



WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

**Economic Development
Action Plan 2016 - 2018**







West Wimmera's goal for economic development...



TO CREATE AN **ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM** THAT BENEFITS THE ENTIRE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY



The **West Wimmera Economic Development Action Plan** is a derivative of the West Wimmera Shire Council Economic Development Strategy "Target 10,000", finalised in 2014.

The Strategy is a comprehensive document that recognises the importance of a resilient and robust economy. The following initiatives have been extracted from the Strategy and provide the overarching foundation for the Action Plan:



NURTURE the start-up and growth of locally owned businesses



MAXIMISE cost-effective self-reliance through import substitution, while expanding exports from local businesses



IDENTIFY, celebrate and spread models of triple-bottom line (people, planet, profit) success in local businesses



ACCOMPLISH as many of these initiatives as possible through private investment



In pursuit of economic growth

The West Wimmera Economic Development Action Plan brings together nine major strategic themes. This framework provides a reference tool to facilitate specific strategic directions for economic development activities in the pursuit of West Wimmera's goal for economic development.



The nine specific themes are the cornerstone to West Wimmera's overall economic development strategy:

1 Actively promote and support a **diverse economy**, specifically in priority growth areas

2 Strengthen and diversify the shire's **tourism industry** and destination appeal

3 Strengthen the **agricultural sector** and build market opportunities

4 Small **business support** and strengthened business sector

5 Attract **industry and enterprise** investment

6 Ensure optimal **transport linkages**

7 **Digital economy**

8 **Sustainable economic development**

9 Develop the **skills and capacity of the region's workforce** now and into the future



Economic growth requires a positive business and investment culture. By capitalising on our natural competitive advantages and building on our successes and strengths, the region can develop and project positivity and cohesion. It also requires community confidence and connectedness; a sense of pride in the region, a positive attitude towards the economy and high levels of engagement and cooperation. People will be pleased to associate themselves with West Wimmera. The confidence of these people will be evident in their willingness to collectively plan for the future and their approach towards risk-taking.

A confident and united region enables successful government lobbying and inspires economic interest in our region. Influencing government policy requires West Wimmera to have a unified voice which carries the authority of the region. West Wimmera will deliver clear, well-researched and convincing messages that are direct and tailored to meet the government's needs. Most importantly, these messages sell the region in a way that is desirable to government and influences their decisions regarding the region.

Guiding this approach are four principles:

Principle one

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Provide strong leadership to efficiently and effectively implement the action plan and deliver on the desired outcomes.

Principle two

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

Cultivate regional leadership and promote shire identity whereby the community identifies positively as the West Wimmera region and shares the economic development vision and goals. Promote cooperation and coordination of activity between and across all level of government and develop productive working relationships with key stakeholders.

Principle three

ONE VOICE

Facilitate sound, consultative and informed discussions in the preparation of advocacy and project development, to ensure the projection of a united, cohesive voice.

Principle four

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Regularly communicate concise messages to key stakeholders, with an economic positivity and confidence building agenda.



Strategy theme one

ACTIVELY PROMOTE AND SUPPORT A DIVERSE ECONOMY, SPECIFICALLY IN PRIORITY GROWTH AREAS

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- INCREASED CONTRIBUTION OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT IN TARGETED INDUSTRIES
- INCREASED EMPLOYMENT IN TARGETED INDUSTRIES

KEY INITIATIVES

To support priority growth opportunities, this plan is focused on:

- Agriculture (value adding)
- Tourism, events and culture
- Manufacturing
- Small, micro and home based business
- Health and community services

STAKEHOLDERS

- Wimmera Development Association
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 2, 6, 11

West Wimmera is committed to building on our strengths and competitive advantages to maximise economic potential and realise our goal of creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem that benefits the entire local business community.

West Wimmera has prioritised our top growth industries and this plan is focused on delivering support to these sectors. This plan focuses on the diversification of the West Wimmera economy and how we can sustainably grow the industries for which we have a specialisation. Diversification into the identified industries expands the employment opportunities in the region, which subsequently has a positive impact on skill levels and average income levels.

These industries have been prioritised because they represent our natural competitive advantage; it is not that other industries are not valuable to the West Wimmera economy. These industries are considered to be the sectors where the greatest overall impact can be made.

Agriculture (value adding)

Agriculture is West Wimmera's leading sector by value, representing half of the regional economy. Over 850 people are employed in agriculture in West Wimmera. Agriculture is mainly based around grain, wool, hay and meat production while diverse, niche activities such as nuts, wine processing, and olives represent an established portion of the industry. The vast majority of agricultural production in West Wimmera is not consumed locally and is exported within Australia and overseas.

To support economic growth of West Wimmera, it will be important to support the growth and diversification of the agricultural sector.

Intensive livestock has been a key area of innovation for the farming sector, leveraging sustainable technologies to deliver greater environmental and cost efficiency outcomes in agriculture production. Investment in these types of enterprises in appropriate locations will contribute to the economy through employment, value add opportunities and potential brand awareness for the Shire.

Opportunity exists for small and micro producers to develop product that can be consumed locally, shortening supply chains and providing an affordable and healthy source of fresh produce. Additionally, development off intensive food production facilities such as hydroponic glasshouse production has potential to further grow the economy.



Tourism, events and culture

Tourism and events are an important driver of economic development in the region. West Wimmera is located within the broader Grampians tourism region, known as the Wimmera Mallee. Tourism injects over \$10 million into the West Wimmera economy and employs approximately 60 equivalent full time workers. Tourism expenditure is related predominantly to accommodation and food services, art and recreation and retail trade. West Wimmera is within close proximity to both the Grampians and the Limestone Coast (SA), both of which attract international brand awareness, and is a central point to explore for those travelling between Melbourne and Adelaide. West Wimmera consists of a range of natural and cultural attractions such as Lake Charlegrark, Harrow Discovery Centre, Edenhope Red Tail Gallery, Little Desert National Park and Bailey's Rocks.

Opportunities exist for investment in adventure activities, retail, wellbeing retreats and accommodation.

Manufacturing

While manufacturing is not currently a dominant industry for West Wimmera, the regions support for value adding activities is expected to expand this sector. With an abundance of inexpensive available land, easily accessible rail and road linkages, rich and diverse agricultural districts and a convenient location between Melbourne and Adelaide, manufacturing activities are well suited to West Wimmera. There are opportunities for West Wimmera to attract and cultivate niche value adding activities as well as encouraging local industry into advanced activities such as innovation, product design and research.

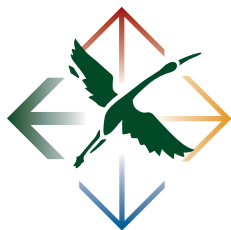
Small, micro and home based business

Micro, small and home-based business is a major source of business activity and employment in West Wimmera. Small businesses operate in every sector of the economy. They are increasingly contributing to the creation of regional wealth and are vital to the process of innovation. A strong and diverse small business sector often leads to a stable economy that is better able to adapt to changes in the regional economic climate. Strong small business development is a sign of an entrepreneurial culture, and a willingness to take risks in order for people to take control of their own economic destiny. West Wimmera's lifestyle offers the best of country living and is an attractive environment for home based businesses. Improved communication and transport linkages will encourage more people to relocate to the area and set up home and e-commerce businesses.

Health and community services

West Wimmera's health and community services sector is a significant contributor to the regional economy. The sector employs 183 people or 10.9 per cent of the workforce. Local health facilities are wide ranging as they service the needs of the districts across the shire. The ageing population will continue to drive increased demand for health and community services.

Whilst the provision of quality health, community and ancillary services is a major economic sector in itself, it is also a vital prerequisite to creating a desirable living environment for residents. A lack of services creates a competitive disadvantage in the attraction and retention of people to the region.



Strategy theme two

STRENGTHEN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AND DESTINATION APPEAL

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- INCREASED VISITOR NIGHTS/ EXPENDITURE
- NUMBER OF IMPROVED EXPERIENCES/ PRODUCTS/ SERVICES
- NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCES/ PRODUCTS/ SERVICES

KEY INITIATIVES

- **Increase domestic and international visitation**
- **Increase the shire's capacity and experiences in the tourism market areas of:**
 - *Nature-based/ adventure* — *Health and wellness*
 - *Cultural and heritage* — *Events*
- **Experience diversification ie. investigate a potential regionally significant attraction for the shire**
- **Undertake research to ensure continuous improvement of the visitor experience**
- **Strengthen relationships with the state and regional Tourism Boards**
- **Support Horsham Rural City Council to introduce passenger rail services into the region**

Tourism and events are an untapped opportunity for West Wimmera and the region.

The array of natural and built features and assets, its strategic location on major transport routes and proximity to regional destination centres including the Grampians National Park, Mount Arapiles and the Limestone Coast (SA), provide a basis upon which to grow this economic sector.

Tourism and events provide a range of economic, social and cultural benefits to communities and regions which include:

- Encouraging business diversification and investment
- Enhancing the cultural diversity of communities and providing unique opportunities for residents to engage in cultural activities
- Supporting enhancements to the natural environment
- Acting as a drawcard for new residents and new businesses.

Data for the region suggests that 3.4 per cent of West Wimmera employment is related to tourism (57 jobs), contributing an estimated \$10.1 million to the local economy.

West Wimmera has a number of opportunities to build economic returns from the development of packages, product and coordinated marketing, of the attributes and attractions in the region.

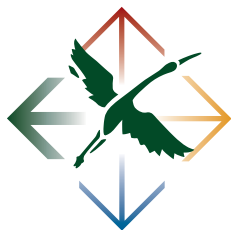
STAKEHOLDERS

- WWSC
- Wimmera Mallee Tourism
- Visit Victoria
- Grampians Tourism
- Wimmera Development Association
- Businesses and community groups

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 4, 8, 10





Strategy theme three

STRENGTHEN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND BUILD MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- INCREASED VALUE OF AGRICULTURE CONTRIBUTION TO GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
- ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW MARKETS
- BIO-ENERGY INDUSTRY GROWTH
- IDENTIFIED VALUE ADD PRODUCTS IN THE MARKET
- RETURNS TO FARMING ENTERPRISES BASED ON EFFICIENCY GAINS IE. WITHIN THE SECTOR

KEY INITIATIVES

- Investigate opportunities to create supply chain efficiencies ie. ascertain the status of developments related to Graincorp's project regeneration
- Increasing food production capability including food security and quality of production
- Diversifying through innovation and value add opportunities
- Addressing barriers to industry and enterprise development

Agriculture is the major industry in the West Wimmera region. In all its forms, agriculture contributes significantly to regional domestic product and employment.

Agriculture is part of the lifestyle appeal of the region and it provides economic opportunity outside metropolitan areas. Agriculture is also vital to our region's food security and contributes to our sustainability by reducing our food miles.

A broad definition of value added is to economically add value to a product by changing its current place, time and from one set of characteristics to other characteristics that are more preferred in the marketplace. As a specific example, a more narrow definition would be to economically add value to an agricultural product (such as wheat) by processing it into a product (such as flour) desired by customers (such as bread bakers).

Producers involved in adding value should think of themselves as members of a food company that processes and markets products to consumers. Adding value to products can be accomplished in a number of different ways, but generally falls into one of two main types: innovation or coordination.

Attracting increased levels of farming investment, including greater diversification into less traditional intensive farming practices and protected cropping activities, will provide opportunities to diversify local product, increase production and productivity and provide jobs.

STAKEHOLDERS

- WWSC
- Graincorp
- Local farming enterprises
- Industry groups
- Wimmera Development Association

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 5, 6, 9





Strategy theme four

STRENGTHEN SMALL BUSINESS SECTOR

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- INCREASE OF NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN THE SHIRE
- POSITIVE CHANGES IN THE ANNUAL WWSC BUSINESS SURVEY

KEY INITIATIVES

- Provide support to build capacity, connectedness and confidence of small business owners
- Addressing barriers to industry and enterprise growth and profitability
- Encourage entrepreneurialism and innovation
- Enhance attraction and retention of skilled labour
- Support the development and growth of community-based business groups ie. progress association

STAKEHOLDERS

- WWSC
- Local small business sector
- Wimmera Business Centre

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 2, 6, 7, 9

Facilitated actions: 10, 11, 12

Encouraging a more dynamic 'startup ecosystem' and facilitating an environment conducive to business growth is vital in helping to develop an entrepreneurial culture and accelerate economic development in the region.

This involves establishing infrastructure and programs that encourage and enhance collaboration, networking and knowledge transfer between entrepreneurs, SMEs and researchers for example. The provision of relevant information, contacts and dedicated support at the appropriate stages is also vital. It is important to have a holistic view on this area of activity to ensure that there is a much greater partnership approach.

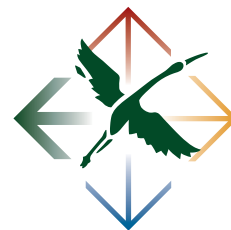
Innovation is a key focus. Research from across the world has shown that innovation is the most important driver of long term productivity and prosperity. Innovative businesses create more jobs, grow faster and ultimately contribute more to regional economic growth.

The development and retention of skilled business operators and a skilled workforce are critical to the achievement of longer term economic sustainability. Developing local skills represents a long-term solution and will deliver workforce stability that is critical to business growth.

Home-based businesses are a growing proportion of the local business sector; this will only increase with the advances in new technology. Home-based businesses are highly desirable in a local economy as they are likely to adopt innovation to drive business improvement and employment.

Strategy theme five

ATTRACT INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE INVESTMENT



PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDENTIFIED NEW INVESTMENTS 	
KEY INITIATIVES	STAKEHOLDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract investors and investment ie. prepare packages to meet needs of new enterprise or expansion of existing Ensure council's investment incentives align with the local environment Attract new and innovative businesses Support innovation and entrepreneurship Market the region as a commercial and lifestyle location Ensure land use planning meets future growth needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWSC Existing and new enterprises State & Federal Government
	LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000
	Direct actions: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 Facilitated actions: 4, 5, 7, 9

Investment is critical to economic growth. Investment enables innovation to reach the marketplace, which in turn has a positive impact on employment and gross regional product and produces a boost to economic confidence.

A positive investment climate creates an economic culture which benefits the entire region, not just investors and investees.

The overarching theme of Target 10,000 is that West Wimmera actively markets its strategic location, attractive lifestyle and natural attractions to position itself as a prosperous alternative to big city living. Attraction investment is about convincing others to join us in success and to view West Wimmera as a favourable investment option.

In the context of this plan, investment is defined as traditional private sector investment, public-private partnerships and philanthropic or angel funding. Increased investment in the region would have a positive effect on the gross regional product and therefore it is a critical strategy for economic development.

New business is an important source of investment. New business creates new employment opportunities, diversifies the economy and increases productivity of the economy. New investment also has the potential to strengthen business confidence within an area. By delivering a proactive business and industry investment attraction program there is potential to strengthen the shire's image as 'open for business'. This can be achieved by actively seeking and engaging new investors, and being 'investment ready' to capitalise on opportunities as they arise. Attracting new investment will involve marketing the region's competitive features and making prospective investors aware that West Wimmera is committed to the longer term growth and economic prosperity of the shire.



Strategy theme six

ENSURE OPTIMAL TRANSPORT LINKAGES



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- INCREASE IN VALUE OF LOCAL EXPORTS
- INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN PRIMARY PRODUCT TRANSPORTATION (TIME REDUCTIONS FROM FARM TO MARKET OR INCREASED CAPACITY)

KEY INITIATIVES

- Improved road linkages ie. Western Highway, various C Class roads
- Improved rail linkages for industry
- Enhanced public transport ie. Passenger rail in the region
- Investigate economic and tourism potential of aerodromes within the region
- Encourage improved access to the Port of Portland

STAKEHOLDERS

- WWSC
- State & Federal Government

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 10, 11

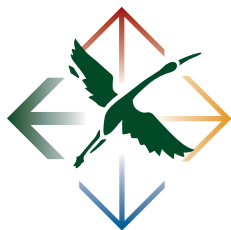
Given its strategic location between Melbourne and Adelaide on major road and rail corridors, the role of freight for the inward and outward movement of goods and products and transport networks to service residents and visitors is vital to the region's competitiveness.

Optimal transport linkages will facilitate development and growth across the region, improve local business sustainability and improve the visitor experience and enhance the tourism market.

The role of transport is integral to the region's economic opportunity. The carrying capacity of rail, the cost efficiencies and the environmental benefits this mode of freight represents, contribute to positive economic outcomes. There is a need to ensure that rail-based assets and service provision are able to provide economic benefits to users through strategic investments and that there is efficient access to ports and markets.

Graincorp under their 'project Regeneration' initiative has committed to spending \$65 million alongside government to upgrading rail infrastructure in the Wimmera-Mallee. From a municipal perspective, this includes upgrading the Lillimur loading site. The carrying capacity of rail, the cost efficiencies and the environmental benefits this mode of freight represents provide the region with some positive economic outcomes.

In West Wimmera, public transport is minimal. In the West Wimmera region, public transport is minimal with a bus service operating between Adelaide and Melbourne twice daily that includes Kaniva, and a daily (Monday – Friday) bus service operating between Naracoorte and Horsham that includes Edenhope and Goroke. Passenger rail is a vital service to rural communities, with mobility recognised as a key indicator of quality of life. A passenger rail service operating through the region would have major benefits, both on the social fabric of the community and economically through increased visitation.



Strategy theme seven

POSITION WEST WIMMERA AS A DIGITAL ECONOMY

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- INCREASED NUMBER OF RESIDENTS CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET
- IDENTIFIED INNOVATIONS AND BUSINESSES ESTABLISHED AND/OR EXPANDED USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

KEY INITIATIVES

- Attract NBN fixed line to Kaniva
- Enhance the capacity of the business community to effectively utilise high speed broadband
- Promote the region as having capability for innovations and remote access

STAKEHOLDERS

- WWSC
- NBN Co.

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 4, 6, 7, 8, 11

Facilitated actions: 6, 11

A sophisticated digital economy has been shown to contribute to economic prosperity. In particular, high-speed broadband access is a demonstrated economic accelerator.

Digital technologies will create opportunities to overcome issues of remoteness and will enhance the delivery of education, the provision of health and financial services and the facilitation of trade throughout the region. A fully-integrated digital economy is the future for West Wimmera.

We know that small businesses with high levels of digital engagement enjoy better business outcomes. Council has an opportunity to work with businesses to understand how they use digital to position themselves in a global market. Council can assist local businesses in increasing their level of sophistication through providing information sessions, tools and templates, and access to digital experts who can assist businesses facilitate change. Support could also be provided to educate businesses in understanding where digital technology plays a part in developing customer strategies and digital marketing plans.

Council must demonstrate strong leadership in how digital transforms the region. Internally the focus should be on how it leverages digital capabilities to create an effective working environment. The ability to use technology to work remotely or use social media to communicate with constituents can play a major role in overall employee satisfaction and retention.

Digital plays a significant role in allowing travellers to visualise themselves experiencing the destination during the planning process. Social sites create a picture based on recommendations and local businesses can become iconic destinations as travellers share their experiences. The NBN will allow local businesses to sell the experience and for tourists to share their experience in the moment using rich media in a way that was previously not possible. The travel experience has been reimagined by digital technology and is one of the most impacted domains.

We are at a critical point in time where the future of our region will be shaped by our ability to leverage the extraordinary pace of technological change. As the global and digital economies converge and become seamlessly connected, the West Wimmera Shire Council is committed to promoting regional engagement and participation in the digital marketplace.

Strategy theme eight

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- REDUCED/ OFFSET EMISSIONS [NEED TO ESTABLISH TARGETS]
- INCREASED INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY
- INCREASED RESILIENCE OF ENERGY/ WATER SUPPLY

KEY INITIATIVES

- Sustainability leadership: encourage new business with sustainability practices and products to locate in the region
- Explore alternate bio-energy infrastructure options
- Identify ways to create self-sustaining communities

STAKEHOLDERS

- WWSC
- Sustainability Victoria

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 2, 6, 10

Facilitated actions: 6, 9, 10

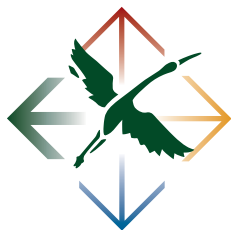
Sustainability is core to this action plan and the future of West Wimmera. Economic success in West Wimmera requires reliable energy supply that is distributed across the region efficiently.

Energy security is essential to economic development. West Wimmera is seeking a future where the region is energy independent and not affected by external costs or supply issues.

The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable development promotes the idea that social, environmental, and economic progress are all attainable within the limits of our earth's natural resources. Sustainable development constantly seeks to achieve social and economic progress in ways that will not exhaust the earth's finite natural resources.

The needs of the world today are real and immediate, yet it's necessary to develop ways to meet these needs that do not disregard the future. The capacity of our ecosystem is not limitless, meaning that future generations may not be able to meet their needs the way we are able to now.

The three factors in maintaining a sustainable development and lowering the carbon footprint that are most crucial are energy consumption, transportation, and diet. Transportation taxes more on fossil fuel than anything else, but it is followed closely by heating, cooling, and electrical uses. Diet concerns the agricultural products in the grocery stores. Moving food from one location to others costs a great deal in fuel use. Instead of importing produce as we currently do, we need to consider ways to use available food sources from within our communities. This would significantly reduce the amount of fuel consumed, helps local industry and builds local economic resilience.



Strategy theme nine

DEVELOP THE SKILLS AND CAPACITY OF THE REGION'S WORKFORCE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- INCREASE IN THE PROPOSITION OF THE POPULATION WITH HIGHER QUALIFICATION LEVELS AND IN HIGHER SKILL OCCUPATIONS

KEY INITIATIVES

- Identify/ address challenges faced by industry and employers in accessing appropriate skills
- Pursue opportunities for, and promote, local skill development programs
- Attract and retain skilled workers
- Support regional migration and skill migration programs
- Support vocational pathway initiatives

STAKEHOLDERS

- WWSC
- Skill Invest

LINKAGES TO TARGET 10,000

Direct actions: 3, 6

Facilitated actions: 1, 13

Workforce skilling, up-skilling and re-skilling are essential elements of West Wimmera's future economic performance. The ability of the local labour force to supply relevant skills to industry is a fundamental criteria in the attraction and servicing of existing and new investment.

West Wimmera needs to have a future-focused workforce to power the growth of our existing industries and to facilitate new economic ventures. Ensuring the supply and the capacity of the region's human capital must be a priority. A skilled workforce is an important resource to building a powerful economy. Developing knowledge and skills means giving the people of West Wimmera opportunities to access high quality education and training whilst also fostering a culture of life-long learning.

A strong education sector exists in West Wimmera for primary and secondary levels. It is imperative to the future sustainability of West Wimmera that vocational and tertiary education options are accessible. Changing models of service delivery linked to an increased use of technology to enable online learning makes this more achievable.

Skilled migration is also desirable to assist in increasing population and cultural diversity in the region. Skilled migrants are also likely to bring new economic ventures to the region and pass on their knowledge and experience to local residents which will have a positive economic effect.

Entrepreneurship should become a more widespread means of creating jobs, as well as fighting social exclusion. The emphasis must be put on training to ensure that education systems truly provide the basis to stimulate the appearance of new entrepreneurs and that those willing to start and manage their own enterprise acquire the right skills to do so. Entrepreneurship should be encouraged at a young age and pursued through the school curricula and supported by council initiatives.





Get in touch...

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BizWest has been established by West Wimmera Shire Council as an initiative to grow and develop opportunities together to build a better region.



westwimmera.vic.gov.au