

# Target 10,000

## West Wimmera Shire Economic Development Strategy



# Introduction

West Wimmera Shire is at a major crossroad. With a current resident population of 4521 people, State Government research suggests that over a 15-year period to 2026 the Shire will lose almost a quarter of its population, reducing in number to just 3417 people.

While the data is based on historic trends, it doesn't necessarily predict the future. The projection might make grim reading, but it also stands as a powerful call to action.

This strategy and action plan is a direct response to the challenge facing the Shire. It's a rallying cry that unashamedly targets population growth and retention, with the lofty ambition of reaching 10,000 people by 2050.

It might sound a bit ambitious given the current numbers, but the reality is it has to be ambitious. If the Shire can't aspire to grow, it is unlikely any other level of Government will step in and drive positive opportunities.

Quite simply the Shire needs to get on the front foot and provide the leadership to make investment and opportunities happen, as the current population trend is simply not sustainable.

It won't be an easy job, but through the development of this strategy, Councillors have identified the barriers to success and have stated their conviction to provide the leadership needed to effect positive change. Providing staff with a clear mandate and to make the strategy come to life will be a positive step forward.

Let's quickly break the numbers down:

A target of 10,000 people by 2050 means a total population increase of 5479 people from existing 2014 figures

The Shire has 36 years to reach that target

Broken down as a yearly figure, it represents 152 people per year

This strategy is the first tentative, but aspirational steps on a long journey for West Wimmera Shire.

## How this strategy works:

This strategy is a little different to most of the Economic Development work being produced in local government in Victoria. For a start, the important information, being the action plan, is placed front and centre and is the key focus of the document. It's not a 100+ page report with page after page of graphs and statistics. It's a pragmatic response to the needs of the wider West Wimmera community. It has been developed through authentic consultation with the business community, and with Councillors and staff leaders at West Wimmera Shire. The actions within the strategy are a deliberate response to the resources available to the Shire, as well as the energy that sits within the community, in order for the delivery of the action plan to be achievable.

The strategy will be implemented by West Wimmera Shire, and has been developed with four humble goals in mind, which were generated through an initial strategic planning workshop with Councillors and senior staff.

The four goals that the Shire has set for itself are to:

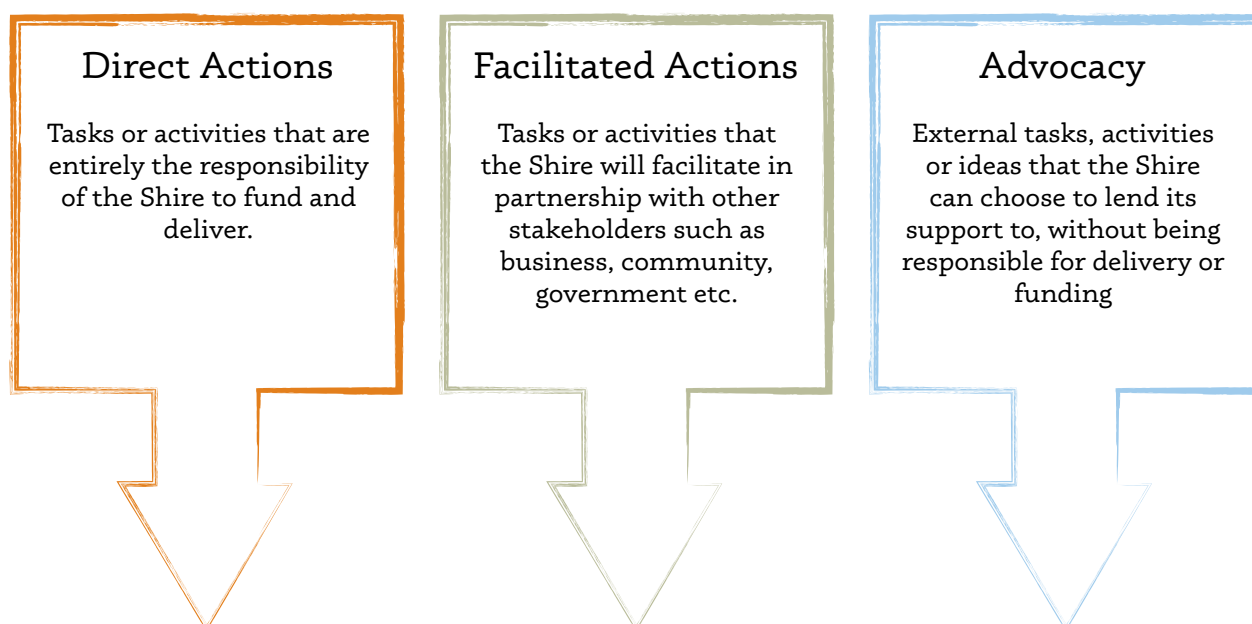
**Be adaptive:** 20 years from now, we want to go forward from where we are at this moment.

**Change perception:** We will change the quality of conversation so people understand the value of West Wimmera Shire.

**Invest:** We will invest in the growth of current and emerging businesses and people

**Be Active:** We will set clear goals, and measure and celebrate our success. A series of objectives were also developed in order for the Shire to be able to measure its performance against these four goals. The objectives, along with the Shire's own measures of success, are listed at the back of the action plan.

Within the strategy, the action plan is broken into three key areas:



# The document is laid out in the following way:

## **Direct Actions and Facilitated Actions**

- Each Direct Action or Facilitated Action is listed on its own page
- The 'high level' idea is explained, anchoring the top of the page
- Descriptions are provided for:
  - why the action should be undertaken;
  - what the benefits are likely to be;
  - who could undertake it; and
  - when it should be undertaken.
- If practical examples exist for similar actions that have successful in other locations, then they will be provided as a brief case study for further reference.

## **Advocacy**

- Ideas or opportunities that would benefit from West Wimmera Shire support will be listed in an action table, with descriptions provided for:
  - why advocacy support should be undertaken;
  - what the benefits are likely to be; and
  - who the Shire could partner with to advocate for support.

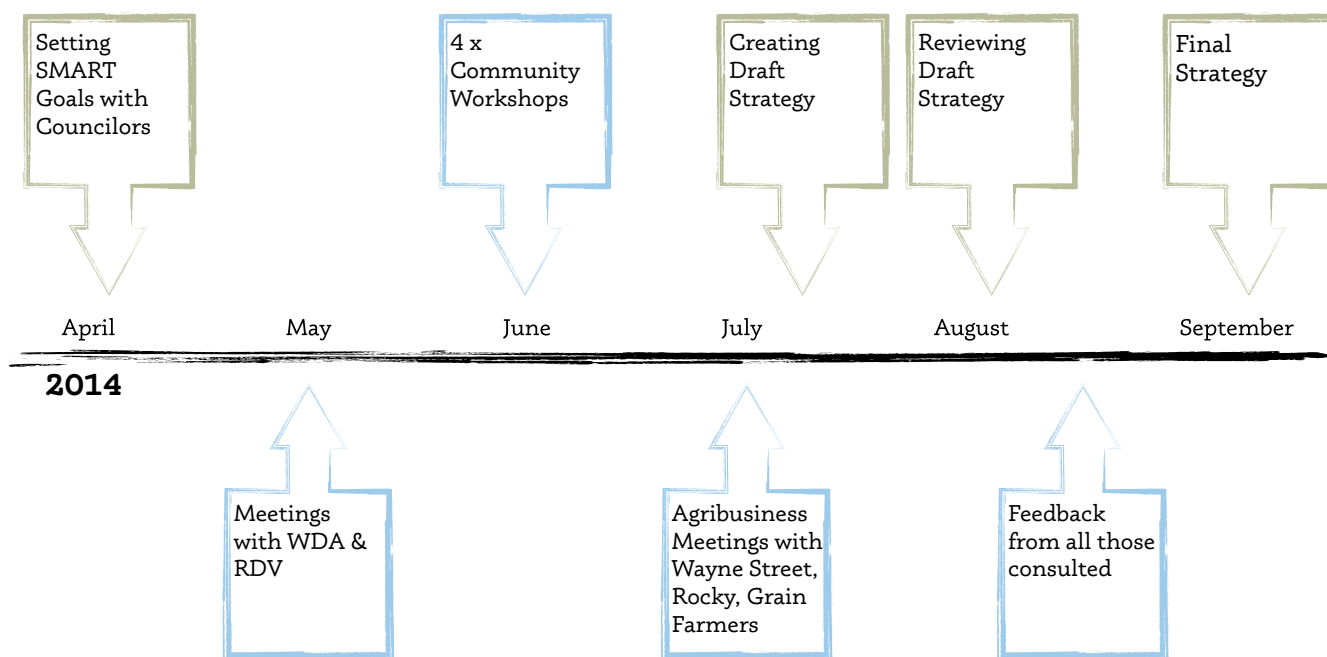
## **What else to look out for:**

- The information and data that helped inform the planning and development of the Strategy is included at the back of this document for reference if you feel the need to take a look.
- The retail related actions within this strategy have been included from West Wimmera Shire's Revitalising Rural Retail Project, completed in March and April 2014 by Socom and Tract as part of the Victorian Government's Streetlife initiative. The full list of actions that resulted from that project are included for reference in this document.
- Throughout the Strategy, the images you see capture the journey of community and stakeholder engagement that was undertaken. It's the story of this strategy as it was shaped by the Shire and wider community. NOTE: As this version is a draft strategy, the images are not included, but fill form part of the final strategy once all feedback has been received on this draft and the final version is ready for completion.
- The strategy aligns with two key documents, being the West Wimmera Shire Council Plan, 2013-2017, and the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Strategic Plan.

# How the strategy was developed:

The diagram below shows the process and steps that were used to undertake the strategy.

## WWSC Economic Development Strategic Plan Our Journey in developing the strategy



## A strong emphasis on agriculture:

The development of the strategy also placed a heavy, but unashamed emphasis on agriculture, given its significance to the West Wimmera economy. As the data utilised in the development of this report shows, agriculture employs just over 50% of the entire West Wimmera workforce, and in 2013 produced \$150m in outputs (gross revenue), and \$132m in regional exports which represented more than 15% of total agricultural exports from the Grampians Region (which is made up of 11 Local Government areas). Within the Grampians Region, a total of 77,000 people are employed, with 2.17% (or 1676 people) working in West Wimmera.\*

At the commencement of the consultation phase, our meetings with West Wimmera Shire determined that the strategy needed to focus on areas that could deliver near-term benefit to the region, providing a platform for further economic growth in the longer term to support population increases.

The engagement process also focussed on the front of mind issues for the region, particularly the impending/announced closure of a number of Graincorp grain delivery and storage sites.



\* Source: Remplan, Grampians RDA

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# DIRECT ACTION 1

**West Wimmera Shire to explore the development of Rural Living Zone and Township Zone subdivisions in Kaniva and Edenhope, and Rural Living Zone subdivisions in Apsley, Harrow and Goroke to provide lifestyle blocks for the real estate market**

## **Why do it?**

- Project research, and consultation throughout the development of the strategy provided a strong indication of ‘lack of housing’ being an issue. When we drilled down locally to ask ‘Why?’, the problem emerged more clearly as a lack of suitable housing for sale and particularly for rental accommodation. This was in line with the findings of the ‘Housing Investment Opportunities in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region’ report.
- WWSC has the resources and skills within its organisational structure to effectively plan for and undertake subdivisions.
- State Government research and the Shire’s own experience from attending the annual Rural Living Expo indicates there is demand from families looking to relocate from city areas in search of affordable housing with plenty of space, and a safe family environment.
- Successful implementation will ensure appropriate land is available for new residents to build on, and will stimulate positive economic outcomes through construction activity.

## **What needs to happen?**

- Undertake a basic planning assessment to determine available land within RLZ and RZ, particularly any land owned by the Shire, or if a planning scheme amendment is required to re-zone land.
- Financial assessment needs to be undertaken to scope the expected project cost and the likely return on investment so Council can make a decision on whether to proceed.
- The ‘Housing Investment Opportunities in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region’ report should be used as a reference document in this process.

## **Who needs to do it?**

- West Wimmera Shire needs to lead the process utilising planning, corporate, finance and infrastructure staff.
- Local real estate agents should be actively kept informed and later involved in the land marketing and sales process.



### **When should it be done by?**

- The project assessment process should begin by January 2015 with a view to considering project delivery costs in the 2015•2016 Shire budget.

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This initiative links to Facilitated action 3. The availability of appropriate land and housing should be actively promoted at the State Government's annual rural living expo.

### **Case study:**

Pyrenees Shire has successfully undertaken two stages of a residential subdivisions over the past decade in order to stimulate housing growth in the township of Beaufort (pop 1004), 50km west of Ballarat. Pyrenees Shire decided to undertake the developments as a trigger for population growth and construction activity after 30 years without a single subdivision taking place in the town. One of the key reasons for a lack of greenfield subdivisions was the low value of real estate, which was attractive for buyers, but created market failure for developers who were unable to make a profit from developments due to the cost of installing infrastructure for subdivisions. Pyrenees Shire made a brave move and stepped into the role of developer, undertaking the subdivisions on a cost recovery basis. The result has been 20 new houses built, with the most recent land release seeing seven of the 9 available blocks sell within two months. The sale of the land includes a contract clause that requires house construction to begin within 12 months of blocks being purchased. The ongoing construction activity and new families moving to the Shire has injecting money into the economy, with construction having one of the strongest multiplier effects of any industry. Pyrenees has plans to undertake an additional 3 stages of the development, which will see some 80 houses built in total, and one of the positive impacts of the project has been an increase in housing prices in the town.



## DIRECT ACTION 2

**West Wimmera Shire should develop an Investment Attraction Taskforce, utilising existing staff and local business people, created specifically to attract new businesses and to support and encourage expansion of existing businesses.**

### **Why do it?**

- For the Shire to pursue its target of population growth, it needs to aggressively attract business and investment that triggers jobs growth, which in turn will have a positive impact on population and the local economy.
- Feedback was received throughout the consultation phase of the project that the Shire provided a good level of support from regulatory areas, but that local businesses were unaware of the support until they started to explore the process of growth and expansion.
- While the feedback is positive, the situation needs to change and business needs to be aware of the Shire's strengths.
- Few councils go to the effort of partnering with their community and knocking on the doors of prospective investors. If West Wimmera can identify likely businesses and investors, and open up positive dialogue to share your unique story with them, it will provide a head start over other Councils.
- Having a multi-disciplinary team that can support businesses to navigate red tape and regulatory needs will ensure a seamless transition when the initial work of chasing investment is converted to planning and building applications and the like.
- If the Shire can develop a first class customer service offering for development projects, then it will provide a unique point of difference within Local Government (particularly small rural Shires) that West Wimmera can actively promote.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The idea or mindset of waiting for investors and business opportunities to knock on the Shire's door needs to be flipped on its head. West Wimmera Shire has the opportunity to build a unique approach where it identifies potential business relocation and investment opportunities, and uses the Investment Attraction Taskforce to start knocking on doors and setting up meetings.
- Proactive and successful local business people need to be included in the team, so that the approach has a strong business grounding, and the work of the Shire is supported by successful businesses that have a track record of making things happen.
- To support the establishment of the Investment Attraction Taskforce, a Strategic Planning session should be undertaken to help the group determine how best to operate, and what its strategic goals should be over a two to three year period.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The process should be led by the executive team, and the Investment Attraction Taskforce should be chaired by someone from outside of Council. It also needs to be a partnership with key staff that work in the regulatory areas of planning, building and engineering, as well as economic development and communications.
- Key local business partners should feature in the Investment Attraction Taskforce, particularly to help identify complementary businesses that could invest in the Shire.
- The planning process to create the team should start in January 2015, with a view to having the team in place by June 2015. The activity if the team will be ongoing from that point..

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

This links to a number of actions in this strategy, including:

- Direct Action 4 the Public Relations strategy.
- Direct Action 5, agribusiness case studies.
- Direct Action 6, high value land uses.
- Facilitated Action 5, soil and water mapping.
- Facilitated Action 6, High value crops.
- Facilitated Action 7, agribusiness joint ventures.

### **Case study**

Ipswich City Council in south east Queensland has successfully transformed its economy and the perception of the city by proactively courting investment. Within the City's own economic development Strategy (2009•2031) it references the open and welcoming approach to new investment and population growth and how this has become an asset. Similar to the idea of an Investment Attraction team, Ipswich has successfully approached and attracted business investment, and its proactive attitude has sent a positive signal to the market and encouraged businesses, developers and individuals to consider Ipswich as a destination for investment and employment. The entrepreneurial approach to the City's development has been vital in achieving many investment outcomes and have been supported by a range of strategies which provide the follow through, stability and consistency of approach to ensure that inquiries are qualified, supported and delivered into new investment. Ipswich has undertaken this work as a partnership between elected Councillors and Staff, and the approach has differentiated the Council from other Local Government Authorities.

## DIRECT ACTION 3

**West Wimmera Shire to undertake an audit of vacant farm houses and vacant housing within existing townships to determine if suitable properties exist to be made available or renovated specifically for the rental market**

### **Why do it?**

- Project research, and consultation throughout the development of the strategy provided a strong indication that ‘lack of housing’ is an issue in West Wimmera Shire. When we drilled down locally to ask ‘Why?’, the problem emerged more clearly as being a lack of ‘suitable’ housing for sale and particularly for rental accommodation. This was in line with the findings of the ‘Housing Investment Opportunities in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region’ report.
- The Shire has had an historically low unemployment rate, which has sat under 5% for more than two decades, and currently sits at 2.5%. This means employers often have to go out of the region in search of workers, but there is little rental accommodation available for workers who want to come into the wider region (not just West Wimmera Shire)
- Mapping vacant housing will not only provide a picture of properties that might be suitable for rent, or suitable for renovation to improve rental opportunities, but might also assist the farm sector to identify houses that could be demolished to free up space on farms and increase productive farm areas.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to communicate directly with farm owners, with township ratepayers and with the real estate industry to get a clear picture of who owns vacant or underutilised housing and might be interested in renting it.  
The housing should then be physically mapped to show exact locations within townships, or proximity to towns.
- The mapping process should include a basic matrix to easily determine a hierarchy of attributes that would make the property appealing to a possible tenant.
- The Real Estate industry needs to be consulted to help establish a clear picture of the type of financial return that is available for a rental, which will assist in determining an appropriate amount of capital expenditure on potential rental properties.
- The project should then select the most suitable houses (i.e. top five) in the Kaniva area and Edenhope/Apsley areas, and the most suitable houses (i.e. top three) in the Goroke and Harrow areas, and undertake a cost estimate to determine the capital works needed to bring the properties up to rental standard.
- Local employers should be kept informed of the project intention and progress, and

invited to indicate their current employment and recruitment needs in order to give property owners confidence that a ready rental market will be available for their property.

**Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire needs to coordinate the project, either utilising internal resources, or engaging an external project manager to run the process as quickly and efficiently as possible.

**When should it be done by?**

The project planning should begin by January 2015, so the project can be included in 2015/2016 budget considerations for delivery in July 2015.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links directly to Facilitated Action 2, a joint Shire and Community project to renovate a rental property.

**Case study 1:**

A number of towns have successfully utilised vacant farm housing to provide low cost rentals in order to attract new residents. The Victorian Town of Wycheproof in the Mallee, successfully followed in the footsteps of Cumnock in New South Wales and Levendale in Tasmania by offering farm houses for rent at just \$1 per week and was inundated with responses. In each case, the farm house rentals project played a role in saving local services such as schools and bus runs, and stimulated economic activity like the opening of a new cafe due to the influx of families. This story from The Age (July 2009) explains the projects [Wycheproof \\$1 rentals](#)

**Case study 2:**

In a similar project, the struggling New South Wales township of Trundle was able to provide farm houses for five families from the city as part of a renewal project to help save their town. The Trundle community was able to leverage the project with a television series called Country Town Rescue, which documented the stories of the town and the five families over a period of 12 months. Country Town Rescue was filmed by Andrew Denton's production company 'Zapruder's Other Films' and resulted in national media coverage when series was aired on ABC1. Here's a link to the program's website [Trundle Country Town Rescue](#)

## DIRECT ACTION 4

**West Wimmera Shire should develop a detailed Public Relations strategy that focuses specifically on generating media coverage that will help change the perception of the Shire, its townships and the opportunities available, including a strong emphasis on agriculture.**

### **Why do it?**

- West Wimmera Shire has an incredible amount of environmental diversity and lifestyle and business opportunity that should be attractive to potential new residents, businesses and investors, particularly in the agriculture industry.
- What the Shire has to offer, and particularly its unique points of difference, is poorly understood outside of the region.
- The Shire has a powerful opportunity to showcase its point of difference, which will assist in competing in a cluttered market against hundreds of other rural areas that face the same challenges and are equally trying to attract new residents and businesses.
- The Shire has existing marketing and promotional material that is quite generic and similar in style to what other regions are producing, which limits its effectiveness in cutting through the clutter.

Placing a strong emphasis on attracting positive media coverage will allow the Shire to promote its niche opportunities and point of difference with a much greater level of depth.

- Media coverage can be far more cost effective for the Shire than paying for advertising, and has a powerful level of authenticity and trust among the consumers of that media. The strategy can directly support the activation of the Kaniva Industrial Estate.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to engage an experienced Public Relations professional to work on the development of the plan.
- The plan should be segmented to align with this Strategy and focus on key media opportunities that help showcase business, residential/lifestyle, and tourism points of difference for West Wimmera Shire.
- As the strategy is implemented, the Shire needs to report back to community on its effectiveness, celebrating the positive media coverage and highlighting the cost benefit outcome for the Shire.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire should seek some outside assistance in writing the project brief, due to its specific needs, and the creation of the Public Relations Strategy by an experienced media consultant should be overseen by the Economic Development Manager.
- Once the strategy has been developed the Shire should consider engaging a skilled public relations professional on a limited ongoing basis to activate the strategy.

### **When should it be done by?**

- The project planning should begin by January 2015, so the project can be included in 2015/2016 budget considerations for delivery in July 2015.

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links directly to all of the initiatives in this Strategy, which should be used as a key reference document for the Public Relations project brief and targeted outcomes .

### **Case study:**

The former Grampians Pyrenees Regional Development Board (GPRDB) achieved national exposure for an employment project by targeting media coverage in order to help boost awareness of available jobs in the region. The partner Councils of Northern Grampians Shire, Pyrenees Shire and Ararat Rural City each contributed \$10,000 to the project, and leveraged a matching \$30,000 from State Government. The money was used predominantly to take full page ads in The Age and Herald Sun newspapers to list the 94 vacant jobs that were available across the region. Each individual job was listed on an employment website, while the newspaper ads also featured comparisons of house prices, rental costs, and mortgage size between the Grampians Pyrenees region and Melbourne suburbs. The GPRDB was able to use the full page ads to 'sell' the story of a jobs boom in the region, and was able to leverage national television coverage on Channel 7 (Today Tonight) in addition to extensive editorial coverage in Victoria in The Age, The Herald Sun, ABC Statewide Radio, and ABC 774 Radio. The value of the media coverage was costed at approximately \$500,000 and more than half of the 94 jobs were filled through the project.

## DIRECT ACTION 5

**West Wimmera Shire should develop 3 powerful case studies of successful agribusinesses. The case studies should be used by the Shire in a concerted campaign to attract more investment to the region.**

### **Why do it?**

- Agriculture is a powerhouse within the West Wimmera Shire economy. For the Shire to pursue its target of population growth, labour intensive industries will be critical to create jobs, which in turn will have a positive impact on population and the local economy..
- The best advertisement for the Shire is the innovative agriculture businesses that already exist there. Promoting their success will ensure the Shire's unique points of difference in agriculture are better understood outside of the region, particularly with potential investors.
- The Shire has existing marketing and promotional material that is quite generic and similar in style to what other regions are producing, which limits its effectiveness in cutting through the clutter.
- Placing a strong emphasis on attracting positive media coverage will allow the Shire to promote its niche opportunities and point of difference with a much greater level of depth.
- A marketing and communications strategy will work seamlessly to provide material that will support the public relations strategy.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to engage an experienced Media and Communications professional to work on the development of the strategy.
- The strategy should have a focus on capturing and sharing existing successful case studies from within the agriculture industry in West Wimmera Shire, starting with Rocky Lamattina and Sons as a high profile business that has been a relatively recent investor in the region and has a powerful story to tell.
- As the strategy is implemented, the Shire needs to report back to community on its effectiveness, celebrating the positive outcomes that the strategy can help facilitate.



**Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire should seek some outside assistance in writing the project brief, due to it's specific needs.
- Delivery of the Strategy should be undertaken by the communications officer, and overseen by the Investment Attraction Team.

**When should it be done by?**

- The project planning should begin by January 2015, so the project can be included in 2015/2016 budget considerations for delivery in July 2015.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links directly to Direct Action 2, as it will support the work of the Investment Attraction Taskforce in their engagement with potential investors. It links to Direct Action 4, the Public Relations Strategy.



## DIRECT ACTION 6

**West Wimmera Shire should support the transitioning of agricultural production to the highest value uses.**

### **Why do it?**

- Agriculture is a powerhouse within the West Wimmera Shire economy. Over time there should be a gradual shift to higher value production, particularly with respect to irrigated agriculture. This happens because the higher value sectors can afford to pay more for the water (or the land with water rights attached) than a lower value producer.
- Higher value sectors are generally more intensive, requiring higher labour input and utilising more regional resources. All of this has the potential to expand the regional economy in West Wimmera.

### **What needs to happen?**

- We believe that West Wimmera should have a stated aim of facilitating a shift to higher value agriculture.
- The Shire needs to actively include this goal within its key strategic documents, within future Regional Strategic Plans in partnership with State Government, and within active organisational strategies and actions plans.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The initiative needs to be led by the Shire's Councillors and Executive Team.

### **When should it be done by?**

- The transitioning will happen over time, with Shire support required in an ongoing fashion until the stated aim is represented in all Strategic documents and activities.

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links to Direct Action 2 the Investment Attraction Taskforce, and will support their engagement with potential investors and future funding support and delivery from State Government.
- There is also a direct link to Facilitated Action 5, mapping soil and water resources to identify high value sites for intensive agriculture.



## DIRECT ACTION 7

**A detailed resident and business study should be undertaken to determine the level of escaped expenditure from West Wimmera Shire.**

### **Why do it?**

- Every local or regional economy has some level of escaped expenditure, which presents a significant opportunity for West Wimmera Shire to leverage within the local economy. The information captured in the study will help to identify product and service gaps that exist in the local economy.
- Understanding the product and service gaps in the local economy will allow existing businesses to consider expanding their service or product offering to fill those gaps.
- The information will provide West Wimmera Shire with a strong platform to target new business and investment, potentially filling vacant shops within townships, and also activating the Shire's Kaniva Industrial Estate.
- For the Shire to grow its population base, it is critical that a growing range of products and services are available, both to retain existing residents, and also to assist in attracting new residents.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The study needs to be coordinated by an experienced research consultancy and has to be as comprehensive as possible so that the data captured has enough depth to provide genuine value and a clarity around opportunities.
- The results of the study should be actively used at the annual Regional Living Expo in Melbourne to promote business opportunities within West Wimmera Shire.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The process needs to be overseen by West Wimmera Shire, potentially in partnership with Wimmera Development Association and Regional Development Victoria, and could be coordinated by the research arm of a regional university such as Federation University, Latrobe or Deakin.

### **When should it be done by?**

- The project should be budgeted for 2015/2016 and delivered from February 2016.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The study links to the ongoing activation of the Revitalising Rural Retail Project.
- The study should be used to support Direct Action 2, the Investment Attraction Taskforce, as it will provide an indication of where direct business opportunities exist.



## DIRECT ACTION 8

**West Wimmera Shire should develop a mobile phone and tablet application specifically to communicate with former residents.**

### **Why do it?**

- Like many rural areas, West Wimmera Shire loses a significant number of people between the age of 18 and 30, who leave the region for tertiary education and employment opportunities.
- Many people who have left the region still have strong ties and a positive local connection to the area, but are not aware of the positive opportunities that are happening.
- The app will allow the Shire to communicate with former residents in a modern way, sharing media coverage, projects, opportunities and progress in a simple bite sized way that reflects how people communicate utilising mobile platforms.
- Once set up, the app can be easily managed using existing staff resources without generating much additional workload.
- The app will provide an opportunity to directly promote available jobs to former residents who grew up in the area.
- The app will also present council with an opportunity to automate the collection of significant amounts of data to show where former residents are living, and what they are doing. This will make it easier to share relevant information with the right people.

### **What needs to happen?**

- A simple project brief needs to be developed for the creation of the app and circulated to a number of app developers to determine the cost of development.

### **Who needs to do it?**

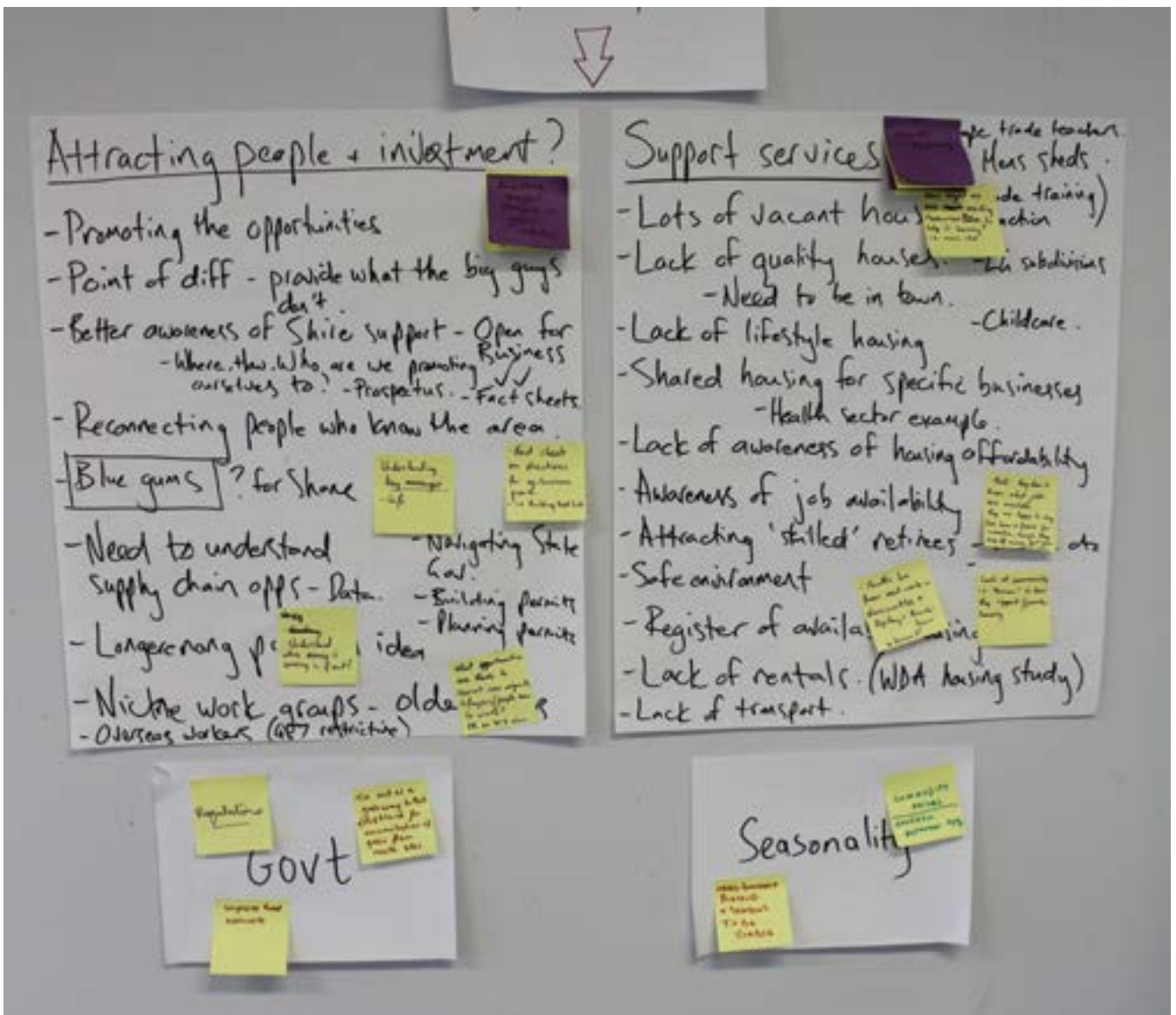
- The process should be managed by the Shire from within its Economic Development and Communications area.

**When should it be done by?**

- The brief should be developed by January 2015 so that costs can be determined and the project can be included in the 2015/2016 budget.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This action links to Direct Action 4, the Detailed Public Relations strategy, as the stories created through the PR strategy will provide content for the app.



## DIRECT ACTION 9

**West Wimmera Shire should develop a business database and undertake an annual survey of all businesses within the Shire to improve the quality of information at its disposal and enhance its ability to provide timely and effective support to businesses.**

### **Why do it?**

- The Shire has a strong knowledge of its local business sector and good relationships with business, but there is a lack of data and information to support quality decision making.
- Developing a detailed database will make it easier for staff and Councillors to have the information at its disposal to make effective decisions.
- The quality of information will also support Council in any future funding applications where background data and information is required by Government.
- The database will dramatically improve the Shire's ability to communicate with all businesses, and particularly with specific business sectors..

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire should explore options for a cloud-based information system to use as a platform for its business survey.
- Once a platform has been chosen, the Shire should allocate a dedicated staff member for a set period of time to undertake an initial survey and populate the system. This is likely to involve a combination of businesses completing online surveys, and the Shire manually submitting hard copy surveys that have been completed by businesses who do not utilise email or have online access.
- The Shire should provide an incentive or prize program to encourage businesses to complete the survey,
- Businesses that don't complete the survey should be followed up directly with a phone call and encouraged to complete the survey over the phone.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The initiative needs to be led from the Shire's Economic Development area, with admin support as needed.



### **When should it be done by?**

- The preferred platform should be chosen by January 2015 so that costs (if any) can be budgeted for.
- Once a platform has been selected and set up, surveys should be distributed in June 2015.

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This action will directly support the implementation of Facilitated Action 9, the Revitalising Rural Retail program, and a significant number of other work undertaken by Council.

### **Case study:**

A number of small rural councils have successfully developed and managed business databases that have become powerful tools for information and communication. Ararat Rural City developed a detailed database of more than 500 business and 800 agribusinesses, by using its rate database to help circulate two specific surveys to the ag and non-ag business sectors. Ararat increased its survey uptake by offering incentives to complete the survey on time, and then went to the effort of directly contacting those that failed to complete the survey in an effort to start with a database that was as comprehensive as possible. The process allowed businesses to indicate when or if they were considering investing, and their projections for staff increases or decreases, and had the benefit of supporting Ararat Rural City to align and allocate its limited Economic Development resource in the right areas. Since Ararat initiated its database, the advent of affordable cloud based CRM systems such as Sales Force also present exciting possibilities

for West Wimmera Shire.

## DIRECT ACTION 10

**West Wimmera Shire should plan and deliver streetscape improvements within the towns of Edenhope, Apsley, Goroke, Harrow and Kaniva.**

### **Why do it?**

- The quality and amenity of streetscapes is a critical factor in the performance of retail and business areas.
  - Improvements to streetscapes will send a positive message to property owners and has proven to be a stimulus for private investment along streetscapes.
  - Feedback during the consultation process showed a high level of community support for the beautification works already carried out in Kaniva. Similarly, feedback also indicated a strong community desire for similar works to be undertaken in other towns, particularly in Edenhope, Apsley and Kaniva.
  - The action aligns with West Wimmera Shire's Council Plan, particularly the actions that relate to Township Amenity planning and public art policies.
- Involving local community in the process will ensure strong ownership and buy-in within each town.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to develop a five year plan that allows for the design and delivery of one streetscape enhancement each year.
- The Shire needs to work with Regional Development Victoria and Regional Development Australia in the planning phase, with a view to securing Regional Growth Plan funding for each project. This will give the Shire an opportunity to leverage a 3:1 funding ratio that will support the planning and delivery of the streetscape enhancements.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The project needs to be led by the Shire's executive team in close collaboration with Regional Development Victoria.
- Councillors need to support the process by having the confidence to adopt and support a 5-year plan for streetscape improvements, as the process will run across more than one Council election cycle.

### **When should it be done by?**

- Budget planning should start in September 2014 for inclusion in the 2015•2016 budget.
- Detailed project planning and annual works should begin from January 2016 to allow for quality consultation prior to the first of the five projects being undertaken.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links directly to the Council Plan, 2013•2017, particularly the improvement of township amenity.

**Case study 1:**

Hepburn Shire has successfully undertaken a Streetscape Planning and Design project for five rural communities. Funded through a partnership with Regional Development Victoria, the project has seen a specialist landscape design firm engaged to undertake community consultation with the towns of Clunes, Creswick, Trentham, Hepburn Springs and Glenlyon. The community consultation has been used to directly shape and influence the design of streetscape upgrades in each town. Once the detailed planning work is completed, Hepburn Shire Councillors have committed to a five year budget plan to deliver one streetscape upgrade project each year for five years.

**Case study 2:**

Ararat Rural City undertook a major overhaul of its Barkly Street Shopping strip over a five year period. Similar to Hepburn Shire, and project was funded in partnership with State Government, and saw a section of footpath and streetscape works undertaken each year for five years. The project was managed internally by Ararat Rural City, with an external contractor engaged to undertake the physical works for each phase of the project. Ararat Rural City chose to start the project in a single block of Barkly Street that contained the most empty shops. By the time the first phase was completed, the entire block was fully tenanted, with a number of businesses and landlords undertaking their own works to improve their shop fronts and infrastructure.

# DIRECT ACTION 11

**West Wimmera Shire should develop a clear plan for the promotion of the Kaniva Industrial Estate, and investigate the potential to expand the Edenhope Industrial Estate.**

## **Why do it?**

- Having invested in the development of the Kaniva Industrial Estate, the logical next step for the Shire is to ensure it actively promotes the opportunity for businesses to invest in the site.
- Given the strong focus in this strategy on job activation, the Kaniva Industrial Estate provides the perfect vehicle to support efforts by the Shire to attract investment, and to encourage the expansion of existing businesses.
- A number of initiatives within this strategy provide a perfect platform to support the promotion of the Kaniva Industrial Estate, particularly the Investment Attraction Taskforce, the Public Relations Campaign, the Rural Living Expo, and the former resident smart phone and tablet App.
- Having gone through the process of developing the Kaniva estate, the Shire has a stronger body of knowledge to now consider a similar project at Edenhope, and to successfully plan and deliver an outcome.

## **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to use the existing actions within this strategy to shape a basic promotional plan for the Kaniva Estate, and allocate times and responsibility to staff for delivery.
- Council needs to provide the Executive Team with direction to prepare a report on the possible expansion of the Edenhope Industrial Estate.
- The Executive Team needs to open discussions with State Government regarding Edenhope early in the planning process.

## **Who needs to do it?**

- The Executive Team needs to have oversight of both projects, with the Kaniva Industrial Estate promotion being delivered by the communications officer.

### **When should it be done by?**

- Planning for the Kaniva Industrial Estate promotion should start immediately and run concurrently with the other Economic Development Strategy actions that it is aligned with.
- Exploration and planning for the Edenhope Industrial Estate expansion should start in January 2015, with a view to achieving a clear direction to proceed by July 2015, so that project planning can start and the project can be included in the 2016•2017 budget for delivery.

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The dual aspects of this project links directly to a number of actions in this strategy, including:
  - Direct Action 2, the Investment Attractions Taskforce
  - Direct Action 4, the Detailed Public Relations Campaign.
  - Direct Action 5, the Agribusiness Case Studies.
  - Facilitated Action 3, the Rural Living Expo promotion.



# FACILITATED ACTION 1

**West Wimmera Shire should create a peer-to-peer learning program with a well resourced Regional or Metropolitan Council in Victoria or South Australia, to assist its staff to develop new skills and undertake complex projects.**

## **Why do it?**

- It's a simple fact of life that most small rural councils operate with smaller staff structures and lean operations due to financial constraints.
- Larger councils often need to deal with higher levels of complexity, and as a result need to have specialist staff that are highly skilled in particular areas, particularly around investment attraction.
- Given budget constraints, developing a Memorandum of Understanding with a larger council and a peer to peer learning program has the potential to save significant money for West Wimmera Shire through being able to source expert advice, ideas or direct assistance without the need to engage consultants or contractors to do the work.
- For larger regional councils, the opportunity for staff to potentially spend time in a smaller rural council can have significant benefits in helping their personal development and growth, particularly those staff looking to grow and develop skills in training, project management, staff management etc.

## **What needs to happen?**

- West Wimmera Shire should undertake a basic assessment of staff development opportunities and customer needs to identify the areas where additional support and development would have the most positive impact.
- The Shire should look at the staff structures of larger, better resourced councils, and determine where there are synergies or unique shared interests that would make a peer to peer learning program beneficial for both parties.
- West Wimmera Shire could possibly seek input from State Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria in helping to identify an ideal larger council to partner with.

## **Who needs to do it?**

- The process should be instigated by West Wimmera Shire's executive team, with support

and input from staff at all levels.

**When should it be done by?**

- Work should start immediately, with a view to having the program in place by January 2015.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This action links to all of this strategy.

**Case study:**

In 2011, The New South Wales Government, through its Department of Premier and Cabinet, published a survey report on Collaborative Arrangements Between Councils. The survey was primarily focussed on shared services and projects across local government areas, however, it revealed that a key benefit of collaboration with other councils was improved access to technical expertise, high quality work and consistency. The study also highlighted that Leadership and Organisational Culture was critical to the success of Council to Council collaboration, and that there was a need for strong leadership by Councillors and Council staff in order for the arrangements to be successful.



## FACILITATED ACTION 2

**West Wimmera Shire should partner with interested communities to run a pilot project to activate an empty house within the community to provide rental accommodation for workers.**

### **Why do it?**

- Project research, and consultation throughout the development of the strategy provided a strong indication that ‘lack of housing’ is an issue in West Wimmera Shire. When we drilled down locally to ask ‘Why?’, the problem emerged more clearly as being a lack of ‘suitable’ housing for sale and particularly for rental accommodation. This was in line with the findings of the ‘Housing Investment Opportunities in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region’ report.
- The Shire has had an historically low unemployment rate, which has sat under 5% for more than two decades, and currently sits at 2.5%. This means employers often have to go out of the region in search of workers, but there is little rental accommodation available for workers who want to come into the wider region (not just West Wimmera Shire)
- During the project consultation, there was considerable energy emerging from the Edenhope and Apsley communities around tackling the challenge of available rental accommodation through a collaborative community project. A number of people were prepared to put their hand up to work on the idea, and the Shire should support this energy by helping the community to make it happen.
- Running the pilot project clearly links to Direct Action 2 of this strategy, an audit of vacant town and farm houses, and will act as a catalyst for that project by showing what’s possible with activating a house, so that the audit can be translated into further positive action.
- The project provides an opportunity to bring together key community groups, and can support the skill development of secondary school students interested in developing trade skills.
- The project also provides an opportunity for a low-cost, innovative solution by upcycling the use of old homes. particularly any farm houses that are shown through the Housing Audit project (Action x) to be relocatable.



### **What needs to happen?**

- Direct Action 2 in this strategy should be used to identify a house within Edenhope or Apsley (or both) that could be made available for this pilot project.
- Consideration should be given to exploring a social enterprise model where the eventual ownership of the house could rest with the local community so that the rental income can be used to generate ongoing community benefit.
- The 'Housing Investment Opportunities in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region' report should be used as a reference document in this process.
- Trade teachers at Edenhope College were spoken of glowingly when this idea was raised in the Strategy consultation phase, and the College should be invited to be part of the project.
- The project needs to be leveraged in the media as a good news story, to showcase how the local community is making positive change and tackling the housing challenge in a productive way.
- Local employers should be kept informed of the project intention and progress, and invited to indicate their current employment and recruitment needs so that a potential tenant can be identified quickly.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire needs to act as project manager, bringing together the interested community members to instigate action on the project.

### **When should it be done by?**

- The project should begin immediately (September 2014) so that the momentum that emerged during the consultation phase of the strategy is not lost..

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links to Direct Action 4, the Detailed Public Relations Strategy.

## FACILITATED ACTION 3

**West Wimmera Shire should support interested local investors to identify low cost and innovative housing and rental accommodation that can be established quickly to service large investments that require an influx of workers.**

### **Why do it?**

- West Wimmera Shire has indicated that large intensive agricultural investments are being considered for the Shire, which have the potential to create a significant number of jobs that will require accommodation for workers on site or close to investments.
- The Shire has had an historically low unemployment rate, which has sat under 5% for more than two decades, and currently sits at 2.5%. This means employers often have to go out of the region in search of workers, but there is little rental accommodation available for workers who want to come into the wider region (not just West Wimmera Shire)
- Other actions within this strategy are designed to improve housing options and outcomes over time, which will gradually cater for an increasing number of workers. This action is specifically targeted at catering for large investments that might generate the need for an influx of workers in a specific remote location.
- During the project consultation, there was genuine interest emerging from workshop participants about wanting to service large investments with low cost accommodation options to cater for workers. A number of people were prepared to put their hand up to work on the idea, and the Shire should work with this interest.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire should start by meeting with interested local investors to test interest in the idea.
- If there is a genuine desire to explore opportunities, the Shire should play a facilitation role for the group, coordinating meetings, research and potentially visits to look at existing products and facilities.
- Should a project opportunity become available, the Shire should be prepared and willing to provide timely and supportive planning assistance to ensure any investment opportunities are priorities and processed quickly.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire's Economic Development and Planning staff need to be actively involved. Local investors need to drive the opportunity and take up the Shire's offer of support.

**When should it be done by?**

- The project should begin in January 2015.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links to Direct Action 2, the creation of an Investment Attraction Taskforce, which is likely to trigger opportunities in this area.



## FACILITATED ACTION 4

**West Wimmera Shire should partner with local employers and business owners to directly promote 'live' job opportunities and 'businesses for sale' at the annual Regional Victoria Living Expo in Melbourne**

### **Why do it?**

- Victorian State Government research has shown that availability of employment is a major influencing factor when city people are considering relocating to a regional area
- The annual Regional Living Expo in Melbourne attracts upwards of 10,000 people each year, putting West Wimmera Shire in direct contact with people who are already interested in relocating to a regional area.
- Taking live jobs to the expo will provide a direct 'call to action' for Melbourne families to turn their interest in a 'tree change' into making the move.
- Providing a list of businesses that are for sale will provide a direct 'call to action' for people looking for a business opportunity.

The initiative will provide a low-cost option for employers to promote vacant roles to a significant audience.

State Government provides \$10,000 towards the cost of attending the expo, so there is a ready budget available.

### **What needs to happen?**

- Every business in the Shire needs to be informed about the initiative well in advance of the Expo, so that they can consider their employment needs, and potentially position any vacancies or expansion of staff around. Similarly businesses owners looking to sell their business can plan in advance to use the expo as a marketing opportunity.
- The Shire needs to coordinate a listing of the available jobs online, so that expo attendees can follow-up the roles and submit applications accordingly.
- Interested employers, particularly those with multiple vacancies, should be encouraged to attend the expo and meet people first hand, as their ability to share their positive story of life in West Wimmera Shire will be a compelling sales opportunity.
- Employers that aren't regular recruiters should be supported with up to date Human Resources information and a flow chart to guide them through the steps of dealing with job applications and undertaking recruitment so they know what to expect and how to

support city based job applicants.

**Who needs to do it?**

- West Wimmera Shire needs to coordinate the project each year, in partnership with local stakeholder groups (chambers of commerce, progress associations etc) and particularly with larger employers such as the health and education sectors.

**When should it be done by?**

- The expo is held in early April each year, and planning and communication should start at least 6 months in advance in October each year.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This links to Direct Action 1, Housing Subdivisions, and Direct Action 7 Escaped Expenditure (to highlight business opportunities).
- The project also links to Facilitated Action 2, Housing activation pilot, as this initiatives progresses over time it should be promoted at the Regional Living Expo.



## FACILITATED ACTION 5

**West Wimmera Shire should coordinate an annual tourism symposium with Local Tourism Associations and businesses to help facilitate an ongoing action plan for the local industry to implement.**

### **Why do it?**

- While Tourism is a small component of West Wimmera Shire's economy (employing 60 people and generating \$2.4m in wages and salaries) it is relatively high yielding, generating close to \$10m in annual outputs.
- West Wimmera Shire has limited staff resources in the Economic Development area, and currently provides ongoing secretarial support to local tourism associations without any specific intent around the strategic value of it support. While the support is beneficial for the tourism industry, it is to the detriment of other industries in West Wimmera Shire that represent a much larger proportion of the Shire's economy.
- A tourism symposium would provide an opportunity to transform the way the Shire supports tourism, and stage a high value annual event that supports Local Tourism Associations (LTAs) and individual tourism businesses to develop annual action plans that are outcomes focussed.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The event should be coordinated by West Wimmera Shire in partnership with industry stakeholders.
- The symposium should be part inspiration and education, featuring a keynote speaker and inspiring peer stories from within the industry, and part planning, using a well structured workshop approach to help LTAs and businesses determine a set of collaborative goals and actions for the coming 12 months.
- The goals and actions should be aligned with Wimmera Mallee Tourism wherever possible.
- LTAs and businesses can then report back on their progress against the goals and actions, which will assist in showing that the Shire's support in coordinating the symposium has had a positive impact, rather than putting time into ad-hoc secretarial support with no reporting mechanism.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- West Wimmera Shire should take the lead on organising the symposium, with support from LTAs and Wimmera Mallee Tourism, particularly around event content and topics, to ensure relevance with the industry.

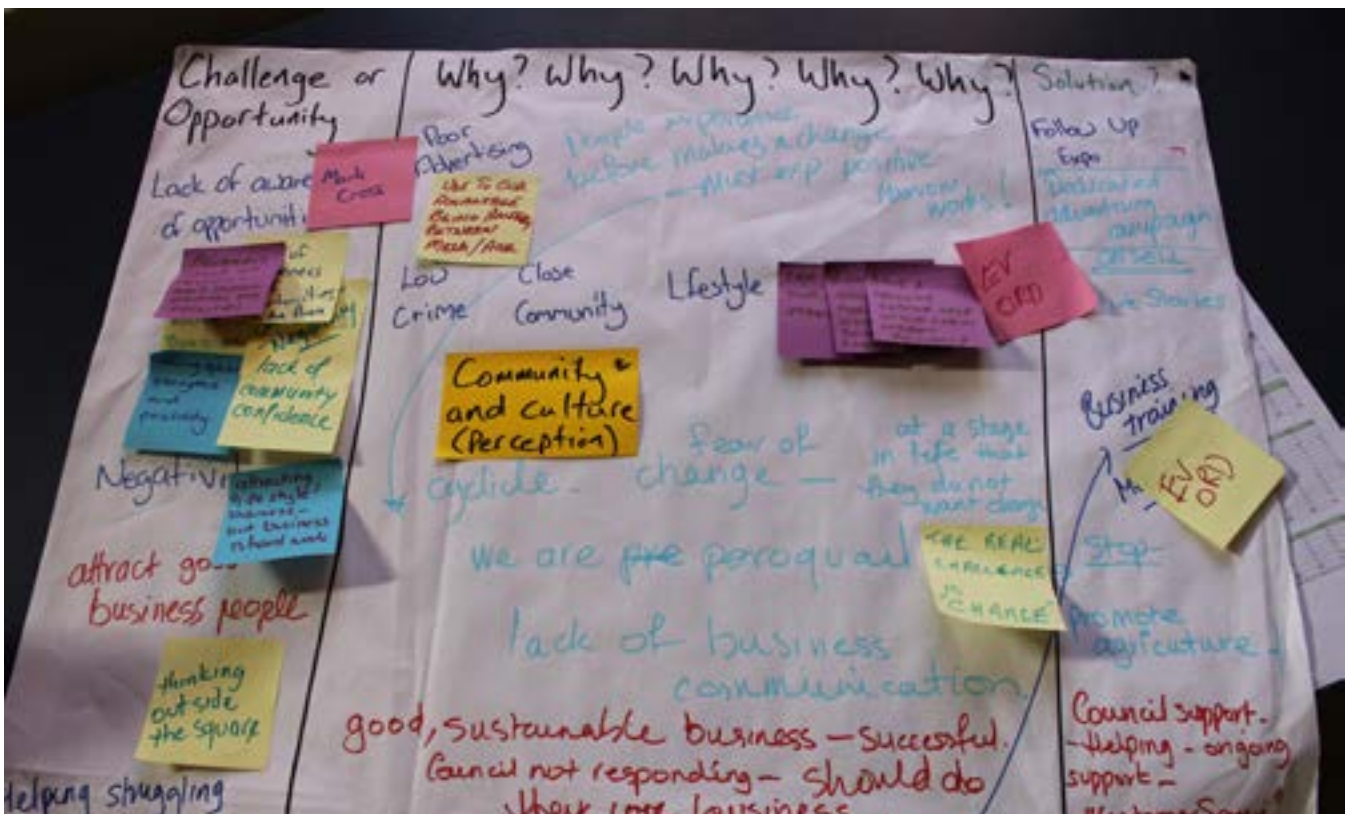
**When should it be done by?**

- Planning should start in January 2015 with a view to running the first symposium in late winter or early spring at the latest.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

**Case study:**

Commerce Ballarat runs a highly successful annual event called Business Big Day Out. The event brings businesses together to facilitate networking, expert presentations and peer to peer learning that introduces businesses to cutting edge ideas and best practice. In addition to attracting significant attendance, the event provides additional marketing and promotion through positive media coverage and participant feedback.



## FACILITATED ACTION 6

**West Wimmera Shire should seek funding support to accurately map soil and water resources in order to identify high value sites for intensive agriculture.**

### **Why do it?**

- Agriculture is a powerhouse within the West Wimmera Shire economy, but a lack of strategic planning work has been undertaken to support the industry.
- Areas that have the ideal mix of high quality soils and secure access to groundwater provide the two essential ingredients for intensive agriculture.
- This will facilitate a gradual shift to higher value production, particularly with respect to irrigated agriculture. This happens because the higher value sectors can afford to pay more for the water (or the land with water rights attached) than a lower value producer.
- Higher value sectors are generally more intensive, requiring higher labour input and utilising more regional resources. All of this has the potential to expand the regional economy in West Wimmera.

### **What needs to happen?**

- There is a high likelihood that there have already been extensive soil and aquifer studies completed. If is the case, then West Wimmera can facilitate bringing this information together in a practical form to help guide regional investment and to attract more intensive agribusiness operators to the region.
- If it has not been done, then there is merit in considering the positive benefits that such a resource could have from the perspective of economic development and planning.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The initiative needs to be led by the Shire and funded in partnership with State Government and Regional Development Australia.
- Consideration could be given to undertaking the project on a larger scale regional basis in partnership with neighboring councils and stakeholders such as Wimmera Development Association.



- The work would need to be undertaken by a specialist consultant or tertiary researcher.

**When should it be done by?**

- 2016

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links directly to Direct Action 2, Investment Attraction Taskforce, and will support their engagement with potential investors and future funding support and delivery from State Government.
- There is also a direct link to Direct Action 6, supporting a Shift to Higher Value Agricultural uses.



## FACILITATED ACTION 7

**West Wimmera Shire should seek funding support to commission a study focussed on identifying the types of high value crops that are suited to the soils and climate of the West Wimmera.**

### **Why do it?**

- Agriculture is a powerhouse within the West Wimmera Shire economy, but a lack of strategic planning work has been undertaken to support the industry.
- This work will allow West Wimmera Shire to develop a much more focused strategy to attract new investment into the region.
- Given the success of the Lamattina business, there is clearly scope to broaden the range of high value crops that can be grown in West Wimmera Shire.
- This will support West Wimmera Shire's intent to facilitate a gradual shift to higher value production, particularly with respect to irrigated agriculture. This happens because the higher value sectors can afford to pay more for the water (or the land with water rights attached) than a lower value producer.
- Higher value sectors are generally more intensive, requiring higher labour input and utilising more regional resources. All of this has the potential to expand the regional economy in West Wimmera.

### **What needs to happen?**

- Any such study would need to give consideration to the distance to market, which lends itself to produce that has good shelf life and can handle long distance haulage.
- The focus should be on annual crops rather than perennial tree crops, at least in the first instance, as the cost of developing greenfield sites is a significant hurdle

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The initiative needs to be led by the Shire and funded in partnership with State Government and Regional Development Australia.
- Similar to the soils and water resource mapping project, consideration could be given to undertaking this action on a larger scale regional basis in partnership with neighboring councils and stakeholders such as Wimmera Development Association.

- The work would need to be undertaken by a specialist consultant or tertiary researcher.

**When should it be done by?**

- 2016

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links to Direct Action 2 the Investment Attraction Taskforce, and will support their engagement with potential investors and particularly farmers looking to diversify their operations within the Shire.
- There is also a direct link to Direct Action 6, supporting a Shift to Higher Value Agricultural uses.



## FACILITATED ACTION 8

**West Wimmera Shire should consider the development of a strategy to promote joint•ventures between West Wimmera farmers and vegetable producers located in areas where there are significant urban encroachment issues.**

### **Why do it?**

- West Wimmera has good soils, abundant water, an ideal climate and few urban encroachment issues.
- Farmers located in areas such as Werribee, Cranbourne, Mornington Peninsula and Bacchus Marsh are significantly constrained as a consequence of urban growth pressures.
- There are many examples of growers that have shifted to a regional focus and been very successful, with West Wimmera boasting one of the best examples in Rocky Lamattina & Sons.
- Matching farmers with farmers through joint ventures has the potential to increase the rate at which the shift to higher value agriculture occurs.
- Higher value sectors are generally more intensive, requiring higher labour input and utilising more regional resources. All of this has the potential to expand the regional economy in West Wimmera.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to look at engaging an experienced investment attraction specialist who can support interested farmers to step through the joint•venture process.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The initiative needs to be instigated by the Shire in partnership with Regional Development Victoria, Invest Victoria, and led by an experienced investment attraction specialist.

### **When should it be done by?**

- The project should be scheduled for 2017, or earlier if funding availability is evident.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links to Direct Action 2 the Investment Attraction Taskforce, and will support their engagement with potential investors and future funding support and delivery from State Government.
- There is also a direct link to Facilitated Action 5, mapping soil and water resources to identify high value sites for intensive agriculture.
- The project links to Direct Action 5, creating agribusiness case studies, which will help to provide some supporting evidence in a storytelling format for this action.



## FACILITATED ACTION 9

**West Wimmera Shire should facilitate the establishment of a grower controlled grain receival and storage business in Kaniva.**

### **Why do it?**

- The recent announcement by Graincorp that it is closing its Kaniva receival facility has created a pressing issue for West Wimmera grain growers, but also an opportunity within the marketplace.
- There is already a group of progressive farmers in the Kaniva area who have discussed the idea with Council, and that energy around the project needs to be harnessed and supported.
- In other grain growing regions of Victoria, such as the Southern Mallee, there have been similar scenarios play out, providing some guide as to what is possible if grain growers seek a collective solution.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to determine the level of interest from local producers to undertake such an initiative.
- If enough interest exists, the Shire needs to confirm what kind of assistance and facilitation the producers require, and then actively work with key partners such as State Government to ensure the support is available make it happen.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire needs to facilitate the process, but the initiative needs to be led by producers, who should feel confident that they have Council support.

### **When should it be done by?**

- Given the announcement regarding the Kaniva facility, and the uncertainty around Lillimur, the project needs to be undertaken immediately (from Aug 2014).

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- The project links to Direct Action 2, the Investment Attraction Taskforce, but realistically may be completed before the taskforce can be established, given the strong energy around the project and the pressing need.



# FACILITATED ACTION 10

**West Wimmera Shire should partner with key stakeholders in Kaniva and Edenhope to implement the Revitalising Rural Retail Project action plans.**

## **Why do it?**

- The strategic work for the project has already been completed through Streetlife funding.
- The project provides a focus for retail support in the key shopping strip locations of Kaniva and Edenhope.
- Retail services are a critical component of township amenity, and any improvements experienced in the local retail industry will support the Shire's endeavors to grow population by attracting new residents to the Shire.
- The action supports West Wimmera Shire's Council Plan, particularly by aligning with the actions that relate to Township Amenity planning.

Involving local community in the process will ensure strong ownership and buy-in within each town.

## **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to incorporate the actions outlined in the Revitalising Rural Retail Project into its departmental action plans, and the work plans of individual staff to ensure there is accountability for project delivery.
- The Shire needs to look at funding opportunities from the arts and philanthropic sectors to support some of the project actions which have an arts and amenity focus.
- The action plans within the two respective strategies need to have an accountability framework developed, outlining who will take responsibility for the action and when each action should be undertaken.

## **Who needs to do it?**

- The project needs to be led by the respective communities, with Retail stakeholders leading the process and the Shire's economic development and community area providing support as required.

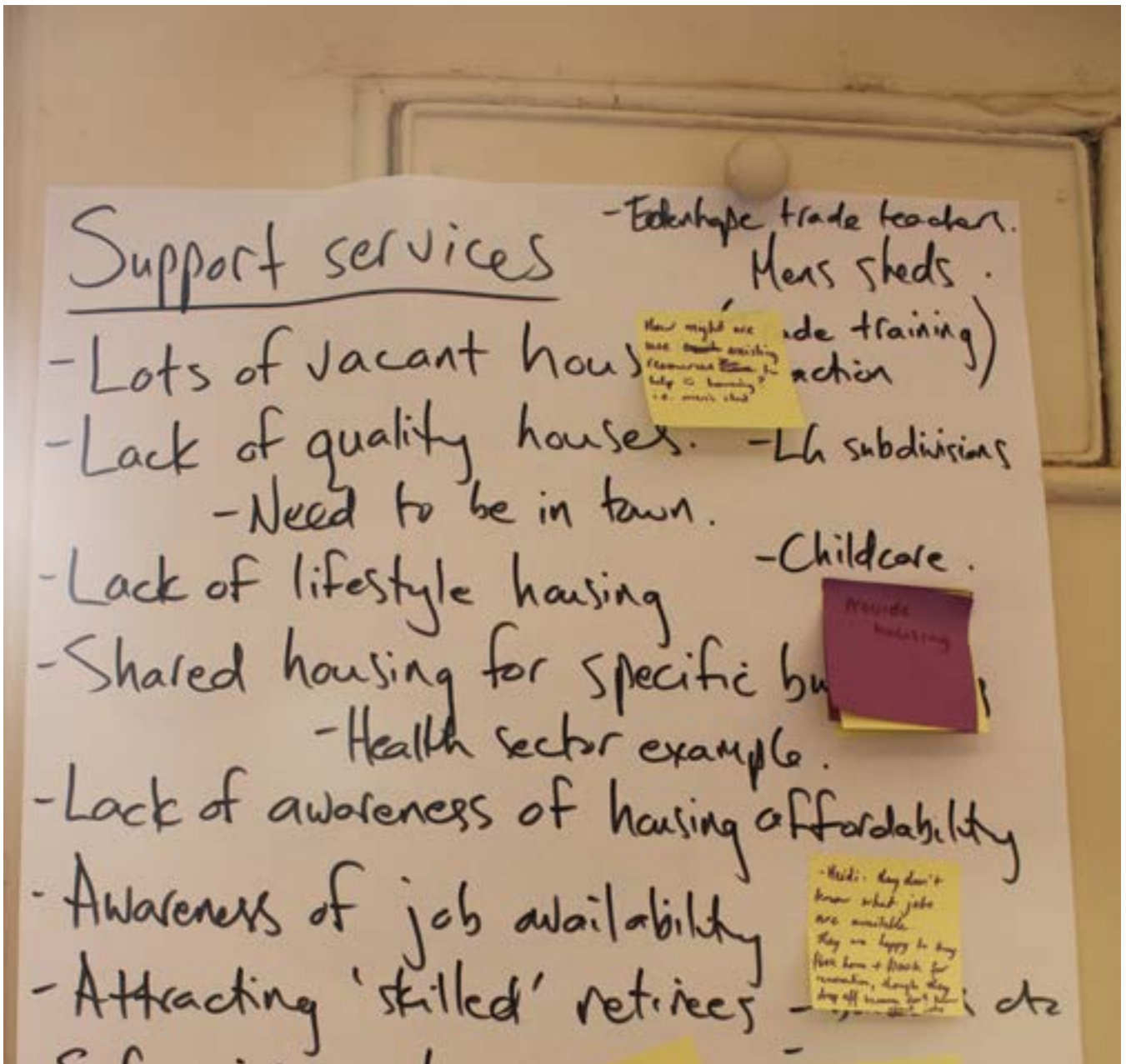
## **When should it be done by?**

- Consultation should begin with the stakeholder groups in September 2014, with the immediate focus to be on developing the accountability framework so that a timeline can be established for the delivery of each action.



**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This project links to Direct Action 9, the Business Database, which will support the delivery of this action.
- The project links directly to the two Revitalising Rural Retail Project Action Plans.



# FACILITATED ACTION 11

**West Wimmera Shire should work with local stakeholders (progress associations/chambers of commerce) to encourage and support all businesses to adopt use of EFTPOS technology.**

## **Why do it?**

- It might sound surprising in 2014 to be advocating for the use of EFTPOS (Electronic Funds Transfer Point Of Sale), but a significant number of businesses in West Wimmera Shire do not use or offer EFTPOS services for customers.
- It is a basic customer expectation that EFTPOS is available within businesses, and not having EFTPOS presents a poor level of customer service.
- Limited availability of Automatic Teller Machines across the Shire means that businesses without EFTPOS are missing out on visitor expenditure from passing trade and customers who are unable to access cash withdrawal, or prefer not to use cash.

## **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire needs to work with business stakeholder groups and local banks to quickly determine which businesses in each town are not currently utilising EFTPOS.
- A simple guide to the benefits of employing EFTPOS technology needs to be shared with those businesses.
- The business engagement should include a simple flowchart that explains the process of setting up EFTPOS.
- The information should be shared with businesses in a face to face process to ensure their needs are understood, particularly any fears that may be held.

## **Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire should coordinate the process, with local progress associations/chambers of commerce and local banks undertaking the face to face contact with businesses.

## **When should it be done by?**

- June 2015.

## **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This project links to Direct Action 9, the Business Database, which will support the delivery of this action.
- The process links to the delivery of the Revitalising Rural Retail project.



## FACILITATED ACTION 12

**West Wimmera Shire should work with local and regional stakeholders to deliver a Small Business Activation program and annual showcase event.**

### **Why do it?**

- The opportunity to provide ‘economic gardening’ to support small business growth is a great way to generate jobs by working with businesses that already exist within the Shire.
- A dedicated program for small business will ensure that businesses which don’t fit in the major employer categories such as retail and agribusiness are not lost between the cracks.
- The program can provide the perfect vehicle to align with regional or even State initiatives, such as Wimmera Development Association’s planned ‘Online Economy’ project, and the State Government’s Small Business Festival Victoria.
- The program can outline opportunities for small business training and development sessions that allows small business to plan ahead, and to generate networks that flourish.
- The program can provide a direct opportunity for the Shire to encourage the take up of low cost and innovative solutions for businesses. Great tools that already exist include marketing and advertising podcasts, and online small business networks that provide peer to peer support.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire can use the development of a detailed business database to test the interests and needs of small business, in order to develop an annual program of activities. Businesses need to be pushed to get online, as the disruption of the internet presents both the single biggest threat and the single greatest opportunity for many small businesses in West Wimmera.
- The Shire should kick-start the program with a Small Business Inspiration event (similar to Facilitated Action 4, Tourism Symposium), which can become an annual celebration and networking event for small business in West Wimmera Shire. A practical and entertaining keynote speaker like Tim Reid from the Small Business Big Marketing podcast would provide an incredible learning opportunity for business and get the program off to the best possible start.
- The Inspiration Event should be aligned with the annual Small Business Festival Victoria, to provide a free marketing and promotion tool.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire should coordinate the program at a practical level, sharing the role with local business associations/chambers of commerce to undertake face to face contact with businesses as needed.
- Funding support should be sought from State Government.  
Sponsorship should be sought from one of the larger businesses in the Shire to assist in covering project costs for the Inspiration event.

### **When should it be done by?**

- Planning for the activation program should begin in January 2015, aiming for an official launch on July 1 to run on a financial year cycle. The inspiration event should take place in August each year to align with Small Business Festival Victoria.

### **Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- This project links to Direct Action 9, the Business Database, which will support the delivery of this action.
- The process links to the delivery of the Revitalising Rural Retail project.



## FACILITATED ACTION 13

**West Wimmera Shire should facilitate a strategic planning day with all Health Services in the Shire to determine how the organisations might be able to support each other to achieve strategic goals.**

### **Why do it?**

- The health sector is one of the largest single employers in the Shire, and operate in employment categories that inject significant wages into the local economy.
- Growth in employment in the health sector has significant beneficial flow on effects for the economy.
- Access to health services plays a critical role in local township amenity, and it is vital that West Wimmera Shire supports Health Service to maintain and grow its existing service levels to support the local population.
- With an ageing population, West Wimmera Shire will increasingly require quality health services, and has a unique opportunity to ensure retirement facilities and retirement housing is available to support retirement age people to stay in the region.
- The Shire has the capacity to be a strong advocate for the health sector in regional planning, and can play a vital role in supporting projects an opportunities through smooth planning processes at a local level.

### **What needs to happen?**

- The Shire should open discussion with the Health Service at a CEO level to test interest in the idea of a Strategic Planning Day
- Key needs and opportunities should be mapped across both organisations prior to the planning day, so that the planning session itself is action focussed and achieves clarity on what each organisation can do to support the other into the future.
- Other key stakeholders at a regional and State level, such as WDA, RDV and Department of Health should be invited to support thinking and ensure the ideas emerging from the planning day are aligned with regional plans.

### **Who needs to do it?**

- The Shire should instigate discussion on the idea, and the two organisations should take a shared approach to planning and delivery.

**When should it be done by?**

- Planning for the day should begin in January 2015, with a view to running the workshop in May or June to coincide with the completion of budgets and an impending financial year. If the day proves to be a success, then consideration should be given to running the workshop annually.

**Is there a direct link to any other actions in this strategy?**

- Given the challenges around attracting staff in the health sector, this project potentially has strong links with Direct Action 1 which relates to the provision of housing, and Facilitated Action 3, which would support jobs in the health sector being promoted at the Rural Living Expo in Melbourne.



# SHIRE ADVOCACY

West Wimmera Shire should play an active role in advocating for a range of actions and outcomes that, while out of the Shire's direct control, have the capacity to support economic development opportunities within the Shire.

The actions in the table below are deliberately aligned with appropriate actions from the Council Plan to ensure there is a clear link between the Economic Development Strategy and the overall direction of West Wimmera Shire.

West Wimmera Shire advocacy		
Topic	What needs to happen	When (if specific)
1. Public transport	1.1 Continue to support regional efforts to push for a return of passenger rail services beyond along the Melb to Adelaide rail corridor.	Ongoing
	1.2 Develop an ongoing dialogue with Department of Transport at a Grampians regional level to ensure any funding opportunities or trial projects to support rural and remote communities can be piloted within West Wimmera Shire	Ongoing
2. Freight	2.1 Continue to advocate for improved rail freight infrastructure to support access to ports.	Ongoing
	2.2 Continue to be an active member and support the work of the Western Highway Action Committee	Ongoing
	2.3 Continue to support regional efforts for an increase in Federal Government support for road network funding.	Ongoing
3. Communication and technology	3.1 Work with NBNCo to explore faster broadband and internet options to West Wimmera Shire	Ongoing
	3.2 Continue to support the regional efforts of Wimmera Development Association in improving mobile phone connectivity and addressing black spots.	Ongoing
4. Tourism	4.1 Undertake ongoing discussions with Parks Victoria to advocate for Walking Track development in the Shire.	Ongoing
5. Education	5.1 Advocate for regional education providers to offer training opportunities within the Shire, particularly to support skills in agriculture.	Ongoing
6. Business	6.1 Encourage West Wimmera businesses to participate in Wimmera Development Association's planned 'Online Economy' project for small business.	2014-2015
	6.2 Promote the use of the State Government's Red Tape Rubbish Bin to highlight and address bottle necks in regulation and Government red tape.	Ongoing
7. Health	7.1 Support West Wimmera Health Service to expand the number of nurse traineeships offered within the region.	2014
	7.2 Determine what Shire support could be provided to assist West Wimmera Health Service to attract more medical placements to the region.	2014



# STRATEGY OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

The table below was determined by West Wimmera Shire Councillors at the beginning of the project to help guide the four key focus areas of the project.

Objective	What's going to help us to reach the objective?	What's hindering us from reaching the objective	Measures/Targets
<b>Active:</b> Set clear goals and measures, and celebrate success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working together</li> <li>- Improved transport networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative attitudes</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved long term population projections for West Wimmera Shire in the areas of migration and organic growth (births).</li> <li>2. Increased household income.</li> <li>3. Greater business diversity.</li> <li>4. Value adding in agriculture</li> <li>5. Number of new houses</li> </ol>
<b>Adaptive:</b> In 20 years from now, we want to go forward from where we are now.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reliability of seasons to support agriculture</li> <li>- Tools to enable adaptation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industry education</li> <li>- Technology development</li> <li>- Lack of reward for effort.</li> </ul>	
<b>Investment:</b> Investing in the growth of existing and emerging businesses and people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capitalising on regional opportunities</li> <li>- Supporting access for investment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mobile phone coverage</li> <li>- Internet speeds and availability</li> </ul>	
<b>Perception:</b> Changing the quality of conversation and understanding the value of West Wimmera.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talking up what we have to offer, such as natural environment, safe lifestyle</li> <li>- Affordable quality housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment opportunities, particularly for men and women to support 2 income families.</li> <li>- Lack of affordable quality housing</li> </ul>	

# BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Data and information was utilised from a variety of sources and was shared with Councillors, Staff and the business community in order to support the thinking and ideas that emerged through the engagement process that shaped and defined the strategy.

The key sources of information included:

**1. State Government Towns In Time data, which uses census information to show time series data between 1981 and 2011.**

[Kaniva](#)

[Edenhope](#)

[Goroke](#)

[Apsley](#)

[Harrow](#)

**2. REMPLAN data, which provides detailed economic and employment information by municipal area.**

[REMPLAN Grampians Region](#)

[3. Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Strategic Plan](#)

[4. Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan](#)

[5. West Wimmera Shire Council Plan 2013•2017, available from the Shire website](#)



# PROJECT CONSULTATION OUTPUTS

## **Councillor and Senior Management workshop**

• workshop was held with Councillors and the senior management team at the commencement of the project to establish the goals and expectations of the strategy. The outputs below are from that workshop.

### **Key insights from hard data presentation:**

- Half the population lives within the main six townships
- Home based businesses (400+) are relatively strong, and have potential for growth, but we don't know who they are at this stage.
- Opportunity exists for virtual education.
- A declining population de•incentivises State and Fed government support. Government will want to see a strong, clear and unified vision to address population decline.
- Population dependent.
- Attractive to outsiders (exports).
- Potential in Tourism (food for branding).

### **Empathy mapping (based on eight identified business segments)**

#### **What the community 'feel'?**

- We could do more to encourage people to stop and spend.
- There are gains to be had.
- Not much happens.
- Retirees: Get to bigger towns, there are more people.
- Retirees: Opportunity sits in bigger towns.
- There are factors outside our control at local level.
- Farming is safe and in a reliable area.
- Health: No cooperation from anyone

- Health: Feel it is hard to grow. No demand.
- Retail: Despondent
- Education: Positive

### **What does the community 'say'?**

- Retail: Indicate problem to community
- Health: no demand for more beds
- Hospitals: shortage of skilled people
- Education: More children being born (positive)
- Established trades: Council just gets in the way with regulation.
- Established trades: Perpetuate misinformation within the community.
- Aspirational trades: How can I get space and \$\$\$ to start up.
- Room to grow.
- Blockages/barriers.
- Farmers: What is my contribution to the community.
- Lots of people travelling through West Wimmera Shire.
- Tourism: Opportunity, opportunity, opportunity.
- Retirees: They are important.

### **What does the community 'do'?**

- Looking for best investments.
- Tourism: Amber ridge action success.
- Retirees: Do small things to be of value
- Grow products

- Looking for opportunities/technologies
- Retail: Put business on the market.
- Education: Better teacher's facilities and study opportunities.
- Established trades: Bypass regulation and avoid compliance with standards.
- Aspirational trades: Went to landlords to see if land was available.
- Health: Focus on constraints of facilities.

### **What does the community 'think'?**

- Retail: how to exit.
- Education: Online learning. Being able to deliver courses from home.
- Education: Development through increasing the amount of students (retention).
- Education: Being able to do tertiary study from home.
- Health: How to increase more hospital beds.
- Health: How to attract qualified professionals.
- Aspirational trades: uncertain of how to get started (how do I not drown?).
- Established trades: don't have time to think about economic development opportunities.
- Retirees: they still have value.
- Farmers: How can I do things better.
- Information, accommodation, business opportunities.
- Would be good to....

### **1. What external forces might shape our future? (weather, technology, transport).**

- Advances in technology (i.e. larger machinery)
- Some technology.
- Communication technology
- Technology investment, access to internet.
- Technology, internet, mobile.
- Pressure on food security in Asia and Europe
- Agricultural terms of trade

- Local economies and food production whilst global
- Weather
- Dry times
- Climate change. Constant impact on agriculture (Birchip Cropping Group's Latest research).
- Transport network
- Lack of good major infrastructure
- Get more from highway
- Passenger transport to Horsham and Hamilton would make West Wimmera genuinely accessible for lifestyle options.
- Local Government structure
- Labour availability.
- Wind back in welfare culture.

## **2. What local trends might shape our future? (demographic change, declining/growing industries, govt priorities).**

- New crop possibilities/agriculture.
- Adaptability to changes in Asia.
- Lack (or slowing) of govt spending into the future.
- Government emphasis on dollars and resource sharing.
- Government policy.
- Drying up of government grants.
- Community willingness.
- Govt draw 2 hour circle around Melbourne. Horsham is place where investment stops.
- Technology to mitigate distance and connection issues.
- More selective about food.
- Declining population.
- Ageing population x 2

## **3. What industries in West Wimmera are ripe for growth?**

- Aged care and associated industries.
- Services sector.
- Aged and health services.
- Natural environment and tourism.
- Tourism
- Tourism
- Anything with wood (trees).
- Saleyards.
- Intensive livestock production.
- Value add feedlot.
- Grain.
- Associated manufacturing of ag products.
- Value add to agriculture.
- Agriculture.
- Irrigation.
- Horticulture (growing vegies).

#### **4. What new and emerging industries could help diversify your business mix?**

- Value adding of ag products.
- Value adding to agriculture.
- Agriculture value and potential.
- Small scale timber processing.
- Dairy.
- Grain containers.
- Non metro regional anchored services.
- Waste and recycling.



- Aged care housing.
- Renewable energy.
- Arts.

<b>Adaptive:</b> In 20 years from now we want to go forward from where we are.	
<b>Helping</b>	<b>Hindering</b>
Reliability in the seasons/geography	Red tape
Technology advancements are occurring	Lack of can-do culture due to red tape
Education and training	Lack of rewards for efforts
Perceptive communities	Reduction in government services and infrastructure in rural areas
Science	Reduction of investment in research and agricultural education
Adapt or perish realisation	Lack of government vision/regionalisation
<b>Helping in the future</b>	<b>Hindering in the future</b>
Increased investment in education	Red tape reduction is required
More support for research and development	Appropriate risk taking/vision to deliver
<b>Changing perception:</b> Changing the quality of conversation and understanding the value of West Wimmera Shire.	
<b>Helping</b>	<b>Hindering</b>
Highlight success	Negative perception
Arts society = new business premises	No clear reason for why people should return
Returning families	Lack of opportunities for both men and women (households need 2 people working)
Employment opportunities	Red tape
Talking up what is on offer, the natural environment, safe living, lifestyle.	Legislation
Affordable quality housing	Expectations
Quality first class education	Standard of living
	Quality housing not available
	Loss of youth
<b>Helping in the future</b>	<b>Hindering in the future</b>
Good internet access	Perception of not keeping up with technology
Value community	New generations expectations

<b>Investing:</b> Investing in the growth of current and emerging businesses and people	
<b>Helping</b>	<b>Hindering</b>
Technology	Conservative nature
Good climate	Red tape
Global markets growing	Technology - internet speeds and mobile black spots
Water	Cost of employment
Quality services	Population
	Distance
	Transport hubs
	Negative attitude
	Cost shifting by state and fed govt onto local government
<b>Helping in the future</b>	<b>Hindering in the future</b>
Access to super funds	Global financial events
Positive message in broader community	Future amalgamations (LG)
Improved transport network	More regulation
Resource sharing	Cost shifting
Stronger regional centres	

<b>Active:</b> Setting clear goals, and measuring and celebrating success	
<b>Helping</b>	<b>Hindering</b>
Willing to be in the space	Legacy issues
Today (i.e., undertaking the ED strategy)	Perfectionism (all or nothing)
Hardworking and willing community to participate and contribute	Resistance to innovation
Smaller groups do and can collaborate	Knockers of success
	Unwillingness of some groups to work together, and inability to work with diversity and differences of opinion.
<b>Helping in the future</b>	<b>Hindering in the future</b>
West Wimmera embracing and celebrating diversity	Not understanding regional opportunities
Report cards on achievements	Not telling our story
Telling our story	

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP OUTPUTS

The information below is the verbatim outputs from four workshops held with different sectors of the business community in Edenhope and Kaniva on June 2 and June 3

## **Quotes from participants • why this matters:**

“I want to see more people”

“Community is as good as you make them”

“I want to see the community thriving”

## Workshop 1:

### **Theme 1: Attracting People & Investment:**

#### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

Promoting the opportunities

Point of difference - provide what the big guys don't

Better awareness of shire support - open for business

Reconnecting people who know the area

Blue gums

Need to understand supply chain opportunities

Longerenong promotion idea

Niche work groups

Overseas workers (457)

Older workers

Navigating government

Building permits

Planning permits

Possible solutions:

Where, how, who are we promoting ourselves to?

Prospectus

Fact sheets

Understand where money is coming in and out

Providing fact sheets for agribusiness growth

i.e. Applying for building permits

Building feed lots

## **Theme 2: Support Services**

### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

Lots of vacant houses  
Lack of quality houses  
Lack of lifestyle housing  
Lack of awareness around housing affordability  
How might we use existing resources to help with providing appropriate housing?  
i.e. Men's Shed  
Trade training (Tafe)  
Increase awareness of job availability  
People in Melbourne at the Regional exhibition don't know what jobs are available. They are happy to buy \$60k homes and spend \$100,000 on renovations if they can secure a local job  
Attracting skilled retirees  
Safe environment  
Register of available housing  
Look at how 'Harrow' support in providing housing  
Lack of rentals (WDA housing study)  
Lack of public transport  
Possible solutions:  
Register of available housing  
Register of available jobs to take to the regional exhibition  
Use local resources such as Mens Shed or Tafe students to renovate existing homes

## **Theme 3: Government**

Regulations  
To act as a gateway to Port of Portland for accumulation of grain from northern sites  
Improve road network

## **Theme 4: Seasonality**

Commodity prices  
Need commodity pricings & seasons to be stable

## Workshop 2:

### **Theme 1: Housing**

#### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

Lack of quality housing:  
Lack of quality and suitability  
Farmers won't lease / rent farm houses  
Regulation stops smaller plots and / or costs too much  
Cost of new housing / materials / labour / fire area adds \$20k per house  
Return on rental investment below investment level  
E.g. \$300k house at 5% return = \$15k p.a. rent (no go!)  
Lack of awareness of cheap housing  
Estate agents don't push into larger centres through national IT  
Outsider never hears of our area  
Lack of advertising of our area and what's available by Shire or Agents  
Community initiatives:  
Assist all players young and old  
Possible solutions:  
Find cheaper new housing ideas  
New building methods such as flat pack housing  
Council lobby to reduce size of farm plot and make available more rural residential  
Shire to spend on adverts for housing  
Community groups renovate for rental market  
Council guarantee purchase of housing to be remodelled by interest groups such as; Lions, Legacy, Apex, Mens Shed. To include maintenance and repairs in future at Council cost

### **Theme 2: Community and Culture (Perception)**

#### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

Lack of awareness of opportunities:  
Poor advertising  
Sell key messages:  
Halfway between Melbourne and Adelaide  
Low crime  
Close community  
Lifestyle  
Negativity:

Cyclical  
Fear of change  
At a stage in life that they do not want change  
We are parochial  
Lack of business communication  
Attract good business people  
Good sustainable business  
Council not responding - should do their core business  
Helping struggling businesses  
Better to fix then to lose or replace

**Possible solutions:**

Stronger follow up from Regional exhibition  
Dedicated advertising campaign  
On sell positive stories  
Council support  
“Customer service”, stick to core business  
Council support  
Business training and mentoring

**Theme 3: Education & Training**

**Challenges & Opportunities:**

Link education to regional jobs  
Young people leaving for uni  
Sustainable employment opportunities for young people  
Lack of local adult education opportunities  
Possible solutions:  
Source teachers  
Forward planning programs  
Changing perception  
Provide opportunity for uni graduates

**Theme 4: Technology**

**Challenges & Opportunities:**

Lack of consistency in speeds and availability of internet  
A lot of shops don't have EFTPOS  
Possible solutions:

Advocating and investigating alternatives  
Change local ideas  
Facebook

### **Theme 5: Tourism**

#### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

Set a common date for annual functions so people look forward to it each year  
Knowing where “West Wimmera” is and what we have to offer  
Provide services and goods that attract tourism  
Promote open space  
Better tourism promotion  
Promote tourism with assets in local area  
Possible solutions:  
Tim Reid workshop series

### **Theme 6: Value Adding**

Relocalisation  
Making use of what we produce locally  
Diversity of farming  
Processing back end of business, i.e. Luvaduck  
Food outlets  
Think boutique and unique

## **Workshop 3:**

### **Theme 1: Value Adding**

Competing with major manufacturers  
Wages cost  
Red tape  
Expectations too high  
Reliable employees  
That are skilled  
Lack of employment base  
Encourage local growth by encouraging students to pursue skills for local employment  
Initial investment outlay is a barrier  
Investment from company with guaranteed market

Relocation of existing business  
Finding the gap in the market  
Differentiate & marketing  
I.e. making signs of local produce  
Use of online technology  
Making pasta locally  
Wheat to Adelaide to make paste, then transported to Melbourne  
Understanding our supply chains

### **Theme 2: Job Opportunities**

#### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

People not coming back  
No opportunities  
Struggle

### **Theme 3: Government**

#### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

Lacking a strategic plan for agriculture  
Is State & Fed government receiving the right information from local government  
Condition of roads  
Rail (Vicroads)  
IS WWSC spending money on the right things?  
Industrial estate  
Tourism ventures  
Roads  
Too many regulations making it hard for building permits  
Provide & explain information from the right person  
Roads!!  
Terrible  
Customer complaints  
Main street in Kaniva is fantastic and has helped with tourism



## Workshop 4:

### Theme 1: Jobs

#### Challenges & Opportunities:

Difficulty in finding staff for non-medical roles at the hospital (i.e. cleaning services)

Success with overseas staff, but more needed

People not prepared to do the average jobs

Roadhouse used Gumtree to find a manager from Queensland

Need to invest into opportunities, such as San Remo and making pasta locally

Possible Solutions:

Expand the number of nurse traineeships as it's been successful

Expand medical placements as it's been successful

Need to connect the job opportunities with the market looking for work

Tap into former residents (kids who grew up here) to market opportunities to them

Provide scholarship opportunities. It's been done before, however it might need to be promoted for a longer period of time

Locals with investment potential need to choose the region. How do we sell the opportunity and story for encouraging local investment?

### Theme 2: Housing

#### Challenges & Opportunities:

More housing blocks needed within town boundary

½ acre preferably at \$20k

Small lots for retirees

Lot of farm houses, but lack of incentives for farmers to activate them

Possible solutions:

Develop flats for the elderly

Council could undertake subdivisions to overcome lack of activity by developers

Need to map the number of farmhouses and see what condition they are in. Potentially look to relocate some of these homes:

Run a \$1 dollar home campaign

Look to use Council land at the race course as somewhere to relocate farmhouses

Look at the development of the Council owned land by the race course

### **Theme 3: Government**

#### **Challenges & Opportunities:**

Red tape

Business red tape, accounting, OH&S

Need regional tax incentives to encourage investment

Knowledge of Council staff

Possible solutions:

Use of the Red Tape Rubbish Bin (State Gov initiative)

Provide rate incentives to attract investment

Mentoring with / from other councils with speciality experience in investment and economic development, such as Hume City Council

