HUME REGION
LOCAL GOVERNMENT NETWORK

Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry Into
Local Economic Development Initiatives in Victoria
August 2012

Secretariat:
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20 August 2012

Mr Neale Burgess MLA
Chair
Economic Development and
Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
Melbourne, Vic 3002

Dear Mr Burgess

The Hume Region Local Government Network (HRLGN) is pleased to have the opportunity to make a submission to this Parliamentary Inquiry.

HRLGN is comprised of twelve member councils:

- Alpine Shire Council
- Benalla Rural City Council
- City of Greater Shepparton
- Indigo Shire Council
- Mansfield Shire Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Moira Shire Council
- Murrindindi Shire Council
- Rural City of Wangaratta
- Strathbogie Shire Council
- Towong Shire Council
- Wodonga Rural City Council

While some of our members may also make submissions on behalf of their individual council, this submission reflects our shared, regional perspective.

We believe economic development - including investment attraction, sustainable growth and tourism is fundamental to the development of prosperous rural and regional communities and critical to the sustainability and liveability of our region.

We would welcome the opportunity to present this submission at a hearing and answer any questions the Committee may have.

For further information, please contact our Executive Officer Ann Telford, by phone on [redacted], or by email to [redacted]

Yours sincerely

Cr Roberto Paino
CHAIR – HUME REGION LOCAL GOVERNMENT NETWORK
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Introduction

The Hume Region covers over 40,000 sq. kms of rural and regional Victoria. It encompasses twelve municipal areas and most of the state’s Alpine Resorts.

Alpine Shire Council  Benalla Rural City Council  City of Greater Shepparton  Indigo Shire Council  Mansfield Shire Council  Mitchell Shire Council  Moira Shire Council  Murrindindi Shire Council  Rural City of Wangaratta  Strathbogie Shire Council  Towong Shire Council  Wodonga Rural City Council  Falls Creek  Mt Hotham  Mt Buller  Mt Stirling

As members of the Hume Region Local Government Network, we work collaboratively in some region-wide endeavours but also operate in four sub-regional groups. They are:

- **Upper Hume:** Wodonga, Towong, Indigo
- **Central Hume:** Wangaratta, Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield
- **Lower Hume:** Mitchell, Murrindindi
- **Goulburn Valley:** Shepparton, Moira, Strathbogie.

1 http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Hume-Region-LGAs
The combination of both rural and regional locations within Hume provides a diversity of life experiences and priorities for our communities. The variety of landscapes, three regional centres, differing levels of access to services and infrastructure, various approaches to land use planning and a range of economic drivers also provide a range of outcomes for communities and the environment. We embrace the differences and work together across organisations and boundaries to build the best possible future for the region as a whole.

Our shared vision is:

“The Hume Region will be resilient, diverse and thriving. It will capitalise on the strengths and competitive advantages of the four sub regions, to harness growth for the benefit of the region and to develop livable and sustainable communities.”

Economic development in our rural and regional areas is comprised of a broad range of complementary activities. They are carried out by staff of many disciplines and by all levels of staff within Councils. They range from Customer Service desks through to the CEO. In our experience, these activities account for a large proportion of annual expenditure. Our activities are driven by our commitment to improving socio-economic levels and the sustainability and livability of our communities.

A characteristic and strength of the Hume Region is that Local Government and the Alpine Resorts individually and collectively contribute and drive economic activity. The nature of the relationship is mutually beneficial to the economic wellbeing of the region.

In Hume Region, economic development activities are based on the following principles:

1. Economic development is fundamental to the development of prosperous rural and regional communities, and underpins the sustainability and liveability of our region.
2. Successful economic development relies upon a strategic approach.
3. We seek sustainable growth, rather than growth at any cost.
4. Effective partnerships, both within our region and with state and federal governments, are critical to our success.
5. Economic development requires the investment of resources from all levels of government and the private sector.
6. Infrastructure investment in the regional centres of Shepparton, Wangaratta and Wodonga, drives economic growth and prosperity across our region.

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A. Economic development programs and activities

A range of programs are undertaken across the region, some of which are provided region wide and some are municipality specific, depending on the nature of that area:

- **Key strategic planning initiatives**

  The development of strategies, master plans and strategic initiatives utilise current knowledge (either industry sector or geographical) and aim to direct development in an appropriate manner which will benefit businesses and community alike.

- **Investment ready industrial land**

  Maintaining a stock of industrial land which is adequately zoned with adequate services and infrastructure works as an investment tool and also directs growth and investment in appropriate areas.

- **Skills development programs**

  A lack of skills supporting local business growth aspirations is a key barrier to economic development and requires government intervention to supply skills either directly (for example regional skills migration) or via up-skilling and continuous learning opportunities (for example Rural Skills Connect).

- **Facilitating new investment / business**

  An outcome of strategic planning initiatives is the provision of a service which assists and attracts new investment and businesses within identified appropriate areas or sectors.

- **Promotional activities**

  Local Government plays a key role in facilitating marketing activities on behalf of a sector (for example industry and investment attraction, food and wine, cycling, Ned Kelly, events, conferencing) or the municipality/region (population, visitor and consumer attraction).

- **Urban renewal initiatives**

  Given the growth aspirations of the region, larger regional centres are now facing a period of urban renewal within older areas of cities to enhance best use of land and infrastructure for the benefit of business and the community.
B. Roles and responsibilities of Local and State Government

Regional centres have self-contained economies. That is, the economic activity, such as job creation, industry, service provision and retail is largely generated from and managed within the catchment of the regional centre. In this context, Local Government’s role is to:

- Stimulate economic activity
- Act as a driver for growth and prosperity
- Ensure that impediments to investment and economic are minimised e.g., zoning, investment ready land, and approval processes
- Promote and encourage sustainable development, from both an environmental and economic perspective
- Provide necessary infrastructure for liveability, (such as performing arts centres, aquatic centres, recreational hubs and streetscapes) and for economic development (such as industrial estates, retail precincts, tourism and agriculture)
- Ensure the workforce has the appropriate skills
- Generate investment through the provision and facilitation of grants
- Act as a point of contact and advice for prospective business
- Provide tailored support for key industry sectors including agri-food, food and wine, retail and manufacturing.

The State Government’s role is to:

- Partner with all levels of government for major infrastructure investment as an enabler for economic growth
- Provide grant and funding programs as a stimulant
- Provide whole of government approach and one stop shop to investment opportunities through RDV/RDA
- Act as an advisor
- Provide direct support in crisis times, such as with a major employer issue or emergency event response situation
- Streamline processes
- Provide employment programs
- Remove barriers to investment and economic activity
C. Differences in role of Local Government in rural and regional areas to that of metropolitan based municipalities

The role of Local Government in rural and regional areas is totally different to that of metropolitan based municipalities.

Regional centres look after self-contained economies where the primary activity and stimulus for jobs occurs within the region. This may involve the regional centre itself or hinterland towns and villages contributing and benefiting from the economic activity. This economic activity includes tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, retail service provision, commerce, health and education.

Regional centres are the drivers and epicentre of those economies. Rural councils rely upon and leverage off the regional centres while contributing in their own right according to the characteristics of their particular localised economies.

Metropolitan based municipalities are the receivers of economic development. It happens despite them. They do not oversee self-contained economies but are merely part of the whole. They manage growth rather than drive it.
D. Barriers to development and possible solutions

Given the roles and responsibilities of Local Government in facilitating economic development, there are a number of barriers which curtail or slow growth.

1. Rezoning Delays

Given the growth aspirations of rural and regional Victoria, delays in rezoning residential and industrial land are a considerable constraint.

Regional Growth Plans are currently being developed in accordance with regional planning and State Government policy. This forms a basis of common understanding and a body of work which will underpin and simplify rezoning decision. It is therefore submitted that following the adoption of the Regional Growth Plans, the authority for approving rezoning amendments should be devolved to the regions within DPCD.

2. Statutory Planning Issues

a) Third party appeal rights
Within land use planning, the opportunity for third party rights for appeal to VCAT has seriously jeopardised a number of major regional development initiatives. A recent example of this is the proposal for new saleyards to be built just out of the City of Wodonga. This development has always proposed utilising high end sustainable technologies and the plans have clearly described very effective means for dealing with waste products. The plans made clear no waste or other emissions would leave the facility. A facility of this nature does not even need a works approval from EPA.

Despite this the planning system allows for third party rights for appeal and in this case, redevelopment of the saleyards was held up for well over a year via appeals to VCAT. Even when costs of such matters are awarded in favour of the Council, the huge resource costs behind the appeal system adds substantially to the budget. There are other examples across the Hume Region where similar instances have occurred, significantly delaying approvals or even in some cases leading to the developer going elsewhere.

While it is recognised that appeal rights should exist, it is submitted that the State Government reviews the third party right of appeal against works approvals that is currently available in the Victorian planning system to achieve some level of balance.
b) Potable Water Supply Catchments

A most critical issue within rural and regional Victoria at present is the new planning guideline that will restrict residential developments in newly designated “Potable Water Supply Catchments”. This new planning guideline will result in some planning zones being changed and water supply authorities will have the right of veto on any and all proposed residential developments within the zoning catchments. This will have significant negative impact upon 5 of the Hume Region’s 12 Councils.

If the guideline stands, it will seriously impede development in a number of municipalities across the State and stifle growth almost completely in 2 councils in the Hume Region, namely Mansfield and Towong Shires and have a significant impact upon a major economic locality (Lake Eildon) within the Shire of Murrindindi. In these councils almost the entire municipality will be affected by the rezoning.

Both councils and this Network have raised the issue in a number of senior forums. As yet there has been no resolution.

It is submitted that the State Government moves to rescind the planning guideline restricting residential developments in potable water supply catchments.

c) EPA Requirements

Other issues affecting economic development from a planning perspective involve EPA requirements and in particular buffer zones. Where these are applied, either to industrial zoned areas or from them, they are increasingly more stringent and costly; have the potential to deter development; and undermine the integrity and purpose of the zone.

In a general sense, it is arguable that a shift to greater EPA controls and compliance has come at the expense of common sense and practicality.

It is submitted that a review of EPA requirements be undertaken with a view of achieving some balance and common sense in the planning system.

3. Strategic Planning and Investment

Pressure to release land for development is a key issue for the region and the State. Most councils face significant pressure to speed up access to appropriately zoned land and provide the investment and ensure that land is developed ready for market.
Regional councils in particular have identified that they are facing increasing difficulties in servicing the investment required to meet growth demands. Even though revenue sources are likely to increase additional population in the future, it is difficult to find resources from already stretched budgets and the skills necessary to plan for and manage more complex future developments in advance of the new populations. There is a need for alternative funding streams to offset the costs to Local Government of upfront infrastructure investment and support the timely scheduling of infrastructure delivery.

As strategic plans, masterplans and initiatives are delivered that highlight the future needs of the community, access to funding to provide the appropriate infrastructure is a necessity.

It is submitted that timely and integrated investment in strategic planning, infrastructure and economic development is required to facilitate population growth and ensure more attractive, affordable, liveable and productive centres. In this way they can serve their community’s longer term needs for education, jobs and services and therefore sustain and strengthen their regions.

4. Transport Connections and Reliability

A major barrier to successful development within the Hume Region is a lack of effective transport services and transport infrastructure. The most obvious example is the intermittent rail/bus service provided between Wodonga and Melbourne. It is consistent only in being slow, late and inefficient.

The most successful economies are the ones provided with a frequent, high quality rail service and world class road networks. We believe the government has the opportunity and means to improve this situation for the Hume Region, which after all has as it’s spine Australia’s most important transport corridor, the main connection between Melbourne and Sydney.

The business links between Wangaratta and Wodonga are supported and enhanced by the proximity of those cities to the Hume Freeway. The connections across the region to Shepparton and including links to other locations however are much less effective. So planning and lobbying for improved transport and associated infrastructure across and within the region has become a time consuming but critically important economic development activity. Clearly, improved transport infrastructure as outlined in the Hume Strategy, would enhance the regions development.
5. Access to Information & Communication Technology (ICT)

Fundamental to economic development within rural and regional Victoria is access to state of the art, reliable ICT. It is a priority of the Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities and is being pursued by the Hume RDA for this region.

It is submitted that the State Government should actively support the timely and effective roll-out of improved ICT to the Hume Region.

6. Grant processing delays

At present much of the funding for economic development initiatives is available from the State Government through the Regional Growth Fund (RGF). It is delivered through either the strategic initiatives component or local initiatives component. One of the positive aspects of the RGF is the streamlining of various programs into the single Putting Locals First Program (PLFP).

However, funding application and approval processes vary significantly within the RGF. For example, the administration of the PLFP is a complex process.

We believe that streamlining this process could significantly reduce red tape, reduce administrative costs to government and improve both experience and outcomes for Councils seeking funding. There are numerous departmental steps that need to be undertaken or followed requiring a significant amount of work and rework for funding applicants. There are reports in the region that some approvals have taken several months.

It is submitted that the Putting Locals First Program approval can be made more efficient by providing regional staff with increased decision making autonomy.

7. Skills Shortages

With an ageing population, skills shortages are inevitable unless intervention is not undertaken successfully. In rural and regional areas this is even more acute and paramount given isolation and distance issues.

A successful intervention has been the Skilled Migration Program in its various forms. Funded through the Department of Business and Innovation and operated regionally through local councils it has attracted skills in key strategic areas of health and manufacturing which otherwise would have remained unfilled. The economic benefit rising from ensuring these gaps are filled has been significant.
It is submitted that the Skilled Migration Program be continued and operated through regional councils for the benefit of the wider region.

**E. Partnership opportunities - State and Local Government**

Regional planning is the primary tool for promoting and facilitating joint support.

In the Hume Region, the Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities is the regional plan. It’s purpose is among other things to provide a basis for collaboration and cooperation at a regional and sub-regional level around planning and priorities and to inform decision making and investment in the Hume Region.

It necessitates a whole of government approach and therefore management of it has been structured accordingly. The management structure overseeing the implementation of the Hume Strategy involves an equal partnership of local councils, the Regional Management Forum representing State agencies and the Hume Regional Development Australia Committee.

Notwithstanding this, a whole of government approach is needed to support economic development. This should occur with:

- Funding of infrastructure needs;
- Planning for service provision delivery.

A single point of contact and funding entry would facilitate this aim.

Strengthening the relationship with the Federal Government is also an imperative. While this has improved through the RDA structure, there is much work to be done to engage the Federal Government on a whole of government basis to support economic development in a timely and responsive way. Two rounds of federal funding per year facilitated through the RDA is a convoluted, slow and unresponsive way to supporting local opportunities and needs.

The State Government has a role together with Local Government in improving this arrangement with the Federal Government.

**F. Best practice local economic development**

A range of Best Practice Case Studies from across Hume Region, are attached as Appendix 1 for your information.
G. Conclusion

Economic development plays a different and significantly more important role in rural and regional areas than it does for metropolitan based municipalities. Even within regional Victoria the roles are different.

Regional centres look after self-contained economies and are the drivers and epicentre for them. Rural councils rely upon and leverage off the regional centres while contributing in their own right according to local characteristics.

Metropolitan based councils are largely the receivers of economic development and who manage growth rather than drive it.

In this context, rural and regional councils play a significant role in driving economic development through a variety of programs and activities. However, there are a number of barriers which curtail or slow growth.

It is submitted that a number of measures can be undertaken to moderate or remove these barriers as follows:

1) Rezoning delays: devolve power to approve rezoning amendments once regional growth plans are in place;

2) Third Party Appeal Rights: review the capacity for these against works approvals to achieve balance between the rights of objectors and that of developers;

3) Potable Water Supply Catchments: rescind the planning guideline restricting developments in potable water supply catchments;

4) EPA Requirements: undertake a review to achieve some balance and common sense in the planning system;

5) Strategic Planning and Investment: implement a timely and integrated investment in strategic planning; infrastructure and economic development to facilitate population growth and ensure affordable, liveable and productive centres;

6) Transport Connections: ensure that in the case of the Hume Region, the perilous state of public transport along the Hume corridor is corrected and then connected effectively across the region;

7) Access to ICT: actively support the effective roll-out of improved ICT as an essential piece of infrastructure to the Hume Region;
8) Grant Processing Delays: provide regional DPCD staff with increased decision making autonomy to streamline the valuable Putting Local First Program;

9) Skilled Migration: continue the Skilled Migration Program through regional councils.

It is recognised that the important role economic development plays in rural and regional areas can only be maintained and supported by an effective partnership between State and Local Government. Regional planning underpins this relationship and it can be built upon by an effective structure and whole of government approach. A single point of contact and funding entry would facilitate this aim. Strengthening the relationship with the Federal Government is also an imperative and while this is improving there is still much work to be done on a whole of government basis.

To highlight the important role councils in rural and regional areas play in promoting, supporting and stimulating economic development a number of case studies are presented from the Hume Region.
Appendix 1

Case Study – Best Practice Local Economic Development Initiative

A Lift for Small Business “Rediscover Beechworth” – 2012

The Community Need

The closure of a major facility and tourist attraction; La Trobe at Beechworth, resulted in the loss of almost 40 jobs. La Trobe was home to weekly corporate functions, events and weddings in Beechworth which brought with it many visitors and tourists. As a result of the closure businesses throughout Beechworth have seen an economic decline. Furthermore, businesses still located and operating from the La Trobe site were also perceived as closed, which was not the case.

Project Summary

The aim of the project was to work collaboratively with Beechworth businesses on a marketing campaign which advertised the diversity and uniqueness of Beechworth businesses. The campaign showcased to the wider region (Victoria and Southern NSW) the many opportunities located in Beechworth aside from what Latrobe offered. The marketing campaign featured advertisements in newspapers, radio stations and television networks as well as public relations in to Melbourne.

Project Spend:

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount ($)</th>
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<td>Southern Cross. The River</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cause Effect</td>
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Total: $31,488.82
Project Partners & Funding Arrangements

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) contributed $20,000 towards the project. The following businesses participated in project and each sponsored the project with $500 contributions:

Beechworth Ghost Tours, The Hibernian Hotel, The Spa at Beechworth, Dalchiri, Beechworth Squash and Fitness Centre, Beechworth Health Service, Beechworth Honey, Lake Sambell Caravan Park, Beechworth Emporium, Beechworth.com, Beechworth on Bridge, Quercus Community Bookshop.

The project was also supported by the Beechworth Chamber of Commerce with a $500 sponsorship.

The total expenditure was $31,488.82, the Indigo Shire Council contributed in-kind support through personnel and resources.

Community Benefits

The project was completed on 28 March 2012 and considered a success. The collaborative approach created a greater economy of scale for the businesses and gave the campaign more media purchasing power. This resulted in greater coverage and value for all involved.

"The campaign was excellent and I think that all who participated would be very pleased with the outcome." Lake Sambell Caravan Park Beechworth.

A post campaign survey found 72.7% of participants considered the project to be effective or highly effective. Over 80% of the businesses indicated that they would likely collaborate with other businesses on joint promotional projects in the future.

Contact for further information

William Rickwood, Business Development Officer, Indigo Shire Council.

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Hume Region Case Study - Best Practice Local Economic Development Initiative
The Community Need

Community, environmental and infrastructure capacity are finite commodities. When they are exceeded, the tourism experience invariably suffers, as can the environment and local liveability. Knock on impacts for business across all sectors can be considerable.

Our community needs a vibrant economy that is sustainable and that fits within and is complementary to our rural amenity, natural landscape and social amenity.

There are plenty of examples out there on the world and domestic stage where the tourism tide turns. It doesn’t happen overnight nor does it respect boundaries drawn on maps. It sneaks up on you and erodes community liveability, visitor satisfaction and fragile ecosystems. There are symptoms, but if no one is measuring nor paying attention to the big picture, the subtle signs can be missed.

As representatives of the community, it is incumbent upon Council to discuss the topic of destination sustainability and management among key land managers and stakeholders.

It is vital that the management and leaders of the various organisations consider their ‘patch’ of the Mansfield Mt Buller The High Country (MMBTHC) destination as a critical part of the whole that is working toward ensuring sustainability for future generations.

Council’s aim is a mutual understanding and a commitment to key principles that can guide future planning and strategy implementation.

Project Summary

Collective Approach to Sustainable Destination

Mansfield Mt Buller The High Country (MMBTHC) has been marketed as a brand for years with considerable success. The area encompasses shire, resort, state forest, lake and alpine national park; all with their own land and water management authorities. The local and visitor explores across the land management boundaries with scant regard to tenure and tends to treat the area as one destination with many experiences on offer.

In what may be a first in Australia for destination management, the four land managers and key stakeholders, that impact upon the ‘Mansfield Mt Buller The High Country’ destination piece, signed off on a collective principles statement.
Never before had the senior representatives of Council, Mt Buller Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, Buller Ski Lifts, Goulburn Murray Water, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, VicForests, Tourism Victoria and Adventure Victoria convened to focus attention on the sustainability of the destination.

The shared vision is of a sustainable destination that has as its core asset the natural environment and is built upon nature based and adventure tourism, accessibility and authenticity.

The key principles cover the importance of collaboration, risk management with particular reference to water and bushfire, product development, visitor experience and community amenity.

Meetings at both the strategic and operational level are ongoing. The meetings provide valuable networking, updates across the destination and an opportunity to discuss a collective response to key issues, opportunities and threats as they relate to the agreed collective principles.

Key objectives and supporting strategies for the group focus around three key areas being

1. Collaborate among destination partners
2. Operate and develop within our capacity
3. Improve the destination experience

Council officer time is provided to co-ordinate meetings and to provide limited support toward achieving agreed outcomes. There is no dedicated resource.

Project Partners

Mansfield Shire Council
Mt Buller Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management
Department of Sustainability and Environment
Parks Victoria
Tourism Victoria
Goulburn Murray Water
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
VicForests
Buller Ski Lifts
Adventure Victoria

Funding Arrangements

Initial funding was sourced via Regional Development Victoria and provided by Municipal Association of Victoria to cover costs associated with the inaugural meeting and professional external facilitation.

There is no ongoing funding for this project and it is beyond Council’s capacity to fund a resource. Significant projects of this type that are collaborative and strategic in nature should be considered for state and or national funding.
Community Benefits

The project delivered on a range of outcomes that will benefit community for the long term, as it enabled a broad based discussion at a strategic level with an holistic lens. The fact that the key destination decision makers across varied land tenure now all know each other and have agreed on the key principles to consider and the issues facing the destination is a major step forward toward sustainability.

The community will benefit as much from what won’t happen as a result of the project as by what will and are better placed to direct the future they want.

Tangible outcomes include a signed collective principles statement and ongoing meetings.

Recently the ‘Sustainable Destination Partners’ agreed to support and advocate that the proposed Epic Mountain Bike Ride project be prioritised by the Australian Alps National Landscapes Committee as its top priority for the recent TQual funding round. The subsequent application was successful in gaining $125,000. Once built, the Epic will be an iconic tourism product of international standing, that will drive economic development in the area in a manner consistent with the key principles.

Contact for further information

Judy Dixon, Deputy Manager Tourism & Economic Development
The Community Need

In 2006 Council partnered with the Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network (CRLLEN) to undertake the Murrindindi Training Demand Study. On completion of the study it became clear that gaps existed locally in a range of industries for appropriately trained and available staff; and access to training opportunities for local people. The key areas of deficit identified at that time included Outdoor Recreation/Education, Hospitality and Nursing/Allied Health.

As a consequence of discussions initiated in 2009 - 2010 relating to the potential future uses of the (old) Alexandra Hospital site and the likely withdrawal of Swinburne University as a local provider of Outdoor Recreation/Education training, a steering committee was formed to investigate the potential of creating a local, post secondary education provider to fill some of the gaps and to provide local access to potential career pathways.

The upshot of these early discussions and the work of the steering committee is that the Murrindindi Training Institute (MTI) is now located at and operational from the (old) Alexandra Hospital site.

Project Summary

Due to broad and supportive industry input and strong local collaboration, the MTI as an entity has now been formed and is delivering courses at Cert 111, Cert 1V and Diploma level. Following the opening of a new hospital in 2011, the old Alexandra Hospital site is being reshaped for the purpose of training/education provision and the MTI is already looking to expand this offer in the future.

Project Partners

The initial concept of the MTI was developed in collaboration with Alexandra District Hospital, Murrindindi Shire Council, Continuing Education and Arts Centre of Alexandra (CEACA), Alexandra Traders and Tourism Association (ATTA), industry partners and led at that point by the locally based Outdoor Education Group and the Central Ranges LEN what is this acronym?). Input was also provided by Alexandra Secondary College and Alexandra Rotary Club.
The key partners in this project that were represented on the inaugural Board of MTI - that is now a company limited by guarantee - included Alexandra District Hospital, Murrindindi Shire Council, CEACA, CRLLEN and key industry representatives.

The current MTI Board is made up of seven stakeholder representatives comprising the Alexandra District Hospital, CRLLEN, CEACA, the Outdoor Education Group, Outdoor Leadership Advisory Committee and the Australian Camping Association and a community representative.

**Funding Arrangements**

Murrindindi Shire Council is the auspice for a Regional Development Victoria (RDV) *Planning For Tomorrow* grant of $70,000 and has committed to a contribution of $5,000 each year for two years.

The MTI has also been successful in securing significant further grant funding for the development of governance arrangements and the refit of the building including:

- $50,000 – ACFE Capacity and Innovation Round 1
- $50,000 – ACFE Capacity and Innovation Round 2
- $35,000 – ACFE Board
- $35,000 – Hard to Reach Learners
- $18,000 – Other funding (including a significant CRLLEN contribution)

Further funding is being sought to progress business development opportunities to enable the future expansion of the MTI training offerings.

**Community Benefits**

The impact of the MTI locally is significant and will only increase over time. The key benefits include the local provision of post secondary training that is industry specific, where a need clearly exists and jobs are immediately available. The long term benefit is that people can train locally, work locally and live locally. The cost of this training is also reduced given that travel and accommodation costs are lower or non-existent. The MTI may be a significant factor in reversing, to some extent, the strong trend that results in most of the younger demographic (17 – 25) leaving the region for employment or training opportunities.

Plans are already in place to review and update the Training Demand Study of 2006 to identify further training needs in the region. The MTI Board then intends to engage with key industry representatives to develop plans for future courses to meet industry needs.

The broader impact on the community is the provision of local jobs with a flow on effect on businesses and the local economy generally. Given the local context including a ten year drought, the 2007 and 2009 bushfires, more recent flood events and the closure of the local timber mill, the potential economic and social impact of the ongoing development of the MTI concept should not be understated.

A further benefit of the MTI development includes the re-use of a significant community building for community purposes. The old Alexandra District Hospital is an imposing structure situated on the highest point in Alexandra. Significant investment has been made in
supporting the usable infrastructure, much of which has been built as a result of community fundraising and lobbying efforts.

The MTI is an example of a welcome and strong community collaboration in a region that has felt the impacts of natural disasters and a downturn in economic prosperity.

**Contact for further information**

Bob Elkington

Manager Economic Development

Murrindindi Shire Council
Case Study – Best Practice Local Economic Development Initiative

Shepparton Showgrounds Redevelopment – 2004 to current

The Community Need

A multi-use public space (open and sheltered) to support the needs of the Shepparton Agricultural Show Society, community groups, event’s organisers including the Spring Car Nationals, Garden & Lifestyle Show, SheppARTon Arts Festival and the wider Greater Shepparton community. In addition the site provides a proud and visually attractive gateway to the Eastern entry of the city of Shepparton.

Project Summary

The Shepparton Showgrounds has a proud history of hosting major events in the heart of Shepparton. Identifying the potential for this site to become a far more flexible and inclusive site in Greater Shepparton, one capable of servicing the needs of the wider community along with the Shepparton Agricultural Society and major event organisers, a masterplan for the redevelopment of the Shepparton Showgrounds site was prepared in 2004, with the oversight of a reference group with membership drawn from SPC Ardmona, Shepparton Agricultural Society and City of Greater Shepparton.

During the planning stage it was identified that there was strong potential for the site to become one of the most flexible and sought after events venues in the region. The 2009-2013 Greater Shepparton City Council Plan identified the redevelopment of the Shepparton Showgrounds as a key objective within the Community Life objectives.

Through the redevelopment, the site continues to be used for the Shepparton Agricultural Show, but has become more accessible for a wide range of major events, conferences and more personal celebrations and events such as community gatherings, birthdays and weddings.

The wide range of stakeholders and annual users of the Showground’s facility have played an important part in developing the current master plan and continuing to build and grow their events as the site matures to its hosting potential.

This project will directly benefit the hosting capacity of the following annual major event users of the facility:

- Shepparton Agricultural Show (2 day event 15,000 attendees)
- Spring Car Nationals (3 day event 25,000 attendees)
- Shepparton Swap Meet (1 day event 3,000 attendees)
- Shepparton Lifestyle and Leisure Show (3 day event 5,000 attendees)
- Shepparton Garden and Lifestyle Show (2 day event 3,000 attendees)
- Shepparton Arts Festival (4 day event 5,000 attendees)
- Rotary Car Show (1 day event 2,000 attendees)
- Albanian Festival (1 day event 2,000 attendees)
- Water Cluster Conference and Expo (3 day event 3,000 attendees)

Various other events and stakeholders include 2 to 4 circuses each year, other national car rallies and vehicle displays such as Pontiac Car Club Nationals and the Veterans Car Club of Australia (2013 events) along with other music festivals and community celebrations.

The masterplan has been progressively refined and implemented over the years following its development. The redevelopment is now well advanced and approaching the point where it could be considered capable of satisfactorily staging the range of events envisaged in the original redevelopment feasibility study. The number and type events staged are growing year by year.

To date, the redevelopment of the Showgrounds site has included the following projects:

- Incorporation of greyhound racing track in new major facility development at Kialla.
- Sale of northern portion of site to SPC Ardmona to enable development of new storage and logistics facility.
- Extension of Fryers Street to Archer Street, creating new transport link from CBD to the east.
- Relocation and refurbishment of the heritage listed showgrounds grandstand.
- Establishment of the McIntosh exhibition and reception complex, incorporating the heritage listed 'sheep sheds'.
- Restoration of the historic showgrounds gateway and ‘cattlemen’s’ bar’.
- The removal of all aged site services infrastructure and replacement with extensive and purpose designed power, gas, water, fire, drainage and communication facilities.
- Construction of a number of onsite carparks and associated infrastructure.
- Completion of extensive hard and soft landscaping works.
- Construction of large asphalt hardstanding area.
- Relocation of the Shepparton Search and Rescue Squad into new facilities developed in nearby Dudley Street.
- Construction of a large multi-purpose pavilion in replacement of three small single purpose cattle pavilions.

The major outstanding element of the redevelopment is the completion of the large central grassed event and recreation area. This area, together with its abutting eastern and southern promenades will link the completed projects, providing a redeveloped ‘whole site’ for the first time. The project will also be a substantial step in the creation of a striking eastern gateway into the Shepparton CBD, a major objective of the masterplan.
The second significant element is the extension to the recently completed Multi-Use Pavilion. This will provide additional facilities to enhance the range of services that can be provided by the pavilion.

**Project Partners**

The main project partners involved in the project have included:

1. Greater Shepparton City Council
2. Shepparton Agricultural Society
3. Shepparton Preserving Company / Ardmona
4. Regional Development Victoria
5. Federal Infrastructure Funding

**Funding Arrangements**

To date approximately $10M has been invested in the site. This has been funded through a variety of means including:

- Cash contribution from the Shepparton Agricultural Society following the sale of a parcel of land to SPC/A
- Regional Development Victoria
- Federal Infrastructure Funding, and
- Greater Shepparton City Council investment

The site is now benefiting from generating an income from user charges and it is expected that on the completion of the outstanding stages that this revenue will continue to grow.

**Community Benefits**

The community has benefited greatly from the redevelopment. Acquiring the land and management of the site from the Shepparton Agricultural Society has in turn relieved significant financial and human resource burden from the Society allowing it to continue to grow. It has also opened the site up to the use of the broader community rather than being limited in its use to a small number of events each year.

A varied range of user groups now frequent the Show Ground including the McIntosh Centre for birthdays, weddings, conferences, trade shows and multicultural celebrations.

The addition of the Multipurpose Pavilion has provided a large scale indoor events space that has been hosted the 2011 Carols by Candlelight event due to poor weather – given the scale of the event, it would more than likely have had to be cancelled due to the limited indoor options available capable of housing large crowds (3000+).

The redevelopment has been sympathetic to the long history and heritage value of agricultural activity at the site. This is evident in the preservation of the Grand Stand, the design of the McIntosh Centre preserving and incorporating the original animal nursery structure and the renovation of the popular Cattlemen’s Bar. In addition the contemporary blade gate signage along with the large open space provides a strong visual gateway to the eastern entry of the city.
This redevelopment has played a major part in continuing our region’s reputation as a major events destination. It has also built on the quality and range of arts and cultural activities held in the region. On completion it will enable Greater Shepparton to actively pursue larger scale events, expos and exhibitions which will, in turn, deliver significant economic benefits to Shepparton and the wider region.

Contact for further information

For more information contact:

Geoff Hay

Team Leader Business and Industry Development

Greater Shepparton City Council
The Community Need

A strategic approach to economic development within the Rural City of Wangaratta; driving investment and attraction within industry.

Project Summary

Wangaratta Unlimited was established to provide advice to council on activities, projects and initiatives which would support the economy of Wangaratta and lead to a prosperous community.

The committee meet once per month and have a strategic focus, currently around the following areas which lead to the delivery of our goals:

- Regional Centre
- Destination development
- Agrifood
- Industry and business growth and advocacy
- Renewable energy and the carbon economy

Two current examples of projects which have been incubated through the advisory committee are:

SPORTS TOURISM INITIATIVE

This project will see the State and National sporting events stimulate the local economy to the value of approximately $2m per annum.

The value of sporting events was highlighted by a member of the committee and further investigated to a point where Council have fully supported the activity.
AGRIFOOD INITIATIVE

In 2009 the Advisory Committee highlighted the need for the Rural City of Wangaratta to take a leadership role in the marketing of ex tobacco land. Post tobacco industry closure large parcels of land were underutilised and it was imperative to take action to ensure this valuable commodity and industry sector was fully supported for appropriate development or sale.

A strategy was developed by the board which encompassed the following tiers of action:

Education and leadership development
Prospectus development
Supply chain facilitation

Funding Arrangements

As per all Advisory Committees to Council the board does not undertake any activities of its own accord. Therefore there is no requirement for funding.

Community Benefits

The board members are all Wangaratta based business people with direct working knowledge in a particular skill or industry sector. This ensures that strategic direction is set for achieving a prosperous, resilient and liveable regional centre.

Contact for further information

Shivaun Brown, Economic Development Coordinator.