invest in sporting facilities that have the potential to drive visitation growth, such as bike tracks.
 - Leverage the intellectual property of Nagambie's investor community to drive economic development and growth in the Shire.
 - Focus economic development activities on further developing and strengthening the agriculture industry.
 - Explore blue-sky opportunities for education provision, including facilities that leverage the Shire's strengths in agriculture or sports.
 - Attract a professional services workforce to support existing industry (e.g. surveyors, engineers, project managers etc.).
- Implement skills-based interventions that aim to retain Strathbogie Shire's youth population and develop youth skills to meet industry needs.

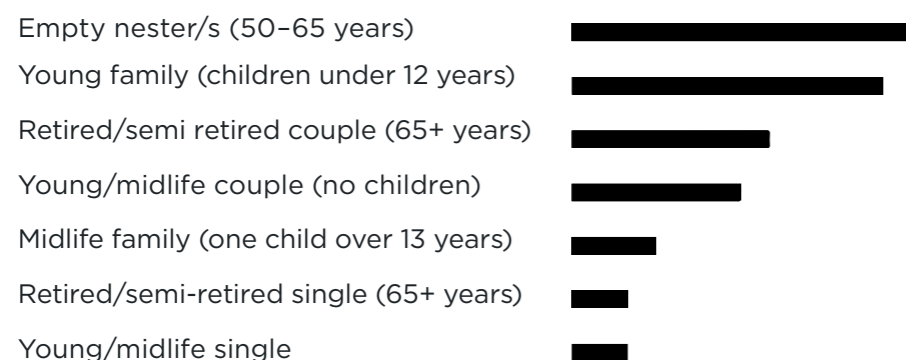
APPENDIX B

SURVEY RESULTS

Who Responded?

The Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey received 49 responses in total, including 15 responses from business owners. Majority of survey respondents are empty nesters (28%) or have young families (26%), as shown in Figure F4.

F4. Household Composition



Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q1. "Which of the following best describes your household?"

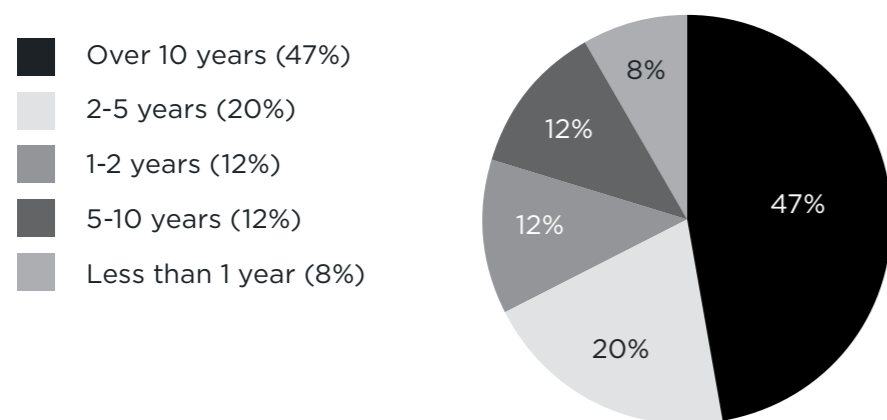
Demonstrated in Figure F5, a high proportion of respondents have lived in Strathbogie for over five years (59%), followed by those who have lived in the region for two to five years (20%). Majority of respondents are located within the localities of Euroa (35%) and Nagambie (22%).

Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q3. "How many years have you lived in Strathbogie Shire?"

The most common occupation among survey respondents was professional (73%), followed by clerical and administrative worker (12%). 43% of survey respondents indicated they work within Strathbogie Shire, whilst 24% of survey respondents indicated they work in another municipality, including:

Survey respondents who indicated they work outside of Strathbogie Shire were asked to detail the reason for working outside the region. Key drivers for Strathbogie Shire residents commuting out of the region for their work included a lack of available jobs, as well as jobs that do not meet their needs in terms of wages and opportunities.

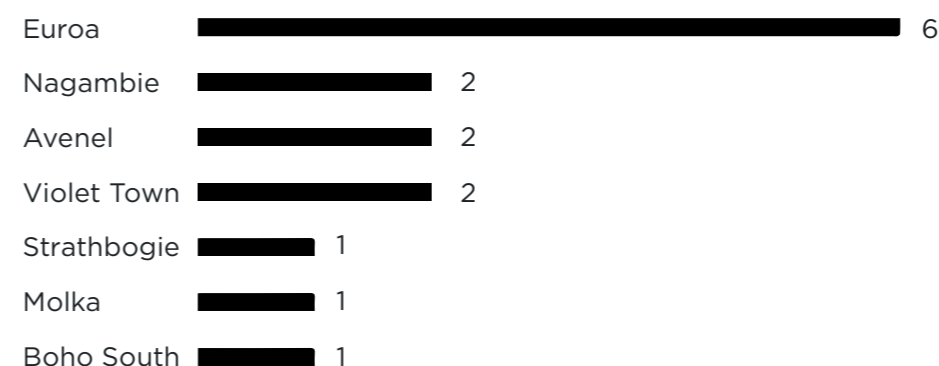
F5. Years Lived in Strathbogie Shire



Business Profile

60% business owner survey respondents have been operating their business for over five years, followed by 20% operating between two to five years. As shown in Figure F6, majority of business owner survey respondents operate their business from Euroa (6 business owner survey respondents). 11 of the 15 businesses own the premises they operate from, with the remainder renting a premises.

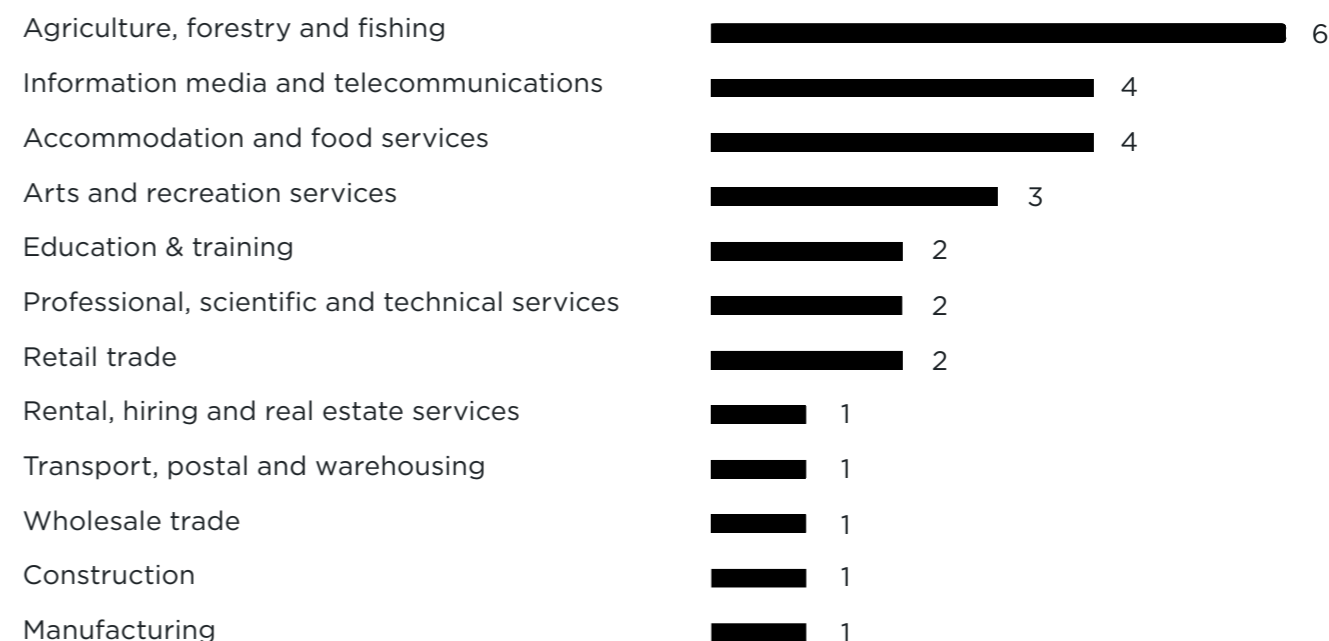
F6. Business Location



Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q9. "Business name and location".

Figure F7 indicates a large proportion of responses were from agriculture, forestry and fishing (6 business owner survey respondents), information media and telecommunications services (4 business owner survey respondents) and accommodation and food services (4 business owner survey respondents) businesses.

F7. Business by Industry



Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q11. "Which industry most accurately describes your business?"

APPENDIX B

SURVEY RESULTS (CONTINUED)




Home-based Businesses

Nine home-based business owners responded to the community and business survey. Home-based business owners indicated that the services or facilities that would most benefit their business included high-speed internet (63%), storage space (13%), mobile connectivity (13%) and administrative and other support services (13%).

Business Operations and Performance

47% of business owner survey respondents indicated they employ staff. As shown in Figure F8, business owner respondents primarily employ full-time (86%) and part-time (71%) staff in their business.

F8. Employee Breakdown

Full time		86%
Casual		71%
Part time		29%
Volunteer		0%

Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q17. "Does your business employ staff?"

Majority of business owner respondents indicated they experience difficulties recruiting staff (57%). As shown in Figure F9, the main barriers for business owners when looking to recruit staff include skills shortages (31%), lack of required qualifications (23%), lack of suitable housing for employees (15%) and a small local workforce (15%).

F9. Staff Recruitment Difficulties

Skills shortages		31%
Lack of required qualifications		23%
Lack of suitable housing for employees		15%
Small local workforce		15%
Social issues		8%
Salary expectations		8%

Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q24. "What is the biggest barrier to staff recruitment?"

As shown in Figure F10, the main constraints to business growth identified through the survey included COVID-19 related impacts (50%), government barriers (43%) and local economic conditions (21%).

F10. Key Constraints to Business Growth

COVID-19 related impacts		50%
Government barriers		43%
No constraints		21%
Local economic conditions		21%
Attracting skilled employees		14%
Lack of demand		7%

Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q27. "What are the main constraints (if any) to growing your business?"

Impact of COVID-19

Comparing the 2020-21 financial year to previous years, 40% of business owner survey respondents indicated they experienced a decrease in business turnover due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A large proportion of business owners indicated they expect their business to fully recover by the end of 2022 (33%), followed by 27% who believe they have already recovered from the impacts of COVID-19.

Business Development and Support

Six of the business owner survey respondents indicated they are a member of a local or industry network or association. These include:

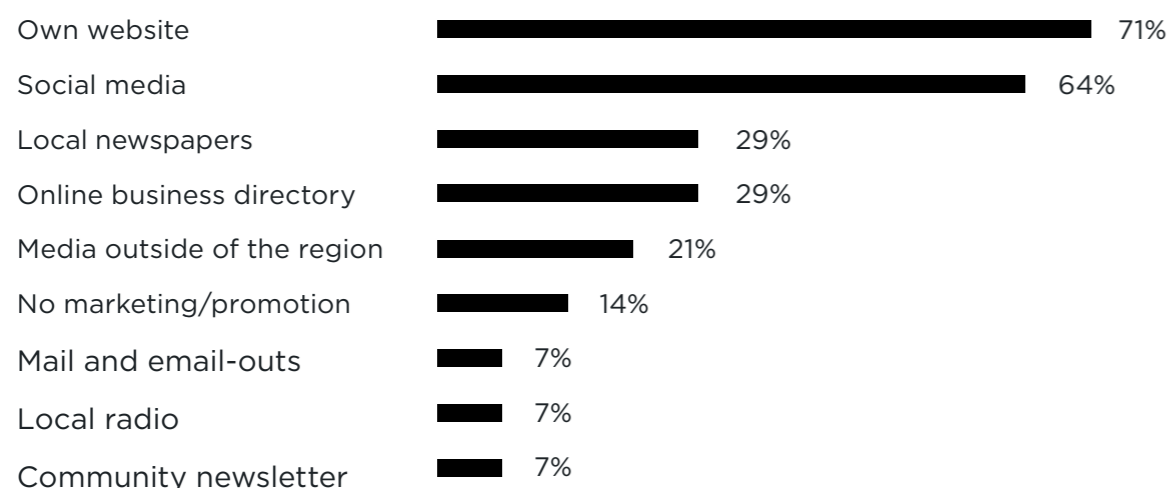
- Euroa Chamber of Business and Commerce.
- Tourism Greater Shepparton.
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council.
- Meat and Livestock Australia.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY RESULTS (CONTINUED)

As shown in Figure F11, business owner respondents primarily undertake marketing and promotion activities through their own website (71%), social media (64%), local newspapers (29%) and online business directory (29%).

F11. Current Marketing Activities



Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q34. "Do you currently undertake any marketing or promotion of your business?"

Business owner survey respondents were asked to indicate their top five business development topics that they would most like training or professional development in. The top five topics are listed below (highest priority = 1 to lowest priority = 5).

1. Staff recruitment.
1. Financial management.
3. Land management.
4. Marketing.
5. Contracts and tenders.

Survey respondents were able to submit open-ended responses regarding the key opportunities that they believe Council should be considering to support businesses in Strathbogie Shire. Responses revealed the following key findings:

- Developing community events/festivals to encourage visitation.
- Improve community infrastructure, such as roads, water, sewerage and mobile and internet services, particularly in small towns.
- Improved public transport services, specifically improving access to Melbourne.
- Co-working spaces for professionals in the area to access meeting spaces and other facilities, such as printers and high-speed internet.
- Improved relationship between Council and business / industry / community members
- Small business support, such as providing assistance with planning, permits and other business-related requirements, as well as business networking and collaboration opportunities.

- Encourage residents and visitors to buy and support local.
- Creating local job opportunities
- Improve marketing and promotion of the region, including tourism activities.
- Increase population-based services, including childcare and early learning.

Economic Development

Survey respondents were asked to prioritise statements relating to Council's role in economic development, listed below (highest priority = 1 to lowest priority = 5).

1. Supporting existing business.
2. Attracting new business and investment
3. Improve standard of living for community.
4. Growing the visitor economy.
5. Resident attraction and retention.

Figure F12 shows the key economic development initiatives that respondents indicated would make Strathbogie Shire a more prosperous and better place to live. The most common responses included to support and develop population based services (65%), township improvements (63%) and further support and develop the key industries (59%).

F12. Preferred Economic Development Initiatives



Source: Strathbogie EDS Community and Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q38. "Which of the following economic development initiatives do you think would make Strathbogie Shire more prosperous and a better place to live?"

APPENDIX C

POLICY CONTEXT

National Context

Regional development policy at the federal level currently has four main pillars, as identified in the *Regions at the Ready: Investing in Australia's Future* document:

- Regional funding programs, including drought relief, COVID-19 relief and a variety of infrastructure and community development funds
 - Regional Deals, based on the 'City Deals model', designed to improve the productivity and liveability of regions
 - Regional Development Australia, providing support for a national network of committees made up of representatives of all levels of government, local businesses and community organisations that promote economic development in their areas
 - Regional Australia Impact Statements, ensuring that all Commonwealth Government legislation considers any special impacts that new policy will have on regional areas
- The federal policy framework has been informed by the Australian parliamentary Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation. The committee made a number of recommendations in 2018, with relevant ones listed below:
- Increase investment in “enabling infrastructure to improve connectivity, key services and amenity”;
 - Extend the City Deals program to regional areas;
 - Consider the decentralisation of federal government services where appropriate and assist the process of relocation; and

- Strengthen support for regional universities.

State Context

The State Government has a \$200 million *Future Industries Fund* that supports six high-growth sectors that have potential for strong economic growth – to create jobs and attract investment in Victoria. The six industries identified include:

- Medical technologies and pharmaceuticals;
- New energy technologies;
- Food and fibre;
- Transport, defence and construction technologies;
- International education; and
- Professional services.

Strathbogie Shire has limited exposure to a majority of these industries, aside from food and fibre, however, there is the potential for the local economy to leverage growth in these sectors.

Plan Melbourne (2017-2050) is the State Government's long-term plan to accommodate Melbourne's future growth in population and employment. One of the seven key aspirational outcomes of Plan Melbourne is “*Regional Victoria is productive, sustainable and supports jobs and economic growth*”.

The following relevant directions and policies to achieve this outcome are outlined in the Plan:

- Invest in regional Victoria to support housing and economic growth.
- Stimulate employment and growth in regional cities.

- Support planning for growing towns in peri-urban areas.

- Improve connections between cities and regions.

- Improve transport and digital connectivity for regional Victoria.

- Strengthen transport links on national networks for the movement of commodities.

Agriculture Victoria's Strategy (Strong, Innovative, Sustainable) identifies the key objectives for the industry to be globally competitive, innovative, resilient and diverse. Farming systems and opportunities in Strathbogie Shire should be reflected in State-wide strategies and the Shire's farmers must leverage existing State programs.

Visit Victoria undertakes tourism marketing and event procurement which aims to increase visitation and associated expenditure within the State. The organisation also creates a major events calendar and provides support for regional tourism boards via funding and strategy assistance.

The State Government has a series of infrastructure priorities informed by Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy and subsequent reports including a discussion paper released last year. The latest work on infrastructure strategy emphasises that regional infrastructure development should be based on the needs and opportunities unique to each region and not on the expectation that the regions can accommodate population growth that would otherwise need to settle in Melbourne.

Regional Context

The *Hume Regional Priorities 2019-21* identifies 29 regional priority projects, with four having a direct connection to Strathbogie Shire:

- Redevelopment of Euroa Health facilities into a post-traumatic stress wellness centre;
- Undertake an intermodal freight logistical precinct feasibility study for Mangalore Airport;
- Design and construction of a new central bridge crossing for Euroa; and
- Nagambie streetscape improvements and better connection between key tourism assets.

The *Hume Regional Growth Plan* provides a regional approach to land use planning in the Hume Region. The plan identifies opportunities to encourage and accommodate growth and to manage change in the region over the next 30 years.

The plan identifies Euroa and Nagambie as sub-regional settlements that are expected to grow as they provide lifestyle opportunities and are located near popular tourist attractions. The plan says these towns will continue to support surrounding rural communities by providing services and access to services in larger urban localities. These localities offer unique growth opportunities related to natural characteristics, but growth needs to be managed to protect environmental assets and values and limit exposure to natural hazards, especially bushfire and flood.

The plan also identifies the Strathbogie Ranges as a potential alternative energy resources site in the region.

The *Goulburn Regional Economic Development Strategy*, developed by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) in 2022, sets out the medium-to-long term strategic directions for driving economic growth and development across the region. The Strategy defines the following strategic directions for economic development in the region, as relevant to Strathbogie Shire:

- Enhance productivity and resilience in the agricultural and food product manufacturing sectors;
- Focus on continues growth and development of the visitor economy, leveraging natural assets and Aboriginal heritage; and
- Strengthen renewable energy generation and the role of the circular economy.

The Goulburn Regional Partnership, often described as the ‘food bowl of Australia’, is focused on a range of social, economic and environmental outcomes for residents, businesses and communities within region. The partnership is focused on five themes, including population wellbeing, education and employment, reducing disadvantage, supporting a growth corridor and economic development.

Local Context

Several local strategic documents, prepared by Council, have also been reviewed to inform the Strategy.

The *Strathbogie Shire Council Plan 2021-25* provides the following vision to guide Council in focusing on priorities over the four-year period to 2025:

The Strathbogie Shire is a region of natural beauty with vibrant communities who are respectful, optimistic and inclusive.

We have a strong sense of belonging and of our collective history. We care deeply for Country and First Nations people.

We are bold. We embrace opportunities. We welcome you.

The Plan outlines six strategic focus areas to achieve this vision. Whilst all focus areas will be considered in the development of this EDS, the “Inclusive. Productive. Balanced” strategic focus area outlines the following goals that are particularly relevant to economic development:

- We are smart spenders, buying local wherever possible;
- We target economic development to enhance our region;
- We are capitalising on our region's strengths;
- We have affordable housing; and
- We are managing growth carefully to protect the environment and meet our social infrastructure needs.

APPENDIX C

POLICY CONTEXT (CONTINUED)

Township growth and development strategies set out the long-term planning, design and community vision for the towns of Euroa, Nagambie, Violet Town and Avenel, and provide Council with a strategic framework to manage and guide future development through to 2040. These were reviewed alongside the Industrial Land Study to examine the Shire needs to encourage future investment.

Council's previous *Economic Development Masterplan 2013-2017* (reviewed in 2015) focused on rural industry (food, wine and equine), infrastructure and planning, population growth and small business and tourism as the key drivers of economic development within Strathbogie Shire.

The *Sustainable Strathbogie 2030 Strategy and Action Plan (2018-2022)* identifies initiatives to reduce the Shire's impact on the environment and create security for future generations. A number of the projects outlined are also linked to economic development outcomes, including leveraging the

Shire's natural assets, developing the "green economy" through renewable markets and carbon reduction, sustainable business practices, as well as innovative waste opportunities and transport solutions.

The *Strathbogie Arts and Culture Strategy (2019-2023)* provides clear direction and for developing arts and culture in Strathbogie over the four-year period to 2023, with a goal to enhance the Strathbogie community's creative and cultural conscious. This document was reviewed to examine opportunities for supporting positive outcomes for the community, visitors and the arts and creative sector in the municipality.

Strathbogie Shire's Council Health and wellbeing action Plan (2022-2025) is Council's key instrument in promoting public health and working towards the best health outcomes for the Strathbogie community. It is important that the Economic Development Strategy shares consistent goals and approaches to health and wellbeing as Council and its health partners.

¹ *City Deals are plans for cooperation between Commonwealth, State and local governments to improve economic, social and environmental outcomes. "City Deals work to align the planning, investment and governance necessary to accelerate growth and job creation, stimulate urban renewal and drive economic reforms."*

