

The background of the cover is a vibrant, high-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a field of tall, green grass. The middle ground shows rolling hills with patches of green pasture and brown, tilled soil. The sky is a deep blue with scattered white cumulus clouds. A solid blue triangle is positioned in the bottom left corner, partially overlapping the grass field.

Baw Baw Shire Council
Economic Development and
Visitor Economy Strategy
2022–2025

Baw Baw Shire

Opportunities are closer than you think

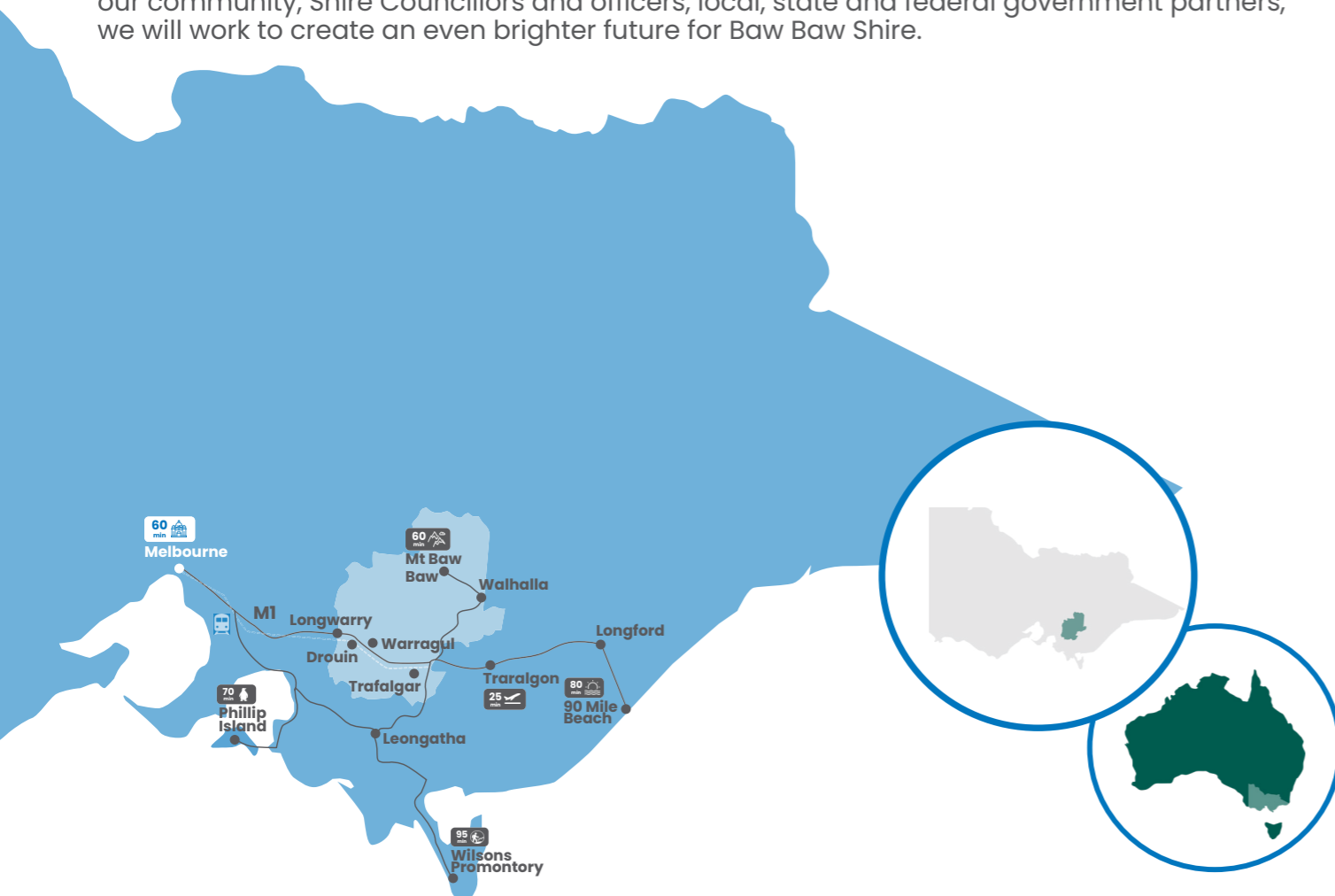
Over the past five years, Baw Baw Shire has transformed into a vibrant place to live, work and invest. We are one of Victoria's fastest growing regions, boasting abundant natural resources, vibrant communities and easy access to Melbourne by road and rail.

Baw Baw's gross regional product (GRP) – estimated at \$2.64 billion, is expanding at a rate almost two times that of the other five local government agencies in Gippsland. With our unique blend of rich agriculture and manufacturing history and numerous tourism drawcards, including Toorong Falls, Walhalla Goldfields Railway and a range of wineries, restaurants and boutiques.

Consistent with other major Council initiatives, including our *Council Plan 2021-25* and the *Recreational Vehicle Strategy 2021-24* and corporate and community planning objectives, this Strategy articulates a clear way forward for Baw Baw and how we will play our role in improving economic and social conditions as well as helping to stimulate, attract and maintain business activity, investment and employment in the region.

The strategy is being produced during a time of great change. The COVID-19 pandemic will have far reaching economic and social impacts. With this in mind, this strategy was developed through a thorough process of detailed review (of the previous strategy), rigorous analysis of economic and tourism data as well as considerable engagement with local communities and businesses.

In many respects, our community has already shown considerable flexibility and agility to meet the challenges posed by the public health crisis and find innovative ways to adapt, change and overcome. While we recognise that we cannot control economic or visitor economy consequences, we can play a key role in helping influence them. With the support of our community, Shire Councillors and officers, local, state and federal government partners, we will work to create an even brighter future for Baw Baw Shire.



Baw Baw – The story so far

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Baw Baw Shire

The story so far

Baw Baw Shire is one of Victoria's fastest growing municipalities. Located 100 kilometres to the east of the Melbourne CBD, the Shire offers a mix of rural and urban living with affordable housing, scenic views and relaxed lifestyle making it an attractive option for new residents.

Baw Baw Shire is the place where the country meets the city, a place where the future is bright and potential is realised

We have experienced significant growth and this growth is expected to continue over the next 20 years – from around 54,884 people today to 80,000 by 2041, that's an increase of over 48%

We produce 10% of the vegetables in Victoria

We support more than 1000 businesses each year to start and grow through Council's Business Support Service

Major industries include manufacturing, construction and agriculture, representing 45% the Shire's overall economic output

We have a diverse range of stunning natural attractions, including breathtaking waterfalls and national parks, historic villages and iconic produce and dining experiences

Start Up Gippsland has supported hundreds of entrepreneurs across Gippsland to create startups, test business ideas and launch them to market. Supporting the growth of their startups to a national or international level and creating local jobs

Our Placemaking Program allocates \$200,000 (\$50,000 in each town) to smaller communities to deliver projects that are at the top of the community's wish list

Our Accommodation Food Services, Health Care Services and Education Training employs one in three local workers

We successfully obtained almost \$20 million in grant funding from Federal, State and other agencies in 2020/21

Baw Baw Shire is vibrant, innovative and significant. We are confident in our economic future.

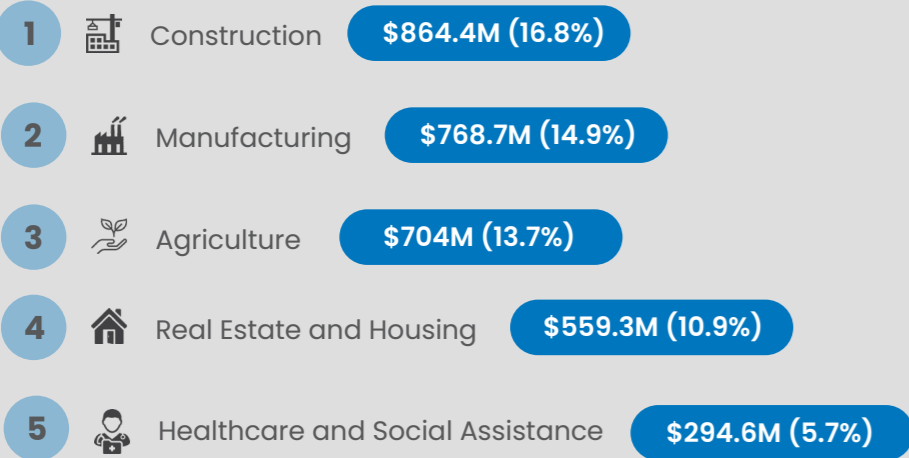
Baw Baw Shire

Economic Profile

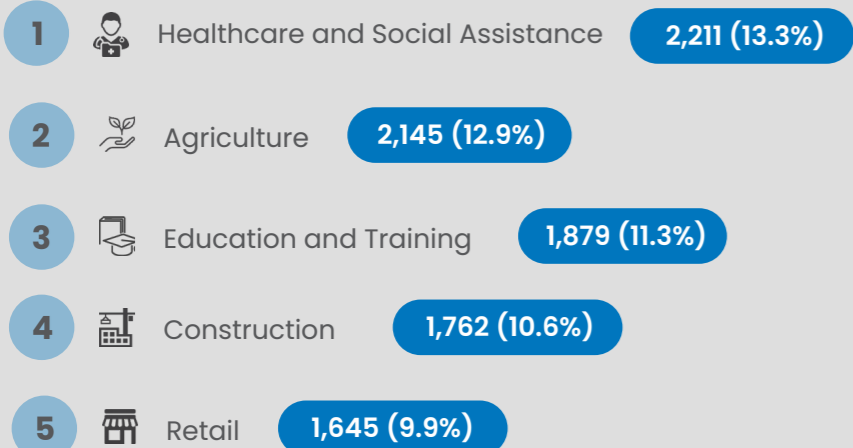
Baw Baw Shire is known for innovation in manufacturing, design and agribusiness. The region is home to a major dairy sector, some of Australia's leading hydroponics and agribusiness companies, and innovative food processing companies. Local equipment and food manufacturing companies export across the globe and are at the forefront of technology development in their fields.

Top 5 Sectors 2020/21

Economic Output



Jobs & Workforce



7.8% of the population earned an income of \$1,750 or more per week



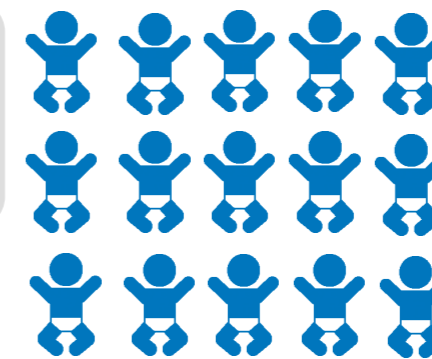
13.9% of households earned an income of \$2,500 or more per week

Baw Baw Shire produces nearly....

80,000 tonne of vegetables equating to **10%** of Victoria's supply



19 babies born each week



Unemployment

June 2021

Baw Baw Shire	4.3%
Gippsland	6.2%
Victoria	4.9%

Gross Regional Product

\$2.642
Billion

3.1%
average annual growth rate

Baw Baw Shire Tourism

Number of Visitors (2019)	1 Million
Visitor Spend (2020)	\$201.9 Million
Economic Contribution (2020)	\$200.7 Million
Jobs (2020)	1,382

Development in key locations...

There are **19,992 proposed lots** for housing developments across Warragul and Drouin supporting a thriving construction industry.

For every new
100
residents

Gross Revenue
\$11.667M (Direct Effect)
\$19.163M (Indirect Effect)
Value Added
\$5.993M (Direct Effect)
\$9.577M (Indirect Effect)
Jobs and Workforce
31 (Direct Effect)
23 (Indirect Effect)



Baw Baw's Economic Profile

Baw Baw Shire covers approximately 4,027 square kilometres of high-quality farmland, national parks and residential areas. The northern half of the Shire is heavily forested and lies in the Great Dividing Range, while the south is bound by the Strzelecki Ranges. The Shire's largest towns are located along the rail and road corridor which provides direct and easy access into the suburbs of Melbourne.

As one of six local government areas comprising the Gippsland region in eastern Victoria, Baw Baw combines a unique blend of rich agriculture and manufacturing history with an array of unique tourism attractions and experiences.

Industry Drivers

Estimates of economic output (i.e sales) by industry have highlighted strong performance in some industry sub sectors. The Agriculture industry sector remains the largest contributing sector to regional output. This has notably increased consistently from 2013, likely due to an increase in businesses and employment in the region.

Both Agriculture and Construction Services have experienced relatively strong and sustainable growth since 2010.

Food Product Manufacturing is the fifth largest industry sector in terms of output and has experienced steady growth since 2010 with the relative share of the sector increasing from 7.0% in 2010 to 7.5% in 2020.



However, other manufacturing industry subsectors have experienced decline, a common trend across the country. The loss of output in the manufacturing industry impacts Baw Baw Shire's productive capacity, with flow on impacts on employment and regional exports.

Workforce

Up to 16,640 workers are employed across a range of industries in Baw Baw Shire, the largest employer being Agriculture (via both direct and indirect opportunities).

Jobs in the population servicing industries of Accommodation Food Services, Health Care Services and Education Training industries have undergone sustained high rates of growth between Census periods 2006, 2011 and 2016. Accommodation Food Services, Health Care Services and Education Training employs one in three local workers 32.9%.

After a period of strong jobs growth for Retail Trade, between 2006 to 2011 (19.2%), the industry contracted from 2011 to 2016 (7.3%), in contrast to overall jobs growth of 5.4% for the same period. However, the sector remains the third largest employer in Baw Baw supporting 1,650 workers.

Tourism Sector



Tourism supports an estimated 950 jobs, which is 5.7% of total employment. The largest sub-sector in Baw Baw is Accommodation & Food Services with 525 jobs supported by tourists' expenditure.



Tourism output is estimated at \$181.669 million, which is 3.5% of total output. The largest sub-sector in Baw Baw is Accommodation & Food Services with tourists' expenditure supporting \$76.303 million.



It is important to note that tourism is an industry that provides indirect benefits to supporting industries and job creation that are unable to be reflected in available data.

- When asked which destination felt closer to home, respondents indicated Gippsland was closer to home with (53%) compared to Baw Baw Shire (41%).
- Baw Baw Shire is best known for natural attractions, close with nature and fun for the family. When we measure people's rational (thoughtful/conscious) perceptions to Gippsland and Baw Baw Shire as a destination, we see that Gippsland outperforms Baw Baw Shire in offering diverse experiences, food and beverage, road trips, and attractive scenery.

There is a strong case to consolidate Visit Baw Baw under the Visit Gippsland brand for major marketing activities. Research indicates that across all brand health measures, Gippsland outperforms Visit Baw Baw with respondents believing the consolidation will have a net positive impact across all touchpoints.

Visit Baw Baw

In preparation for the development of this strategy, Council has undertaken significant research on the Visit Baw Baw tourism brand, and the regional brand - Visit Gippsland. This independent research indicated:

- Awareness of the Gippsland destination is significantly higher than for Baw Baw (98% vs 85%). Not only is awareness stronger, but also people's familiarity with the destination (those who know a bit and know a lot about the destination). This means that people understand the proposition of Gippsland and what it has to offer more so than Baw Baw as a destination (71% vs 43%).
- The source of this awareness and familiarity largely stems from word of mouth from friends, families and colleagues, followed by TV. Gippsland in particular is more likely to be heard of than Baw Baw through word of mouth (59% vs 52%) and TV (28% vs 24%). This suggests that media efficacy is much stronger when Gippsland as a destination is being communicated above the line and below the line.
- When considering which destination to visit for leisure (once restriction/lockdown eases), Gippsland's consideration is significantly higher than Baw Baw's (55% vs 30%). Gippsland is also more preferred as the top destination over Baw Baw (8% vs 2%).

Combining marketing efforts across the region will also allow for Council to realign existing resources and invest further resources in industry and product development. This is supported through the Destination Management Plan for Gippsland, aligning with **Strategic Priority 2: Strengthen Gippsland's appeal as a destination through brand awareness and coordinated marketing across the region.**

Economic Impacts of Emergency Events

There have been a number of emergency events over the last few years, including bushfire and extreme weather, that have impacted the local economy across Baw Baw Shire. These events have specifically impacted regional tourism destinations - Noojee, Walhalla and surrounding communities.

In addition to the loss of physical capital, natural disasters disrupt the economic production and business operations. Retail businesses are closed, workers can't get to the office, crops are destroyed, and factories sit idle without raw materials. It is also likely to impact household spending, which then has flow on effects through the rest of the economy.

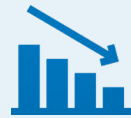
While businesses and resources can be directly affected, events in surrounding locations can also be impacted negatively by State of Disaster protection measures, supply chain disruption and strong media coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Since March 2020, the Victorian community has taken significant measures to flatten the curve and save lives. This has had a significant impact on the Baw Baw Shire, in both the way we live and the way in which our local economy operates.

Impacts on Employment

In Baw Baw, prior to COVID-19 and the introduction of social lockdown measures to manage the pandemic, total employment across the region has been impacted.



For April 2020, total employment is estimated at 16,212 jobs, a fall of 2.6%.



Comparatively in April 2021, total employment across all local industry sector is estimated at 16,690 jobs, a rise of 0.3%.

Job Keeper

Government initiatives such as the JobKeeper program, which contributed funds to businesses to retain staff over the initial six month period (and beyond, at a lower rate), was expected to mitigate much of the impact on employment due to COVID-19. Businesses eligible for JobKeeper must have experienced a decline in revenue of at least 30%. Higher level of JobKeeper applications from businesses are a likely indicator of greater negative economic impacts from COVID-19.

As at March 2021, it is estimated that 11% of businesses in Baw Baw Shire applied for JobKeeper support, slightly lower than Latrobe 11.3% and significantly lower than the Yarra Ranges 22.4%. The number of JobKeeper applications peaked in September 2020 with 33.6% or a third of businesses in the region experiencing a decline in revenue of at least 30% due to COVID-19.

The rate of JobKeeper applications in Baw Baw Shire has consistently decreased since it peaked in September 2020. This is a positive indication that businesses in Baw Baw Shire are experiencing less of a decline in revenue due to COVID 19 in March 2021 compared to 6 months ago.

Supporting Business through the Impacts of COVID-19

Council is committed to supporting businesses through the challenges of the Coronavirus/COVID-19 outbreak.

In 2020, Council launched a \$440,000 Stage One Community and Business Support Package to financially assist residents, sporting clubs, community groups and local businesses in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This package included initiatives such as rates relief, permit waivers, fee waivers for sporting clubs, outdoor dining programs, increased local weighting of local suppliers for projects to 20% and a COVID-19 Business Grants Program.

The initiatives and actions contained within this strategy are designed to support businesses throughout the impacts of the pandemic and into the future. Council will continue to remain adaptive and innovative in our support to the business and broader community.

Economic Development and the role of Local Government

Strategic Leadership and Partnerships



Economic Development and the role of Local Government

“The purpose of local economic development is to build up the capacity of a local area in order to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all. It is a process by which public, business, and non-governmental sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation.” (World Bank, 2006).

The role of local government is to assist in creating an environment where local businesses can grow and prosper. Although Council has a wide scope to undertake economic development, these actions need to be targeted due to budgetary and resource constraints.

True, effective and sustained economic development within Baw Baw Shire is an outcome that can only be achieved through collaboration. It is through collaboration that local government can deliver sustainable economic development and create an environment where local businesses can continue to grow.

The key roles of Local Government

The key roles of Local Government are:

Advocacy: Promotion of regional interests to other levels of government and decision makers.

Facilitation: Providing information, marketing or incentives; fostering partnerships; and, establishing local regulation.

Investment Attraction: Creating an environment that catalyses investor interest.

Investigation: Completing due diligence, feasibilities and de-risking for future investment.

Planning: Aligning vision to local and regional plans; land use planning.

Service Provision: Traditional or new services to support economic development.

Council Plan 2021 – 2025

The *Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021 –2025* identifies 3 key themes to ready the Shire for the future and support a vibrant quality of life as our community grows.

The *Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategy 2022–2025* supports the delivery of these objectives:

1. A Sustainable Shire

Sustainable towns and villages that continue to benefit from our beautiful rural and natural environment.

2. A Healthy Community

Healthy people, living in connected communities and healthy environments.

3. A Thriving Community

Thriving, diverse and resilient communities.

Community Goals

The *Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021 –2025* guides the delivery of this strategy through our community goals.

- A strong economy, creating and sustaining local jobs.
- Education, tourism and cultural offerings that help our region to flourish.
- Future ready infrastructure and transport options that help our community better access services, work and education throughout Baw Baw Shire.

Key Regional Partnerships

Baw Baw Shire Council works with a number of key partners across the region to strengthen and maximise impact across not only Baw Baw Shire but across Victoria. Council will aim to align our strategic partnerships and priorities with Regional, State and Federal Plans. Clearly demonstrating the connection between Local, State and Federal priorities will ensure long-term, strategic investment and growth in the region.

State and Federal Government

Council maintains productive relationships with various departments across State and Federal Governments to influence and deliver programs and projects across community and industry.

Destination Gippsland

Destination Gippsland (DG) is the Regional Tourism Board and the peak tourism organisation in eastern Victoria. The role of DG is to grow and serve the Gippsland tourism sector and work in partnership with industry and Government.

Council is a financial member and joint owner of Destination Gippsland in partnership with the remaining 5 Local Government Authorities in Gippsland. Baw Baw Shire’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a member of the Board overseeing the direction to provide a clear vision for achieving long-term, sustainable growth of Gippsland’s visitor economy.

Food and Fibre Gippsland

Food and Fibre Gippsland was formed in March 2019. Their mission is to lead capacity building, innovation, and knowledge sharing for the greater good of the sector across the whole of Gippsland.

One Gippsland

One Gippsland is the peak regional advocacy body representing this diverse region. It aims to connect the dots between government, business and community, while also collectively working together to champion the interests of the Gippsland region and our people.

Baw Baw Shire’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a member of the board overseeing the direction to create a thriving and dynamic region that harnesses our social, environmental and economic capabilities.

Start Up Gippsland

Startup Gippsland is a Regional Incubator Program that supports entrepreneurs in Gippsland to develop, launch and scale their businesses. This program is managed by Startup Gippsland owned by the Bass Coast Shire, Baw Baw Shire, East Gippsland Shire, Latrobe City, South Gippsland Shire and Wellington Shire councils. The program is currently delivered by Gippstech, a Warragul based company.

Committee for Gippsland

The Committee for Gippsland is a positive and influential voice for Gippsland helping to create a prosperous and sustainable future for the region. Their purpose is to be a member-led advocacy group that engages business and key stakeholders in positive decision making for the sustainable future of Gippsland.

Lardner Park

Lardner Park is a non-for-profit organisation and Gippsland’s premier regional venue, offering unique and flexible indoor and outdoor spaces designed to host a variety of festivals, exhibitions, conferences, sporting events, meetings, trade shows, expos and more. This venue offers significant opportunity for the future of major events in the region. Currently, Council has a strategic partnership with Lardner Park that is reviewed on an annual basis.

Southern Alpine Board of Management

The Southern Alpine Board of Management is the committee of management within the Lake Mountain Alpine Resort and the Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort. Mount Baw Baw is a key tourism operator in Baw Baw Shire and offers significant opportunities for economic benefit to the surrounding communities.

What Sets Us Apart

Opportunities

Our region is unique. From our breathtaking views, to our stunning natural attractions, to our rich agricultural history and our innovative manufacturing, Baw Baw has a variety of unique features that provide our region with competitive opportunities and challenges to guide the role of Council.



Leadership and Advocacy

- Concentrating population can increase efficiencies of infrastructure and service delivery.
- Increasing transport networks between towns to improve connectivity and remove load on local roads and highways.
- Residential developments leading to new residents bringing social, community and economic value.
- Investment in regions to grow Baw Baw Shire as a viable alternative to city living.



Business Attraction and Investment

- Investment attraction with a targeted approach on key industry sectors can drive activity in local supply chains growing local jobs and economic growth.
- Employment and business opportunities associated with servicing lifestyle and needs of an ageing population.
- Close proximity to Melbourne and major markets.
- Integrating land use/development with transport planning (essential services in growing areas).



Business and Workforce Development

- Focus on established businesses to support them to grow, increase collaboration, innovation and expand into broader markets.
- Council can advocate for local businesses seeking funding, changes to policy or legislation.
- Council to take a leadership role in supporting local small business through Council procurement.
- Increasing opportunities for education and industry to create a highly skilled, engaged workforce.
- Opportunities to increase potential for export of locally-produced goods and services.



Visitor Economy and Major Events

- Converting existing day visitors to overnight visitors can have positive economic benefits for the region. In 2019, there were 797,445 domestic day visitors to Baw Baw Shire. If 1% of these visitors were converted to a domestic overnight visitor, an additional \$1.8 million of revenue would be generated by local businesses and eight new local jobs supported each year.
- Established community recreational and event spaces e.g. West Gippsland Arts Centre, Dowton Park, Drouin Civic Park, Lardner Park.
- Regional branding can effectively leverage and value add to local businesses.
- Improved physical assets for visitors across natural attractions.

What Sets Us Apart

Challenges



Leadership and Advocacy

- Previously Council has not developed a strategic approach to advocacy with clear outcomes to be communicated community.
- Transition of some traditional regional employment industries.
- The community has sustained significant impacts from bushfires, COVID 19 and floods.
- Council is reliant on external funding to meet the infrastructure needs of our growing community.



Business Attraction and Investment

- Permit application processes and timing through Council. During industry engagement it was identified there is perceived lack of support from Council.
- Increased pressure and conflicts on land use, as strong population growth, continued business expansion and tourism activity continues at a steadily increasing pace.
- Congestion is increasing around Baw Baw's employment centres..



Business and Workforce Development

- Almost a third of working residents leave Baw Baw for work. Each day, over 6,700 people travel out of Baw Baw to work, while only 2,600 come into the region to work.
- Accessing lower skilled / entry level workers (hospitality, admin, agricultural labourers).
- Lack of relevant TAFE courses in the region focused on agriculture.
- Baw Baw residents commuting to outer Melbourne suburbs for work, resulting in potentially lost local expenditure.



Visitor Economy and Major Events

- Disparate branding for towns, tourism and businesses leading to limited investment/knowledge.
- Visitation has undergone significant decline due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions have had a detrimental impact on tourism related jobs.
- Major and intermediate supply shortfalls for both fixed broadband and mobile coverage identified in significant tourist destinations (Lardner Park, Walhalla, Mount Baw Baw National Park).
- Tourism activity in recent years in Baw Baw has seen the growth in the number of visitors rapidly outstripping growth in tourism businesses.

The Future of Baw Baw Shire

Key Focus Areas

Leadership and Advocacy

Looking to the future Baw Baw Shire will continue to be one of the fastest growing regional areas in Australia. Baw Baw Shire Council is proud to support its community today and into the future and provide progressive lifestyle and economic opportunities for our residents and investors.

Business Attraction and Investment

Attract investment from businesses, which diversify and add value to the local economy, and ensure that Council's message to investors is that the Baw Baw Shire is 'open for business'.

Business and Workforce Development

Ensure Council is visible and active in the local business community, and supports our local businesses to create employment opportunities, provides goods and services and helps both the local and regional economy to achieve growth and prosperity.

Visitor Economy and Major Events

The Visitor Economy is a significant contributor to economic productivity of the region and delivers significant benefit to a number of key industries. Council is committed to supporting the development of a tourism region that engages and inspires travellers to enjoy local produce, stunning scenery and rich, cultural experiences.

Our Goal:

To create a regional economy that has a thriving local and global economic impact, where families can live and grow and vibrant communities flourish. Baw Baw Shire is the place where the country meets the city, a place where the future is bright and potential is realised.



Leadership and Advocacy

1.1 Leadership and Advocacy

What is it?

Advocacy is a process that challenges inequities by collaboratively and actively working with communities and key stakeholders to bring about changes in policy, process, practice, and attitudes in order to ensure communities' rights are upheld (VSO, 2012).

Council is committed to plan and deliver advocacy activities to progress identified priorities that will contribute to Baw Baw Shire becoming an innovative, thriving regional city of the future.

Why are we doing this?

With significant growth comes a challenge for Council to ensure the needs of our growing community are met. This includes developing educational facilities, upgrading road infrastructure, developing sporting and recreation facilities and expanding community facilities and much more.

In the 2020/21 Financial Year, Council received just under \$20 million in funding from Federal, State and other relevant agencies. This enabled the delivery of key projects such as the Warragul Leisure Centre, Bellbird Park Pavilion and Multi-Use Community Space and the Erica to Rawson Intertown Trail. More than 30 projects were funded and delivered to the community.

Council is reliant on external funding to continue to deliver these valuable services to our community, and this strategy will continue to support this work as a priority for the organisation.

Baw Baw's Approach to Advocacy

To ensure Baw Baw Shire's approach to advocacy remains proactive, innovative and adaptable, a tiered approach to projects and initiatives will be developed. This structure will allow for quality advocacy across all levels of Government.

From the Baw Baw Shire Council Mayor to all Council Staff, this model will ensure everyone is actively engaged to guarantee Council's Advocacy Priorities always remain prominent.

Baw Baw Shire Council will aim to align their priorities with Regional, State and Federal Plans. Clearly demonstrating the connection between Local, State and Federal priorities will ensure long-term, strategic investment in the region.

Identified large-scale infrastructure initiatives are likely to remain a priority over the long-term, while other priorities will be funded or completed and removed in the short-term.

Ongoing Review and Management

Activities will be continuously monitored to ensure they are consistent with the objectives of the advocacy campaign. Sufficient flexibility and fluidity will be built into planning and design to ensure that campaigns can be altered and redirected at any time if the messaging is deemed to be moving off track or becoming an unacceptable risk. Advocacy campaigns will also align directly to State and Federal Budgets to ensure Council capitalises on major grant opportunities and electoral cycles.

A review function will be built into each advocacy campaign and action plan. Performance targets and indicators will be determined during the planning phase to allow actions to be set that facilitate achievement of the advocacy ask.

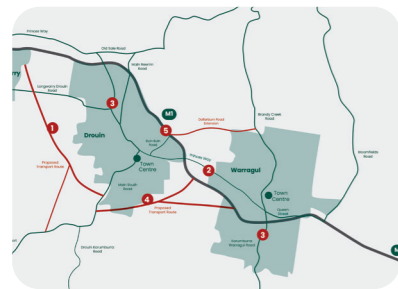


Advocacy Projects – Tier One

Tier One is Council's top 4 Advocacy Priorities. These are generally larger, long-term projects that align with the *Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021-2025*. They are major community initiatives of strategic significance underpinned by a resourced and planned approach.

Council will:

- Provide annual updates to the community on the progress of these priorities.
- Ensure these priorities are a key focus of discussions with Local, Regional, State and Federal influencers.
- Encourage community mobilisation through existing online and community-based networks through the introduction of Community Action Groups.
- Use these priorities to form the basis of submissions to State and Federal Budgets.
- Develop a range of advocacy assets for each campaign including media campaigns, communications plans, website content, economic impact studies, videography, concept drawings, promotional materials, social media assets and other supporting documents.



Warragul and Drouin Bypass

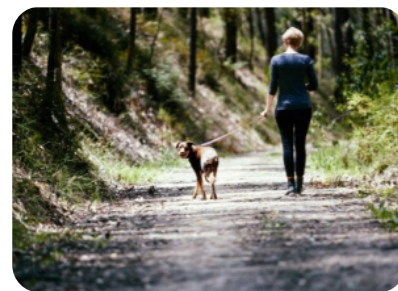
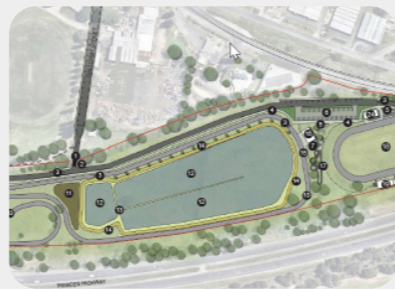
The arterial road networks for both Drouin and Warragul run directly through the centre of each town's CBD, which when combined with daily commuter and school drop-offs and pick-ups, means these towns have become 'no-go' zones for residents at different times each day.

These challenges have resulted in limited private commercial investment into the township over the years, with many retail premises being vacant and prime commercial land remaining undeveloped.

Logan Park Cycling Centre of Excellence

Logan Park is a long established and successful recreational and riding club based in Warragul. Many Australian champions have started their careers at the club.

The design intent is to create a functional, contemporary regional cycling hub that combines cycling sport facilities and community use. The project includes criterium circuit with various circuit lengths, municipal level competition BMX track, cyclo-cross course with obstacles and improved spectator facilities.



Tracks and Trails – Rokeby to Neerim Trail Extension

The Rokeby to Neerim Trail is one of the most scenic trails in Baw Baw Shire as it traverses natural bushland, provides scenic outlooks and prominent attractions.

This project will include the extension of the Trail to one of Baw Baw Shire's key tourism destinations – Noojee. Extending the trail a further 10kms north from Neerim to Noojee, would create a link to the historic town.

Baw Baw Civic Precinct Warragul

The Baw Baw Civic Precinct project aspires to build on existing spaces and infrastructure in the areas surrounding the West Gippsland Arts Centre and Warragul Civic Park by integrating new civic and community spaces.

The project will include a municipal library space, arts gallery and theatre spaces, public toilets, multi-purpose and community meeting spaces, Council customer and visitor service, additional car parking and integration between the proposed Civic Precinct and the existing Civic Park.



Advocacy Projects – Tier Two

Tier Two is Council's next 10 Advocacy Priorities. These are generally medium to large sized projects, that are likely to be delivered in the short, medium and long term based on the strategic alignment with Regional, State and Federal plans.

Council will:

- Provide annual updates to the community on the progress of these priorities.
- Ensure that they are referenced in any relevant submissions or position papers.
- Ensure these priorities are mentioned in discussions with Local, Regional, State and Federal key influencers.
- Develop a two-page promotional flyer and website content for each project for promotional purposes.
- Be aware and proactive in relation to any potential opportunities and act as appropriate.



Sealing of South Face Road – Tourist Route to Mt Baw Baw

This project will see the sealing of South Face Road, Mt Baw Baw to create a dynamic, safe and connected tourist route through Gippsland. This improvement will increase the number of visitors, better connect Mt Baw Baw to the surrounding regions and encourage private investment in the region.

Longwarry Sporting Precinct

This project will include upgrading the existing pavilion, improve the current playing surface and the development of second playing surface. This will provide facilities for the club to support their growing communities and host regional finals.



Events Gippsland – Gippsland Regional Events Fund

The economic impact of events in Gippsland can be broad and far-reaching from increased visitation and the localised expenditure associated with holding the event. The Gippsland Regional Events Fund will provide funding across Gippsland to attract new and significant events to Baw Baw Shire and the region.

Erica Mountain Bike Hub (Central 'G7' Gippsland Mountain Biking Hub)

The Erica Mountain Bike Park is currently home to Gippsland's premier crosscountry mountain bike trails. This project will see the creation of a regional trails hub at Erica as the park already offers a strong mountain biking experience close to the Warragul and Melbourne markets.



Longwarry Rezoning

The land along the Princes Highway in Longwarry is currently zoned as farming. The area on the inbound Melbourne side of the road has been strategically identified as a possible site for developing an industrial precinct, with its ease of access onto the Princes Highway. The land on the opposing side of the highway could benefit similarly from a rezoning to industrial.

Baxter Park Soccer Precinct

This project involves the staged development of the existing pavilion to ensure that the facility complies with Football Victoria's Building Development Guide, the Building Code of Australia and as part of Stage 2 works, National Premier League minimum facility requirements.



Advocacy Projects – Tier Three

Tier Three are other projects and initiatives endorsed by Council in strategic documents and policies, such as the Long Term Infrastructure Plan and the Economic Development Strategy.

Council will:

- Ensure that they are referenced in any relevant submissions or position papers.
- Ensure these priorities are mentioned in discussions with Local, Regional, State and Federal key influencers.
- Be aware and proactive in relation to any potential opportunities and act as appropriate.

Council's Advocacy Focus Areas

Council plays an important role in not only providing our communities with high quality assets and services, but in advocating for the needs of our communities. This includes advocating to State and Federal Governments to provide infrastructure and services in the following areas:



Health

The West Gippsland Hospital services the people of the region. Baw Baw is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Victoria and the existing infrastructure of the West Gippsland Hospital is struggling to keep up with the demand and growth of our region.

This includes providing high quality specialist care across the broader Baw Baw Shire community.



Education

Baw Baw Shire is committed to supporting the growth of early education services, however our community requires quality secondary and higher education providers.

Infrastructure commitments from State and Federal Governments are necessary to assist growth areas like the Baw Baw Shire to address these urgent community needs.



Community Resilience

As a regional Council, many of our smaller towns and communities are remotely located. Recent significant weather events such as storm and fire, have demonstrated that our communities lack access to secure connectivity and power. Infrastructure commitments are required from State, Federal and private businesses to ensure our residents and communities are safe and resilient during emergency events.



Services and Security

The rapid growth of Baw Baw Shire places significant pressure on provision of appropriate utility services such as water and sewerage for residents and businesses.

Additionally, the attraction of businesses to provide a workforce for our growing community are prohibited by access to key utility services.

1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Council

Council is responsible for agreeing to an advocacy framework and determining the key priorities. Council will also receive six-monthly updates on forward planning of advocacy opportunities, and an annual opportunity to review the key priorities.

Mayor

Baw Baw Shire's Mayor will lead advocacy activities. The Mayor will facilitate and strengthen strategic partnerships and focus on building networks that benefit the community. These networks will be at Local, Regional, State and National levels. The Mayor will also be responsible for keeping Councillors and our community informed.

Deputy Mayor

The Deputy Mayor will provide a high level of support to the Mayor, and lead advocacy initiatives when the Mayor unavailable.

Councillors

Baw Baw Shire's Councillors will actively advocate through their networks, and develop successful working relationships with our community. They will actively engage with the community to understand new and emerging community issues, and keep the community informed of Council's progress.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The Mayor and CEO will work closely together on all advocacy initiatives. The CEO will seek strategic partnerships at a Local, Regional, State and National level.

Council Staff

At the direction of this strategy and the CEO, Council Staff will be responsible for:

- Providing advice and support to Council in implementing advocacy projects.
- Seeking strategic partnerships at a Local, Regional, State and National Level.
- Developing an advocacy kit, tools and key messages.
- Developing forward plan of opportunities to work with strategic partners in driving advocacy projects/priorities. For example, policy launches, local government sector meetings, policy reviews, state/federal budgets, pilot proposals.
- Maintaining a comprehensive record of all advocacy related interactions and key stakeholders.
- Working with Council, Executive and Council Staff.

Community Action Groups

Council will develop Community Action Groups comprised of key community leaders. These groups will provide advice to Council on strategic advocacy project/s, undertake proactive strategic relationship management and understand Council objectives and goals.

1.3 A Strategic Approach to Advocacy

Objective 1: Advance agreed priority projects

- Develop a detailed advocacy document
- Identify connection between Council and Government Priorities
- Define roles and form individual action plans for each priority.

Objective 2: Develop an Advocacy Toolkit for Key Priorities

- Develop Advocacy Assets for use by Council and Community Action Groups as required
- Work with Mayor and CEO to develop a targeted approach to each advocacy project and provide ongoing support to advocacy campaigns.

Objective 3: Identify and Grow Relationships

- Identify Key Government Stakeholders across Federal and State Governments
- Identify community influencers that may be able to assist and align with relevant Community Action Groups
- Share informational updates on the progress of Council's Key Advocacy priorities.

Objective 4: Influence and Engage Decision Maker

- Welcome key partners/decision makers to meet regularly with Council and senior representatives
- Share advocacy documents with decision makers to provide up to date messaging of current projects and issues.

Objective 5: Share the Baw Baw Story

- Communicate the Baw Baw Shire Council story with key decision makers to reinforce Baw Baw's identity
- Celebrate success with the community.



Business Attraction and Investment

2.1 Better Business Program

What is it?

The Better Business Program will enhance the existing Better Approvals process at Baw Baw Shire and expand the level of support to businesses.

This initiative will see two clear streams of tailored business support to all new and growing businesses.

1. An enhancement to the Better Approvals process would include training across the organisation to increase customer service skills, identifying opportunities for process improvement across the duration of the customer's experience with Council and working with external agencies to increase information and support available through Council's Business Support Service.
2. The second aspect of this initiative is the development of the **Investment Incentive Scheme** which will include a range of incentives and customised support to businesses that are of a significant size and economic benefit to the region.

Why are we doing this?

Council is committed to supporting the attraction of new and expansion of existing businesses to create local jobs and support the economic needs of our growing community.

Currently, Baw Baw Shire Council offers businesses support through our Better Approvals process. While the program has provided significant benefit to new and existing businesses since its inception in 2019, this project will see the expansion and improvement of the program.

Additionally, the introduction of an incentive scheme designed to attract new, larger businesses to our region will create local employment opportunities.

Council has received a significant amount of feedback from our local industry on the challenges faced with navigating the permit process when starting or growing their business.

Key Initiatives

Improvements to the existing permit processes will be achieved through the following initiatives:

- Develop a process and acquire appropriate resources within the Economic Development Unit to support the preparation of applications, supporting businesses to obtain early referrals/ advice and generally provide detailed feedback prior to the submission of any documentation. This would support our Planning Team with a higher quality of application, streamline the planning process and meet the expectations of our customers.
- Establish stronger connections and alignment between Economic Development, Strategic Planning, Priority Development and Statutory Planning to provide a high-quality, consistent customer experience.
- Advocate for process improvements through the Victorian Government, and where possible assess and trial outcomes identified in the *Better Regulation Victoria - Planning and Building Approvals Process Review*.

Investment Incentive Scheme

The Investment Incentive Scheme would offer a range of incentives and customised support to businesses that meet the eligibility criteria within key industry sectors, including: Tourism, Food and Agribusiness, Health and Wellbeing, Education and Research and/or Renewable Energy

Incentives and support measures would vary depending on the business and requirements, however, some incentive measures can include:

- Dedicated and enhanced business support
- Property location assistance
- Guided familiarisation tours
- Business case assistance
- Industry networking
- Financial incentives such as fee waivers, deferred payments and assessments and written advice. Other financial incentives appropriate in the circumstances will be considered.
- Business profile, marketing, and connectivity
- Community Engagement

The Investment Incentive Scheme will also include working with the Strategic and Statutory Planning Teams to enhance the existing services offered with the introduction of a suitably qualified planner to Economic Development Unit. Traditionally, Council Planning Services do not provide specific advice or direct support in the preparation of an application to ensure there is transparency throughout the regulatory process.

“As we look to opportunities, we need to be inspirational and innovative; imagine possibility, opportunistic and forever optimistic. Being brave and broad thinking to create and identify the ideas. Don't think barriers first but openly think of what will deliver.”
– Baw Baw Shire Community Member

2.2 Future of Development and Strategic Growth

What is it?

Development of a network to shape the future of commercial, industrial, and agricultural infrastructure to support the growth of Baw Baw Shire. This group would include representatives from Council, SP AusNet, Telstra, Melbourne Water, Gippsland Water, Multinet and other similar agencies as required.

This project also includes the development and delivery of the Economic Land Use Strategy to be completed in 2021/22.

Why are we doing this?

Attracting investment provides significant economic stimulus, as new businesses in the community not only provide new jobs, but can also bring in new technology, facilitate innovation, stimulate investment and job creation through supply chains.

The attraction and investment of significant businesses to the region not only requires suitably zoned land, but the availability of infrastructure, such as commercial water, gas and electricity infrastructure. These limitations have led to limited investment across the region.

Key Initiatives

This initiative would provide better collaboration and alignment between Council, State and Private Industry on future infrastructure planning. The ability to activate commercial and industrial precincts across the region will likely see additional investment across many industries, including food innovation and manufacturing opportunities.

The significant agricultural product produced in the region would support development in food manufacturing and associated industries. Baw Baw Shire's supply and proximity to Melbourne would be well positioned for private investment along the growth corridor of the region.

Council is also commencing an Economic Land Use Strategy designed to identify opportunities for development and the future of economic land use. This process will be completed in consultation with the Economic Development Unit.

Once completed this strategy and the initiatives within the *Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategy 2022-2025* will support the delivery of any outcomes. This project will be completed in the 2021/22 Financial Year.

2.3 Discover Opportunities for Development

What is it?

Council will undertake required feasibility studies to identify opportunities for innovation precincts or significant development opportunities. These feasibility studies will then be used to advocate for private investment into the region.

Why are we doing this?

The purpose of a feasibility study is to examine the viability of a proposal, the investment required, potential challenges and opportunities.

There are opportunities for development of a number of appropriately zoned land parcels and market needs in Baw Baw Shire, however, private investment is yet to occur in these industries and locations. To encourage private investment, high-level options for development and land use can be used as tools to attract investment for key projects and locations.

Key Initiatives

Feasibility studies and high level concept plans are excellent marketing tools in the attraction of investment to the region. The outcomes of this initiative would lead to significant economic benefit, creation of local jobs and support the development of a self-sufficient economy and community.

Feasibility studies can include:

- Economic feasibility: The potential economic impacts of the successful completion of the project.
- Financial feasibility: Assessment of the level of financial investment required to deliver the project and the potential return on investment, both for the investor and the broader region.
- Marketing feasibility: Detailed information on demographics, target market, potential market impact and penetration.
- Location feasibility: Detailed information on the land such as land surveying, land zoning, impact on the surrounding area, traffic issues and relevant information on surrounding businesses in the area.
- Workforce feasibility: A detailed understanding of the local workforce, the skills or expertise required and/or potential workforce that can be generated from the project.

Projects selected for feasibility worked will be determined by economic benefit to the region, market need and development of land determined through relevant strategic documents, such as the Economic Land Use Strategy.

2.4 Work from Home Hub

What is it?

A Work from Home Hub is an expansion of the existing traditional coworking spaces, providing individuals and businesses with a shared space, resources and community.

This space is designed to be used, either by those starting out as solopreneurs or businesses who have recently commenced operating from home. The last two years have provided a foundation for a cultural and structural shift in the way in which businesses operate and Baw Baw Shire is looking to the future.

Why are we doing this?

Since the impacts of COVID-19 on our communities, Council has seen a significant increase in the number of businesses operating from home. For many individuals and businesses, there are many benefits to working from home, either as a sole business owner or operating with staff, however, there are challenges to operating businesses in this way for a number of industries.

To meet the needs of a changing businesses environment and equip new businesses, or businesses operating from home with the appropriate resources to grow, Council will explore new ways to offer support.

Key Initiatives

This initiative would involve partnering with Private Business, State and Federal Governments to redefine coworking spaces.

A Work from Home Hub would offer services such as:

- Access to loan IT equipment and IT support
- Meeting spaces
- Virtual networking opportunities within the Hub
- Human Resources support
- Printing Services
- Training and development programs to support the scale up of home-based businesses
- And many more!

This initiative allows for businesses to operate from home and have access to the resources to support a growing and thriving business. Operating a business can be equal parts exciting and challenging, and a key part to sustaining and growing a successful business is to create a community of like-minded businesses and individuals to support you on your journey.

As businesses grow and expand so do their needs, such as, a space to meet clients, pitch investors and appropriate supporting resources are all keys to future success. While COVID-19 presented many and varied challenges, we have also seen growth in entrepreneurs across many industries and the future of business operations forever changed. Council is committed to supporting businesses from home, or any other location – stay local, grow global.



**Business and
Workforce
Development**

3.1 Pathways from Industry to Education

What is it?

This initiative will include partnering with education providers and businesses to determine opportunities to create non-traditional education pathways to upskill and retain workers.

Why are we doing this?

This initiative will aim to support two significant challenges affecting the workforce in Baw Baw Shire.

- Attracting and retaining a skilled and unskilled workforce has been a significant challenge for businesses across a variety of industries.
- The number of individuals leaving the region to pursue education opportunities continues to remain high. Those who return or choose to stay often don't explore non-traditional education pathways to upskill once employed.

Key Initiatives

A Working Group will be established and led by Council to undertake a review of the current situation, opportunities for improvement and the introduction of a pilot program to increase non-traditional education pathways for employers and employees across Baw Baw Shire.

Additionally, Council will undertake a detailed review of the current workforce to ensure key industry sectors have access to an appropriate workforce and remain competitive.

This assessment would provide information on the key issues faced by varying industries, strategic context, current state, gaps within the industry, skills and capacity required for the future and opportunities connected to education to resolve these challenges.

3.2 Improving Opportunities for Procurement

What is it?

Project tendering and request for quotations is a way for businesses to access the procurement market. The procurement market includes projects from both the private and public sectors. These projects can be based locally, within Victoria or across Australia.

This initiative will provide benefit to not only opportunities provided by Baw Baw Shire Council, but other Government Agencies and relevant private/commercial businesses.

Why are we doing this?

This initiative would support the development of a circular economy. A circular economy is an economic system designed to ensure products and services lose minimal value and are retained within the system.

Baw Baw Shire is home to a number of highly-skilled businesses offering various services and products. As one of the largest organisations in the region, Baw Baw Shire Council procures a variety of goods and services to support the work we do in our community. In addition, other Government Agencies across various levels and private/commercial businesses are also often seeking suitably qualified businesses to provide a variety of products and services. Providing businesses with the necessary support to successfully be awarded these contracts is imperative to the long-term success and growth of local industries.

Key Initiatives

This initiative would see the development of a training package and support program for eligible businesses to guide their growth and development through the acquisition of tenders, leading to the creation of employment and economic benefit to the broader region.

The training package would be a delivered over a six-month period (from application to final session) and provide skills development and connection in the following areas:

- Identifying opportunities for tenders or project quotations
- Ability to pitch and sell your business effectively
- Training opportunities, including but not limited to, upskill in tender writing, website and online presence development and how to scale your business to meet the requirements of relevant projects
- Networking opportunities and introductions to relevant stakeholders.

Entry into this program would require the business to meet an eligibility criteria and a commitment to the duration of the program. The eligibility would include offering a product or service with opportunity and scope to successfully tender for projects, be located within Baw Baw Shire and engage local product and workforce where possible.

Additionally, this initiative will also include a review and potential recommendations on the effectiveness of local weighting on achieving good economic outcomes for Baw Baw Shire.

3.3 The Baw Baw Young Professionals Network

What is it?

The Baw Baw Young Professionals Network is aimed at professionals under the age of 40. This network will provide connection and learning opportunities for new and younger residents

Why are we doing this?

Throughout the initial engagement of this strategy, feedback was received that for young professionals looking to relocate to regional areas, there is a significant gap in the quality and opportunities for professional development and ability to create connections and relationships within the community.

Key Initiatives

This network will consist of a collective of like-minded individuals from across the public, private and non-for-profit sectors, brought together to support our local community and professional growth.

Activities will include:

- Events and programs that raise awareness of local industry, future opportunities and the broader economic picture for Baw Baw Shire and the Gippsland Region.
- Peer-led professional development opportunities, including education, mentoring and skill development.
- Opportunities to connect and network with young leaders and like-minded professionals. Establishing relationships with peers, industry professionals and Government bodies.

3.4 Regional Business Grant Fund

What is it?

The Regional Business Grant Fund will see a partnership established across Gippsland with the six Gippsland Local Government Authorities contributing to a regional funding pool, and working with State and Federal Governments to obtain match funding,

The fund would contain streams focusing on business planning, training and procuring equipment designed to increase employment and economic growth.

Why are we doing this?

Over the last two years the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) offered funding targeted to support growth in small to medium businesses. The program was designed to provide opportunities for increased economic growth and employment.

This funding program has seen approximately \$500,000 injected into the Baw Baw Shire economy and continued economic benefits from the successful businesses. The benefits to many businesses included the ability to offer an increase of services, develop online facilities, employ new staff, purchase equipment to allow scale, and begin the export of product and other similar initiatives.

At this stage the LVA has not secured operational beyond June 2022. This program has concluded, with no other funding opportunities targeted at this sector of the economy.

Key Initiatives

This funding program will enable small to medium businesses to acquire necessary equipment, commence export, perform enhanced online capabilities, employ of new staff, introduce of new products or services to the region, establish business partnerships and fast track growth.

Program eligibility would be developed in partnership with all key stakeholders, and include criteria such as:

- Be a legally structured business registered in Gippsland with an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Businesses that have been operational for less than three years
- An annual turnover of under \$1.5m
- The employment of new staff, or potential increase in revenue
- Utilisation of local products and services

The program would run a pilot in Year One, with the view to develop as an ongoing annual program.

3.5 Supporting our Indigenous Economy

What is it?

The Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy Gippsland is the starting point towards ensuring a self-managed and self-determined future of the local communities.

Why are we doing this?

Whilst the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) is the host organisation for this strategy, it has been developed with a full invitation for the whole of Community, its organisations and Aboriginal business to contribute during the consultation phase. The strategy recognises that not everyone would have contributed given the limitations during COVID-19 and that is why GLaWAC have developed a 'living strategy' that will grow and allow ongoing engagement with those wishing to contribute to the economic future of Aboriginal Gippsland.

Some of the key goals of this strategy include:

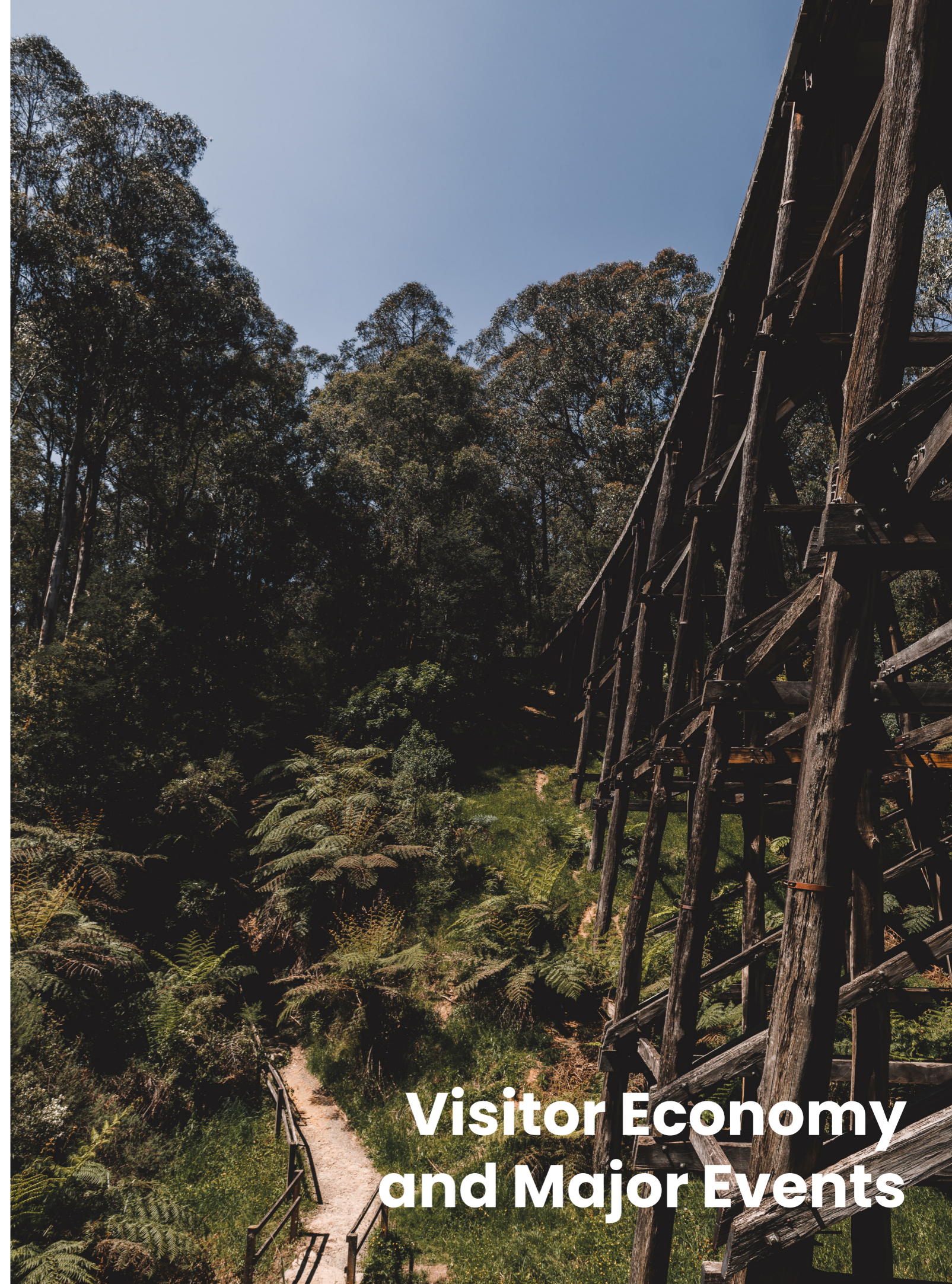
- Raise the awareness of the Gippsland Aboriginal Community about opportunities in business & entrepreneurship.
- Build the profile of Aboriginal businesses – private and Community enterprises – to the broader business sector and Community in Gippsland.
- Strengthen the relationships between Aboriginal businesses and Community with non-Aboriginal businesses.
- Facilitate greater coordination of government, industry bodies, philanthropy, business, Traditional Owner Corporations & Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation investment and initiatives in Aboriginal business/ economic development.

- Provide a range of inclusive and targeted training / information sessions on business ownership for Community members exploring options and pathways to business ownership.
- Provide and facilitate access to culturally appropriate and informed support such as business planning, mentoring/coaching, networking, seed and capital funding relevant to all stages in the business life cycle to enable businesses to build skills and grow.
- Support businesses to expand markets using e-commerce and other technologically based platforms.
- Invest in demonstration projects in caring for Country, cultural tourism and creative arts.

Key Initiatives

This initiative would provide better collaboration and alignment between Council, GLaWAC and other key stakeholders to support greater economic outcomes for the Aboriginal community in Baw Baw Shire and broader Gippsland.

Council will partner with and support, where appropriate, the actions and projects contained in the Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy Gippsland.



**Visitor Economy
and Major Events**

4.1 Focus on Industry and Development – Strengthening the Brand

What is it?

Target Council's resources to work closely with industry, stakeholder groups and communities to create significant, high-quality visitor experiences across the region.

Why are we doing this?

The State Government recently undertook a review of regional tourism boards to guide how the Government could support opportunities to grow the tourism market.

The review identified five key themes that presented opportunities for regional tourism:

- Strengthening our tourism offering
- Making the most of our marketing spending
- Supporting industry
- Enhancing Regional Tourism Boards
- Better coordinating efforts.

Some key learnings from this review included:

- There needs to be a more collaborative marketing approach, one that focuses on the bigger picture and ensures marketing funds are not spread across smaller campaigns that have less impact.
- Regional Victoria offers many unique natural assets and lesser-known experiences for visitors.
- A collaborative cross-regional approach led by boards, working with councils, industry and local tourism organisations to feed through to the Victorian Government.
- Many stakeholders contribute to the success of regional tourism across government, industry and the community, but there is a sense we are not working together.

Prior to COVID-19, Baw Baw Shire has witnessed an increase in visitor numbers, and now more than ever meeting the needs of the visitor experience is crucial. Supporting industry and product development will offer a greater capacity to attract and retain visitors in Baw Baw Shire.

Key Initiatives

Activities to be featured under this initiative would include:

- Work with communities to identify specific projects, develop concept plans, identify funding streams, apply for, and lead projects on behalf of the industry.
- Develop itineraries across Baw Baw Shire in partnership with businesses and industry to attract new visitors to the region. For example, a Baw Baw Food Trail, and other similar initiatives.
- Curate content with businesses to be used in marketing campaigns and undertake photography and videography to increase the tourism asset library for the region.
- Offer tourism-based familiarisation tours, and visitor information training to businesses and staff across Baw Baw Shire.
- Provide specific industry development opportunities.
- Increase Visitor Information Services across the Shire, as per the outcomes of the *Baw Baw Shire Recreational Vehicle Strategy 2021-2024*.
- Undertake tourism research projects to better understand the demographics and needs of visitors to the region.
- Work with neighbouring Councils to leverage off other major events, tourism attractions and visitor services in the region.
- Development of Baw Baw Shire's Official Visitor Guide.

This initiative would also see Council align its marketing efforts underneath the Visit Gippsland brand. Council would partner with Destination Gippsland to combine resources to deliver dedicated marketing initiatives for Baw Baw Shire.

Marketing initiatives and supporting materials would be developed under this partnership and allow Council to provide an increased effort on industry development and product development to create significant, high-quality visitor experiences.

4.2 A Regional Approach to Destination Action Plans

What is it?

Develop a consistent approach to tourism across Baw Baw Shire and incorporate the Destination Action Plans with the *Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategy 2022-2025* and apply the key initiatives across the region.

Why are we doing this?

The aim of this initiative is to achieve the following outcomes across Baw Baw Shire:

- Identify guiding principles for developing Baw Baw Shire as a tourism destination
- Build on each destination's strengths and address weaknesses
- Prioritise the identified actions, issues and opportunities
- Identify projects that can be progressed within current budgets and stakeholder resourcing – either by Baw Baw Shire Council, the tourism industry or other agencies, and through partnerships
- Increase length of stay and yield from current visitor groups
- Improve collaboration between local stakeholders, Council and industry to maximise outcomes.

The existing plans provided contain valuable insights and have several significant initiatives that would be best applied either across the broader region or aligned with this strategy more closely. The Destination Action Plans have previously been delivered through the leadership and resource of Council. This initiative will extend support to the broader region.

Key Initiatives

The following items will be delivered across Baw Baw Shire:

- Improvements to tourism signage
- Promote and support accessible tourism
- Delivery of the *Baw Baw Shire Recreational Vehicle Strategy 2021-2024*
- Update visitor information including themed experiences and itinerary building precinct/location
- Identify and support the development current and potential cycling and recreation opportunities
- Investigate opportunities for enhancing the appeal of townships, through the installation of public art and streetscaping, profiling the work of the local arts community
- Create an image library with new photos and footage to support marketing and visitor engagement
- Undertake visitor surveys to establish a greater understanding of visitors, their requirements, preferences and understanding of the destination
- Industry training and development opportunities to increase capacity of businesses in the region
- Improve infrastructure within key tourism destinations in relation to sewerage and pedestrian access around the town and other relevant visitor infrastructure.

Council will continue to support the three destinations previously identified: Noojee and Surrounds, Walhalla and Mountain Rivers and Yarragon and Surrounds.

4.3 Establishing Baw Baw Shire as the home of Food and Wine

What is it?

The development of high quality, tourism products that showcases Baw Baw Shire as a key destination for world-class food and wine experiences.

Why are we doing this?

Baw Baw Shire is known for its rich agricultural history, incredible produce and stunning scenery.

Throughout the development of this strategy a significant number of community members advised Council that they would like to see our region capitalise on the wide and rich array of natural assets and produce found in Baw Baw Shire.

Our region is home to amazing fruit and vegetable growers, milk, cheese and dairy producers, wine makers, cellar doors, distilleries and breweries. This initiative will develop products that not only support our local industry, but develop high quality tourism products to attract visitors to the region.

Key Initiatives

This initiative will support the development and delivery of food, wine and nature-based products that further boost local industry in Baw Baw Shire.

Baw Baw Food and Wine Trail

Part of this program will be the development of the Baw Baw Food and Wine Trail – a trail dedicated to sharing all the best places to eat, forage, sip, shop, learn and tour in our region.

Council will seek to partner with local producers and develop a trail to highlight the very best our region has to offer and create viable, tourism products for marketing to domestic and international visitors.

Opportunities to partner with touring business will also be explored.

Baw Baw Wine Region

Baw Baw Shire is home to rich, fertile soils that offer the opportunity to produce world-class wine products.

The region is home to a number of significant wine producers who will support Baw Baw Shire in obtaining recognition as an official wine region. This will provide opportunity to promote our region on the world stage and for local producers to acknowledge on their branding where their product comes from.

Marketing Campaigns

In partnership with Destination Gippsland, undertake specific marketing campaigns centred on positioning Baw Baw Shire as a key destination for food and beverage experiences.

4.4 Investment and Resource in Sustainable, Nature-Based Tourism

What is it?

Baw Baw Shire is known for incredible nature-based attractions and trails located throughout the region. Developing environmentally conscious, sustainable tourism products for now and the future of our region.

This initiative will review nature-based experiences and sustainable tourism products, identifying and gaps and opportunities within the market and seek enhancement of existing product.

Why are we doing this?

Natural assets and attractions are often managed and maintained by different stakeholders and investment in maintenance is limited.

While State and Federal Governments have invested in the development of tracks and trails over recent years, existing trails and experiences require ongoing maintenance and investment. These activities are essential to meeting the needs and expectations of visitors to enjoy high-quality experiences in Baw Baw Shire.

Opportunities in Eco and Sustainable Tourism

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are a significant market trend that will impact visitor travel in the future. Council has the opportunity to introduce EV charging stations to support this demand in a sustainable way that will enhance our economy.

Recreational Use of Tarago Reservoir

Tarago Reservoir is located near Neerim South and supplies water to Westernport and Mornington Peninsula. The Reservoir is closed for recreational use, with the Tarago Reservoir Picnic Site open to day visitors.

Baw Baw Shire is home to another popular water way – Blue Rock Dam in Willow Grove. Blue Rock Dam to a significant number of recreational users each year and adds economic value to the surrounding towns. Tarago Reservoir will offer the opportunity for Council to increase its tourism offering and attract new visitors to the region.

While the delivery of this initiative is not the responsibility of Council, working with other relevant stakeholders such as Melbourne Water will present the opportunity to open up the discussion with our community on the feasibility and potential of the Tarago Reservoir.

Key Initiatives

Council undertakes the development of partnerships with key agencies including, Parks Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, community groups and agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

This initiative would include advocating for funding and support for the ongoing maintenance of these assets to ensure we provide visitors with high-quality tourism experiences in Baw Baw Shire.

The Future of Electric Vehicles

Undertake a feasibility study and assessment for the identification of EV charging locations, economic benefit and potential funding models to support a growing tourism market.

Recreational Use of Tarago Reservoir

Work with relevant stakeholders and community members to determine the level of support and potential recreational development of Tarago Reservoir.

4.5 Major Events

What is it?

Council is committed to host four regionally significant events within Baw Baw Shire each year. These events are designed to have significant economic impact, increase visitor numbers, create additional expenditure and grow awareness of the region.

Why are we doing this?

Successful events are the catalyst for the growth and success of the tourism industry. These events not only provide a much needed injection into the economy, but increase the brand awareness of the region.

Baw Baw Shire is home to one of the most significant event venues in Gippsland, Lardner Park. Lardner Park is Gippsland's premier regional venue, offering unique and flexible indoor and outdoor spaces designed to host a variety of festivals, exhibitions, conferences, sporting events, meetings, trade shows, expos and more. This venue offers significant opportunity for the future of major events in the region.

Key Initiatives

On an annual basis the following event types are proposed:

- Food and Wine
- Music
- Sport; and
- Recreation and Arts

This model will provide capacity to increase the industry development associated with events by itinerary building, activations with business and tourism groups around events and maximising the economic impact of these events.

Smaller events will still be considered in line with available budget, resourcing and potential economic benefit to the region.

Currently, Council has a strategic partnership with Lardner Park that is reviewed on an annual basis. Council will seek to review the outcomes of this partnership to better deliver on the attraction and success of events in the region.

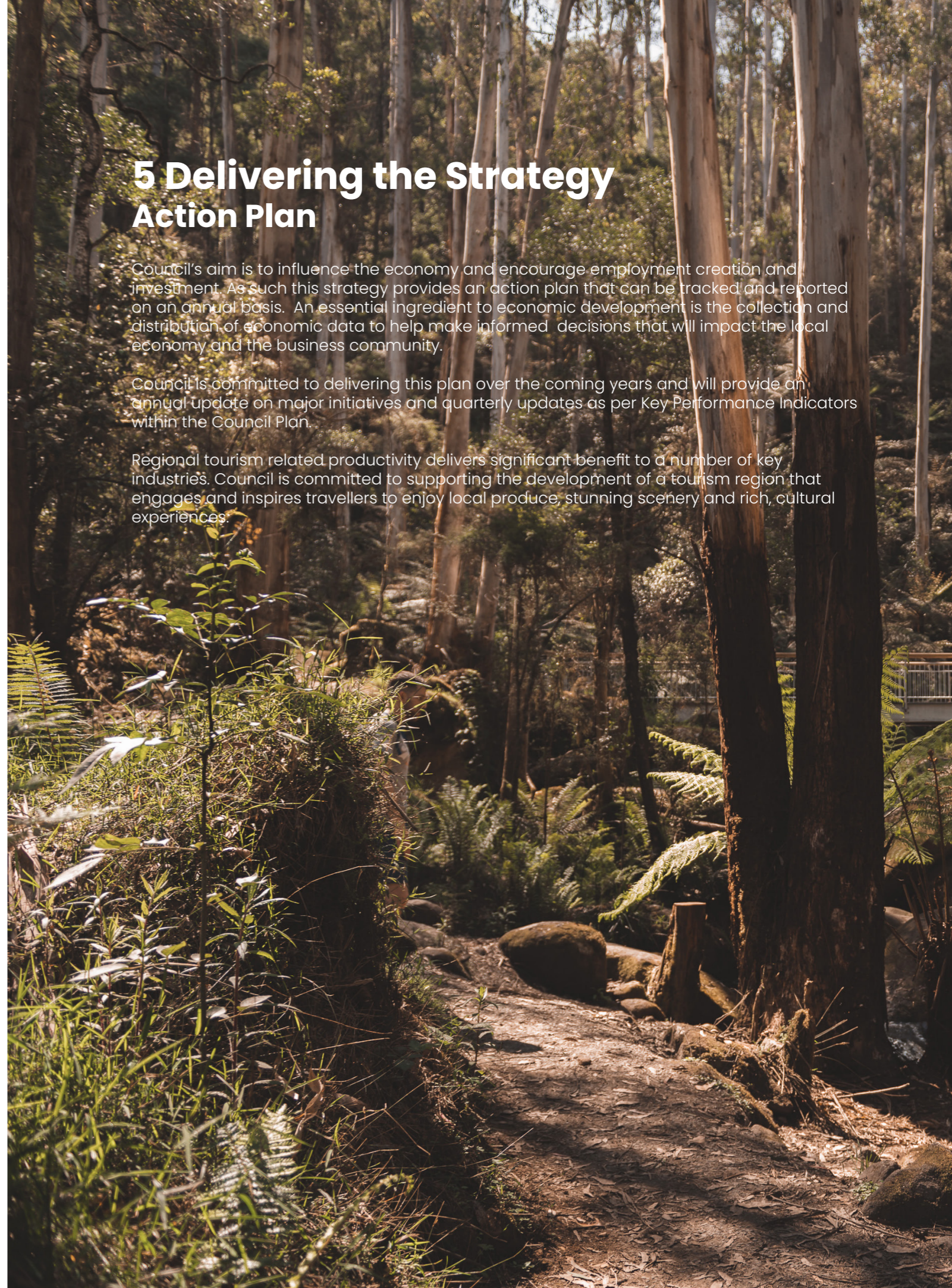
Additionally, Council will continue to work with the six Local Government Authorities across Gippsland to leverage opportunities for local industry from events held outside of Baw Baw Shire. This includes supporting the development and delivery of Events Gippsland in partnership with Destination Gippsland.

5 Delivering the Strategy Action Plan

Council's aim is to influence the economy and encourage employment creation and investment. As such this strategy provides an action plan that can be tracked and reported on an annual basis. An essential ingredient to economic development is the collection and distribution of economic data to help make informed decisions that will impact the local economy and the business community.

Council is committed to delivering this plan over the coming years and will provide an annual update on major initiatives and quarterly updates as per Key Performance Indicators within the Council Plan.

Regional tourism related productivity delivers significant benefit to a number of key industries. Council is committed to supporting the development of a tourism region that engages and inspires travellers to enjoy local produce, stunning scenery and rich, cultural experiences.



5.1 Advocacy and Leadership

Strategy/Actions	Delivery Timeframe	Measure	Target
5.1.1 Endorse priority advocacy issues and projects	Annual	Completed	1
5.1.2 Action plans developed to identify requirements for each Tier One project	Annual	Completed	4
5.1.3 Develop advocacy assets and strategic marketing for Tier One Projects	Annual	Completed	4
5.1.4 Develop advocacy assets for Tier Two Projects	Annual	Completed	6
5.1.5 Deliver marketing material through networks and key stakeholders directly to identified growth opportunities	Annual	Number of communications of marketing materials	20
5.1.6 Meet with responsible State and Federal Minister(s)	Annual	Number of meetings	8
5.1.7 Provide positive economic development media statements associated with key industries and recent success stories	Annual	Number of media releases	8
5.1.8 Engage, support and collaborate with regional leaders and participate in the development of regional plans to shape the future of the economy in Baw Baw Shire	Annual	Memberships with key partners	6
		Number of submissions to strategic plans	4
5.1.9 Embed economic outcomes in decision-making across the organisation	Annual	Development of internal protocol	1
5.1.10 Apply for grants and external funding as required to continue to deliver the strategic objectives of the organisation	Annual	Number of grant applications submitted	15



Major Initiatives

- Adopt a strategic approach to advocacy priorities and key focus areas
- Successful attraction of funding for priority projects

5.2 Business Attraction and Investment

Strategy/Actions	Delivery Timeframe	Measure	Target
5.2.1 Work with partners to proactively identify and engage with prospective investors/businesses in identified targeted sectors	Annual	Number of activities	10
5.2.2 Build relationships with developer and potential investors	Ongoing	Number of new contacts	20
5.2.3 Create positive media statements regarding the livability of Baw Baw Shire	Annual	Number of media releases	4
5.2.4 Monitor land use activity and changes in economic activity to identify emerging trends and opportunities for economic growth	Ongoing	Participation in relevant strategic planning	2
5.2.5 Support creation of promotional materials that demonstrate the benefit of living and working in Baw Baw Shire	Annual	Marketing program delivered	1
5.2.6 Support the development and delivery of the <i>Economic Land Use Strategy</i>	Annual	Participation on project working group	1



Major Initiatives

- Better Business Program
- Future of Development and Strategic Growth of Baw Baw Shire
- Discover Opportunities for Development
- Work from Home Hub

5.3 Business and Workforce Development

Strategy/Actions	Delivery Timeframe	Measure	Target
5.3.1 Engage with local businesses and business associations to understand and support business needs and priorities	Annual	Number of business engagements	2000
5.3.2 Strengthen the promotion of 'Buy Local' initiatives to support key sector businesses	Annual	Marketing program delivered	1
5.3.3 Provide quarterly economic updates to Council as per the Council Plan	Annual	As per Council Plan reporting	4
5.3.4 Support local businesses through workshops and seminars that promote skill and business development outcomes	Annual	Number of workshops held	8
5.3.5 Facilitate skill development and networking programs to support businesses	Annual	Number of sessions	8
5.3.6 Refer businesses to State/Commonwealth Government assistance programs and other support agencies as required	Annual	Number of referrals	50
5.3.7 Support and review the delivery Start Up Gippsland in partnership with the 6 Local Government Authorities in Gippsland	Annual	Number of programs and workshops	2
5.3.8 Continue to deliver and improve Baw Baw Shire's Business Support Service	Annual	Number of enquiries to the Business Support Service	700
5.3.9 Apply for, and if successful deliver the outcomes of the Local Development Strategy Grants Program to the Noojee community to support the Victorian Forestry Plan	Short Term	Successful funding and delivery of objectives	1
5.3.10 Undertake an analysis of trends and opportunities for the region (Post-COVID)	Medium Term	Completion of the analysis	1
5.4.11 Support the delivery of actions identified in the Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy Gippsland	Ongoing	Number of actions and initiatives supported	6



Major Initiatives

- Pathways from Industry to Education
- Improving Opportunities for Procurement
- The Baw Baw Young Professionals Network
- Regional Business Grant Fund
- Supporting our Indigenous Economy

5.4 Visitor Economy and Major Events

Strategy/Actions	Delivery Timeframe	Measure	Target
5.4.1 Showcase and promote the region's attractions and events to facilitate growth in visitation and spending	Annual	Number of marketing activities	4
5.4.2 Develop a marketing and events calendar identifying opportunities for businesses to get involved and leverage off these initiatives	Short Term	Develop a calendar of events	1
5.4.3 Work with the State and Federal Governments to ensure that the region's tourism businesses have presence on their marketing channels	Annual	Number of marketing activities	4
5.4.4 Continue and enhance Council's strategic partnership with Lardner Park	Short Term	Development of new strategic Lardner Park	1
5.4.5 Deliver the outcomes of the <i>Baw Baw Shire Recreational Vehicle Strategy 2021-2024</i> including Visitor Information Services	Annual	Number of initiatives delivered	6
5.4.6 Support the development and delivery of Events Gippsland. Leverage the Events Gippsland events acquisition fund to attract major events to Baw Baw Shire.	Annual	Participation on Events Gippsland Working Group	10
5.4.7 Support the development and delivery of the projects identified in the Gippsland Tracks and Trails Strategy, through advocacy and funding support.	Ongoing (Annual)	Progress of projects, successful funding applications, completion of designs and studies	3
5.4.8 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to partner on product development and marketing opportunities to support visitation to the region, both on and off the mountain.	Ongoing (Annual)	Signed MOU	1
5.4.9 Explore opportunities to greater understand the economic value of the visitor economy.	Medium Term	Strategy/Report	1

Major Initiatives

- Focus on Industry and Development - Strengthening the Brand
- A Regional Approach to Destination Action Plans
- Establishing Baw Baw Shire as the home of Food and Wine
- Investment and Resource in Sustainable, Nature-Based Tourism
- Major Events

Aberfeldy. Athlone.
Bravington. Buln Buln.
Buln Buln East. Darnum.
Drouin. Erica. Fumina
South. Hill End. Icy Creek.
Jindivick. Longwarry.
Moondarra. Neerim.
Neerim North. Neerim
South. Nilma. Noojee.
Parkers Corner. Rawson.
Rokeby. Tanjil Bren.
Tetoora Road. Thorpdale.
Trafalgar. Walhalla.
Warragul. Willow Grove.
Yarragon.

For further information contact Council's
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