



INTERIM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY 2022-2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations and the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community.

Buloke has a significant number of cultural heritage places including an Aboriginal historical place, burials, artefact scatters, earth features, low density artefact distributions, scarred trees and a stone feature.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2018-2021 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is due for renewal. It was determined in mid-2021 that factors including the inability to accurately forecast the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the timing of the results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census of Population would likely be detrimental to the development of a new four to five year strategy.

As such, Council has developed the 2022-2023 Interim Economic Development Strategy in close consultation with a sub-group of the Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDATAC). The interim Strategy will build upon the 2018-2021 Strategy, and propose further ambitious strategies to remain responsive to community needs and economic opportunities, as well as follow the advice of key industry and community stakeholders at both local and regional level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Buloke would like to acknowledge the three community members on the EDATAC Strategy Development sub-committee for volunteering their time to assist in the development of this document:

- Ms Kaylene Cossar
- Cr Graeme Milne
- Ms Julie Pringle

We would also like to acknowledge these community members who form a part of the broader EDATAC who helped guide the direction of the Strategy:

- Mr Adam Campbell
- Mr John Coleiro
- Mr Vin Delahunty
- Mr Graeme Harris



STRATEGIC CONTEXT



METHODOLOGY

The Interim Economic Development Strategy was developed in close consultation with a sub-group of the EDATAC. The establishment of the EDATAC was an action from the 2018-2021 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. Community leaders, Township Forums, the Buloke Tourism Board, broader EDATAC members, Councillors and Council staff were consulted on the draft and provided feedback.



2022-2023 INTERIM STRATEGIES

THEME 1

COVID-19 Recovery

Positioning Buloke for domestic visitor experiences

Capturing a share of regional migration

Addressing the housing challenge

Building secure supply chains

THEME 2

Partnerships to Deliver Economic Development and Tourism

Establish a restructured EDATAC dedicated to short or medium-term specific projects jointly agreed upon by the EDATAC and Council

A leading role in regional partnerships (e.g. Wimmera Mallee Tourism, INVEST Loddon Mallee, and Bendigo Region of Gastronomy)

Engaging town forums and facilitating investment enquiries

THEME 3

Council Facilitation Roles in Creating a Climate for Investment

Budgeting and bids for sustainable new infrastructure and optimising use of existing infrastructure

Continuing gap identification complemented by investment guides and supporting materials

Refining and adopting draft housing and business incentives

THEME 4

Targeted Industries Investment

Enhance agribusiness diversification and value adding

Development of renewable energies and rare earth minerals

Tourism attractions and responsive town businesses

Create circular economy options for a range of product categories

INTRODUCTION



ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Buloke Shire, located north-central Victoria, covers over 8,000 square kilometres and is the fifth largest Local Government Area in Victoria by area, with many small towns and a significant road network.

Buloke is within the Victorian administrative region of Northern Loddon Mallee, but has much in common with municipalities to the west so often is considered part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.

At June 30, 2020 Buloke had an estimated resident population of 6,101¹ having decreased by just 0.4% on the previous year; the lowest decrease in many years. The resident population decreased by an annual average of 1.0% over the 2006-2016 decade. At 0.78 persons per square kilometre, Buloke has the second lowest population density in the State².

Our major economic development and tourism strengths are:

- Land and environment suited to broad-acre cropping, coupled with over 150 years of inter-generational expertise in growing grains,
- Industry-driven capabilities in innovation and research and development in broad-acre farming,
- Land and environment suited to extensive livestock and intensive livestock production:
 - Extensive sheep grazing has a long history in the region, with Wycheproof recognised as the largest store sheep selling centre in regional Victoria
 - Intensive pig production and cattle-lot feeding are well established in Buloke, and there has been recent growth in intensive poultry growing (for both meat and table eggs)
- Abundant locations suited to wind, solar and biomass renewable energies, and undeveloped mineral sands deposits,
- Assets that attract visitors, including:
 - Victoria's largest salt lake (Lake Tyrrell),
 - An acclaimed silo art trail, street art, heritage sites and historic buildings and collections,
 - Geological features, spectacular night skies, recreational lakes (Watchem, Tchum, Woornook, Foletti Park and Green Lakes), sporting and recreational facilities (clubs, courses, grounds, parks, fields and courts), and
- Regular events which are visitor attractions in their own right, such as the Mallee Root RoundUp, Charlton Film Festival, regular race meetings and sporting events, and emerging events such as OK Motels, steam passenger rail trips to Wycheproof, and the Esoteric Dance and Music Festival.

¹ ABS, Regional Population Growth by LGA 2020 (released March 2021)

² West Wimmera Shire has the lowest population density, at 0.43 persons per square kilometre



Our main townships are Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof, with several smaller towns that have dwindled through grain farm aggregation and automation (such as Berriwillock, Culgoa, Nandaly, Nullawil and Watchem).

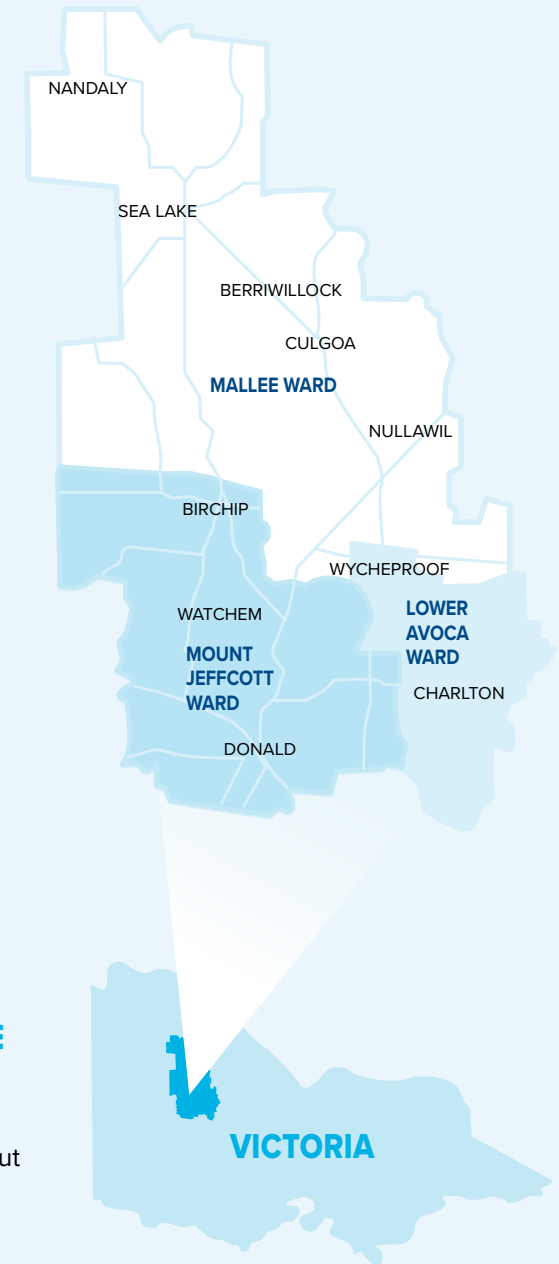
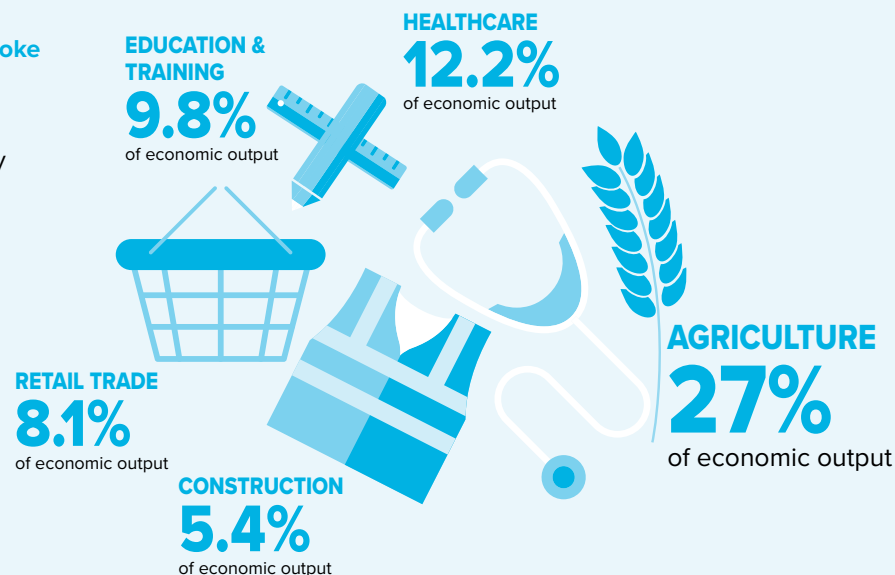
Buloke is considered as socio-economically disadvantaged among Victorian Local Government Areas (LGAs), with population decline, low rates of workforce participation, an ageing population, and a relatively lower income structure. Conversely, our communities have considerable resilience, very high rates of volunteerism, and social cohesion.

Buloke's economy is dominated by agriculture (mainly dry land cropping and livestock) which generates 27% of economic output, 56% of Buloke exports, and employs 29% of all workers.

Other major employing industries are, in order:

- Health care and social assistance, 12.2% (led by medical and other health care services),
- Education and training, 9.8%
- Retail trade, 8.1% (supermarkets and other food retailing are the largest sub-sectors), and
- Construction, 5.4% (including trades).

Just as the overall economy is highly dependent on broad-acre farming, so are the townships of Buloke, where a majority of businesses contribute to agribusiness supply chains and provide services to farming communities. Agricultural activity is dominated by cereals, pulses, oilseeds and sheep for meat and wool. This agricultural focus has been responsible for the many distinctive features in the towns, strong resilience and connected communities, but it has also led to decades long population decline as farms have become larger and more automated, and the financial returns from agricultural commodities have declined in an increasingly competitive global environment.



2018-2021 STRATEGY: ACHIEVEMENTS

Buloke developed and adopted a broad Economic Development and Tourism Strategy for the four-year period 2018 to 2021. This Strategy proposed new approaches to the delivery of economic development functions, greater explicit involvement of the community, addressing our population challenges and activating several specific opportunities. Staff changes, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, have impacted on the ability to implement all of the actions in the 2018-2021 Strategy, however the achievements still had a significant impact. Of the 37 actions in the 2018-2021 Strategy, 29 of those are either complete, in progress or ongoing, which is a significant achievement, and have given Buloke an excellent platform for further success in job creation, population stability, and investment. Achievements in the past four years, in no particular order, are summarised in Table 1.1. A comprehensive audit of progress against all actions in the 2018-2021 Strategy is provided in Appendix 1.

The four years 2018 to 2021 have exceeded economic development and tourism expectations:

- Buloke Shire's population challenges have been partially overcome, with resident population levels approaching stability.
- Tourism sectors and newly emerging tourist attractions have become a focus for the Council, from a very modest base prior to 2018, now with \$23.7 million in new capital investment for tourism and liveability projects.

The most significant economic development shortfall in the four-year period has been an inability for Buloke and our communities to respond rapidly enough to new opportunities, resulting in some being lost³. This inability to respond has been most notable in tourism and in provision of land, housing and support infrastructure for business. Some Buloke towns were unprepared for their new attention from tourist visitors and, as a result, have not captured the complete local 'economic yield' from visitor expenditure.

³ For example:

- The average expenditure by overnight visitors to Buloke has been well below the regional Victorian averages, as recorded by the Tourism Research Australia Domestic Tourism Monitor regional profiles (\$93 per night compared with a regional Victorian average of \$131 per night) indicating lost economic yield.
- Hundreds of interviewed visitors at Buloke recreational lakes during 2018 to 2021 reported disappointment with trading hours, range of food service options and accommodation choices in local towns.



Table 1.1 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2018-21: Major Achievements

Activity/Achievement	Industry Sector	Detail	Relevant 2018-21 Strategy ⁴	Approximate Capital Investment
Buloke Tourism Board	Tourism sectors*	Ongoing operation of an active and committed Buloke Tourism Board.	2	N/A
Wimmera Mallee Tourism involvement ^{5 6}	Tourism sectors*	Collaborating with Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack Shire Councils on the Silo Art Trail, Destination Management Plan, Trading off the Trails programs, and tourism marketing.	6	\$700,000
Bendigo Region of Gastronomy	Tourism Sectors*	Partnering with City of Bendigo and eight other municipalities in promoting regional food and beverages throughout the supply chain.	6	N/A
Economic Development and Tourism Resourcing	All Sectors	Appointment of an Economic Development and Tourism Lead and receipt of funding for a temporary Tourism Projects Officer to deliver specific projects to activate the Silo Art Trail.	3	N/A
Formation of EDATAC	All Sectors	Formation Buloke Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee and selected sub-committees.	2	N/A
Lake Tyrrell and Sea Lake Tourist Developments ⁷	Arts and Recreation Services	Construction of a viewing platform and on-lake walking path, Visitor Information Centre (at Sea Lake), interpretive materials, and development of tours.	5, 7	\$2,800,000
Silo Art Trail ⁸	Arts and Recreation Services	Completion of art works at silos in Nullawil and Sea Lake to extend the Wimmera Mallee Silo Art Trail. Funding received to activate artworks at night in Buloke, build cabins at lakes, and deliver a Street Art Festival and Business Innovation Grants.	7	\$1,300,000
Play Spaces Trail ⁹	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for the construction of five destination play space complexes in Berriwillock, Birchip, Charlton, Donald, and Wycheproof. The play spaces accommodate play equipment which combine adventure activities, variety, innovative design and a social atmosphere. The Play Spaces Trail project objectives are to add to the diversity of Buloke visitor experiences and provide new assets that complement existing attractions.	4, 5, 7	\$2,800,000
Charlton Rex Theatre Development ¹⁰	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for further development of the Rex Theatre, Charlton.	4, 7	\$800,000

⁴ See Figure 3.1 for full name of 2018-21 Strategy

⁵ Trading off the Trails: \$600,000 BBRF funded project, Brightening Broadway RIF project funded for \$450,000, Boosting the Buloke Art Trail \$300,000, WM Tourist Trails \$562,500 funded from BBRF.

⁶ WSM Partnerships Tourism Project: \$375,000 (WDA audited financials 2018) + \$125,000 (WDA audited financials 2020)

⁷ Sea Lake VIC funding of \$300,000 through COVID Infrastructure Stimulus Programs. 'Buloke's Big Builds' 2 March 2018 Council media release \$2,500,000

⁸ Funding support from Victorian Government

⁹ Buloke Shire Annual Report 2020-21, Regional Infrastructure Funded project of \$2,800,000

¹⁰ Funding support from Victorian Government

Table 1.1 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2018-21: Major Achievements

Activity/Achievement	Industry Sector	Detail	Relevant 2018-21 Strategy ¹¹	Approximate Capital Investment
Meat Poultry Industry Expansion ¹²	Agriculture	Establishment of new broiler sector operations with new intensive production sheds. (Private investment).	6	N/A
Layer Poultry Industry Expansion ¹³	Agriculture	Establishment of new layer sector operations with new intensive production sheds. (Private investment).	3	N/A
Lot Feeding Expansion ¹⁴	Agriculture	New investment in lot feeding. (Private investment).	2	N/A
Recreational Lake Improvements ¹⁵	Arts and Recreation Services	Construction and renovation of facilities at Wooroonook, Tchum, Watchem, Green and Donald Foletti lakes, the development of lake master plans, socio-economic assessments, and re-establishment of Green Lake.	4, 7	\$3,400,000
Lighting up Buloke ¹⁶	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for the construction of sports ground lighting and upgrading of existing lighting infrastructure at multiple sporting venues at selected Buloke towns to reach standards expected by the relevant State Sporting Associations.	4, 5, 7	\$2,360,000
Charlton Three Walls Murals ¹⁷	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for, and developing mural artworks in Charlton's main thoroughfare to complement the expanding regional 'outdoor gallery'.	7	\$40,000
Charlton Park ¹⁸	Arts and Recreation Services	Completion of improvements and a new multipurpose facility at Charlton Park.	5, 7	\$4,000,000
Donald Stadium Stage 1 ¹⁹	Arts and Recreation Services	Indoor sport and recreation facility at the Donald Recreation Reserve.	4, 5	\$2,000,000
Birchip Sporting Facilities Upgrades ²⁰	Arts and Recreation Services	Netball upgrade, leisure centre changeroom redevelopment, and oval redevelopment.	4, 5	\$1,184,000

¹¹ See Figure 3.1 for full name of 2018-21 Strategy

¹² Commercial in Confidence

¹³ Commercial in Confidence

¹⁴ Commercial in Confidence

¹⁵ 'Buloke's Big Builds' 2 March 2018 Council media "The Charlton Park Multi-Purpose Facility project reached its funding goal in October last year when Minister for Regional Development Jaala Pulford announced \$1.5 million dollars of State Government funding for the project. Three of Buloke's iconic recreational lakes are also getting amenity upgrades to both ensure

and grow their popularity with locals and tourist alike. The works at Tchum Lake, Watchem Lake and Wooroonook Lake will see the construction of new or heavily renovated fully accessible toilet blocks and shower facilities to modern standards at each destination. These four projects alone represent more than \$5 million of investment in community recreation facilities with substantial funding from Council and communities alongside Federal and State Government grants"

¹⁶ Community Sports Infrastructure Stimulus Program application funded for a project of \$2,363,812

¹⁷ Funding support from Victorian Government

¹⁸ State 'Building Works Package' funding of \$4,000,000 plus Enabling Infrastructure funding of \$1,100,000

¹⁹ State 'Productive and Liveable Cities and Centres' funding of \$1,000,000 - Balance

²⁰ Buloke Shire Annual Report 2020-21

* Tourism sectors are: Tourism Characteristic (accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services, and transport) and Tourism Connected (retail, education)

Table 1.1 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2018-21: Major Achievements

Activity/Achievement	Industry Sector	Detail	Relevant 2018-21 Strategy ¹¹	Approximate Capital Investment
Wycheproof Wetlands Development Stage 1	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding and developing a walking trail network through the Mount Wycheproof flora and fauna reserve looping into a wetlands precinct on the site of disused GWM Water storages.	4, 7	\$350,000
Wycheproof Saleyards ²¹	Wholesaling	Securing funding for the implementation of the Saleyards Masterplan. Addressing sustainability improvements for the Wycheproof livestock exchange including construction of roofing, ramps and races, gates, pens and a drive-through unloading area.	5, 8	\$285,000
Buloke Food Processing Companies ²²	Food Manufacturing	Business expansions, building extensions and introduction of new processing technologies. (Private investment).	3.	\$7,000,000
Charlton, Wycheproof and Sea Lake Early Learning Centres ²³	Education	Establishment and redevelopment of children's early learning centres.	4.	\$2,395,000
Residential developments in Sea Lake ²⁴	Construction	Securing funding for land developments by Council.	3, 4.	\$500,000
Sea Lake Hotel, B&Bs and Lake Tyrrell Accommodation ²⁵	Accommodation and food services	Restoration of an existing local hotel by Sea Lake community investors, and a new motel-style development (Private investment).	4, 7.	\$2,000,000
Housing construction ²⁶	Construction	Value of building approvals 2018-19 to 2021.	5.	\$15,699,000
Commercial and industrial construction ²⁷	Construction	Value of building approvals 2018-19 to 2021 (excluding construction components of projects included above).	5.	\$14,481,000
Total				\$81,593,600
Total Private Investment				\$56,680,000
Total Public Investment				\$24,913,600

²¹ BBRF Application funded for a project of \$285,399

²² Commercial in Confidence

²³ Buloke Shire Annual Report 2020-21

²⁴ Regional Recovery Fund \$300,000 - Balance

²⁵ Commercial in Confidence

²⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics Building Approvals 2018-2021

²⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics Building Approvals 2018-2021

INTERIM STRATEGY: RATIONALE AND LINKAGES

The 2018-2021 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is due for renewal. However there are a number of factors at play which have made it inappropriate for a new, longer term strategy to be developed at this time. Instead, this document presents a two-year strategy update for 2022 and 2023. Key factors supporting this approach have been:

- Just as the COVID-19 pandemic could not have been anticipated, it remains too early to gauge whether its impacts will be short, medium or long-term. This Interim Strategy gives an opportunity to propose some strategic responses for COVID recovery and, by the end of 2023, it should be clearer whether the tourism, migration and local, state and national economic stimulus measures will have long-term implications for Buloke.
- Detailed results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census of Population and Housing at small area and municipality levels will be important in quantifying the extent to which population stability and employment have been achieved, this information is not yet available. The 2021 Census results are scheduled to be released in three stages. Release 1 is scheduled for July 2022 (with population and demographic characteristics), release 2 in October 2022 (with employment related data and workforce profiles) and release 3 in mid-2023 (with Socio-Economic Indices and distance to work data).

- Agriculture is fundamental to the Buloke economy, and results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020-21 Agricultural Census at municipal level will be progressively released from mid-2022. This will include detailed data on agricultural commodities and the value of agricultural production.

The Interim Strategy builds on the work undertaken during 2018 to 2021 and proposes an ambitious set of new strategies. It offers a solid foundation for the next four to five year strategy, to be considered at the end of 2023.

An important consideration in preparing an Interim Strategy has been cognisance of, and the relationship with, other strategic and operational plans of Council, and the extent to which the Interim Strategy is influenced by these plans. In this context, the Interim Strategy is closely aligned to the Long-Term Vision and Council Plan for 2021-25 and is particularly geared to the Plan's 'Our Economy' theme:

“ Future buloke ... is an innovative and strong economy with agriculture, small business and industry capitalising on new ideas to provide a range of employment and tourism opportunities backed by the services, connectivity and housing to achieve population stability”.

The following current Council documents have been reviewed and used in guiding the development of the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy:

- Integrated Buloke 2030 Plan (and related community plans)
- Advocacy Strategy
- Financial Plan
- Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2020-2025
- Climate Action Plan and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Plan
- Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy
- Industry Gap Analysis and Investment Attraction Plan
- Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) Wimmera Southern Mallee Destination Management Plan
- WMT Silo Art Gap Analysis
- Wimmera Development Association (WDA) Housing Review and Regional Housing Solutions Initiatives

NEW ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the Buloke economy since March 2020 and it is unknown how it will impact the economy in the long-term. Disruptions have both negative and potentially positive consequences which were unforeseen prior to 2020.

Our 'population challenge' was identified in the 2018-2021 Strategy. It reported our population had declined by on average 1.0% per annum over the decade 2006 to 2016, a loss of 658 people or 9.6% of all residents. The average age of a Buloke resident increased from 45 years to 51 years in the ten years 2006 to 2016. At the time, the Victorian Government's Victoria in Future projections suggested the rate of decrease would be -1.1% per annum through to 2031; a further population loss of 948 people or 15.3% of all residents.

The 2018-21 Strategy concluded "reversing the population trends and future outlook by creating jobs and sustaining community and lifestyle services is a key challenge for economic development and tourism in Buloke". In the intervening four years, the evidence in meeting the population challenge is positive and, unexpectedly, the COVID-19 pandemic may contribute to stabilising the Shire's population. In the next two years, the challenge has shifted from attracting population to a 'housing challenge', with the risk of population stabilisation in jeopardy due to lack of appropriate rental housing.

The 2020 intercensal population, calculated by the ABS²⁸, was 6,101 persons; just 103 fewer residents than 2016.

Australia's and Victoria's population growth has been about 67% from net-migration and 33% from natural increase during the 21st century to date. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, international migration has been temporarily halted and will take several years to recover dependent on both health risks and Government policy directives. For the first time in the 21st Century, Victoria recorded a decrease (-0.7%) in population in 2021. The contribution of migration and natural increase components is predicted to be reversed for at least five years, with 65% of growth from natural increase and 35% from net-migration.

This implies a reduction in the overall national growth rate from about 1.6% per annum (or 400,000 people per year) to 0.98% per annum (or 251,000 people per year). Other consequences are likely to include:

- An escalation in the rate of population ageing, and
- Increased internal (domestic) migration to regional areas.

Notably the Commonwealth *Inter-Generational Report 2021* work was produced early in the 2021 year (and released in June), prior to the onset of extended 2021 pandemic restrictions in Victoria. This suggests the post-pandemic growth rate for Victoria will need to be further revised and will be lower than estimated in the Commonwealth's inter-generational report. In this revised outlook, any growth in the Buloke resident population require attracting hire rates of domestic migration as well as international migration, when it resumes (probably at a reduced level for at least 3-5 years).

²⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Regional Populations 2020.



FUTURE POPULATION AND HOUSING DEMAND

There is evidence of Buloke's population moving towards stability after more than 50 years of decline. Interviews conducted by Wimmera Development Association (WDA) with local employers reveal there will be 243 expected new full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs located in Buloke over the next ten years.

Projections for our population and housing demand for 2021 to 2036 resulting from WDA's work are summarised in Tables 2.1, Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2. These projections indicate progress towards population stability over the next 15 years, with the average annual change reducing to -0.4% per annum over the 2016-36 period and -0.3% over 2021-36. Although small population decline is still anticipated, the difference between the current projections and the 2019 Victoria in Future (VIF) projections (which calculated an annual rate of decrease of 1.1%) is 740 persons by 2036.

243
EXPECTED NEW
FULL-TIME JOBS
located in Buloke over
the next ten years.

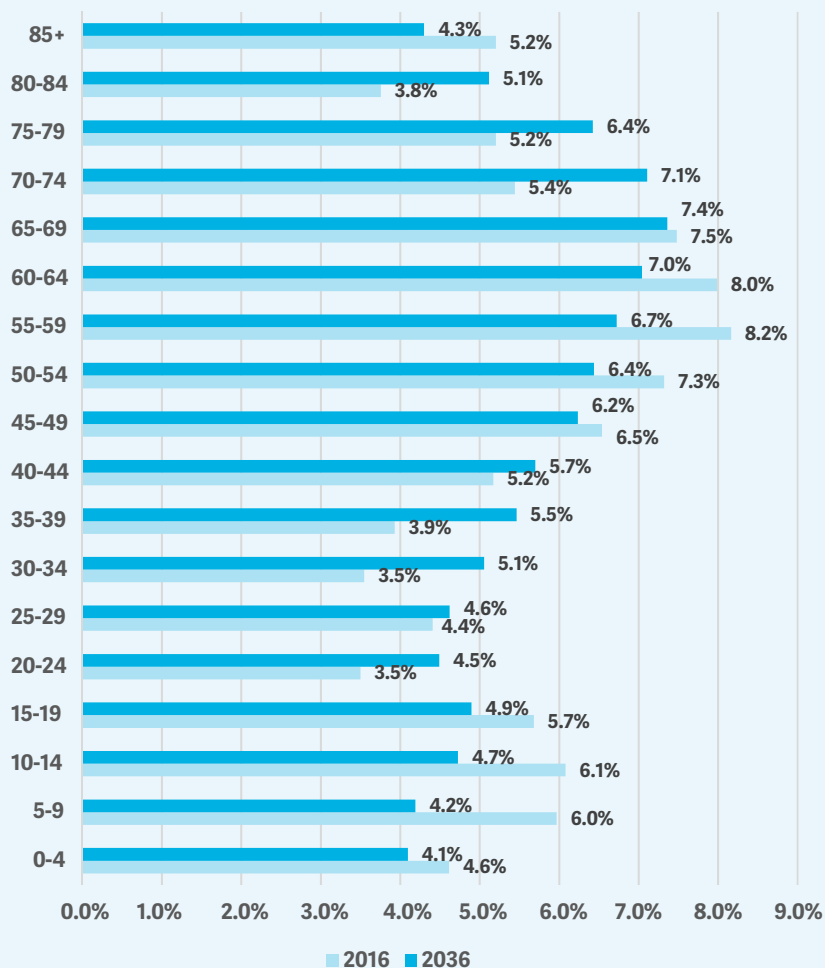


Table 2.1 Buloke Population Projections

Age Group	2021	2026	2031	2036	% change p.a.
0-4	282	237	235	236	-1.17%
5-9	307	269	248	241	-1.60%
10-14	369	328	291	272	-2.02%
15-19	361	343	309	282	-1.63%
20-24	264	295	283	258	-0.15%
25-29	229	275	279	266	1.01%
30-34	240	278	292	291	1.29%
35-39	245	293	307	314	1.67%
40-44	271	302	317	328	1.29%
45-49	350	344	349	359	0.17%
50-54	413	383	369	371	-0.71%
55-59	463	425	397	387	-1.18%
60-64	491	458	426	405	-1.27%
65-69	495	479	449	424	-1.03%
70-74	422	444	431	409	-0.21%
75-79	338	371	380	370	0.60%
80-84	246	273	293	295	1.20%
85+	252	229	240	248	-0.11%
Total	6,037	6,026	5,894	5,755	-0.32%

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 1

Figure 2.1 Buloke Population by Age 2016 and Projected 2036



SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 1

Moving towards population stability in Buloke will generate new housing demand. Reducing household sizes creates demand for additional residential dwellings, offsetting the effect of slightly declining populations. During the decade between 2006 and 2016, our residential housing stock decreased by 80 dwellings. Buloke towns have surplus infrastructure and affordable properties (compared with metropolitan and regional city markets), but with limited choice and poor return-on-investment incentives to develop new houses. The fact that housing values are well below those in metropolitan and regional city markets has brought new people to Buloke; an affordability choice rather than a lifestyle or career choice. At the same time there is a shortage of quality housing for employees (especially in professional and technical service sectors), and retirees or semi-retirees looking to locate in the Shire²⁹.

²⁹ Wimmera Development Association (2020), Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Housing Review. This Review challenged the directions proposed in Buloke's Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy by demonstrating strong evidence that residential demand has potential to exceed the Victoria in Future projections (upon which the Settlement Strategy assumptions are based) which suggest a continuation of population decline trends. However, it warned that the VIF projections could be self-fulfilling unless more ambitious targets are set and unless there is a level of community, government or other intervention in the housing market to meet known demand.

Higher quality housing and rural residential allotments are needed for professional and technical workers, and people seeking a tree change lifestyle and/or an affordable active retirement. Anecdotally, many in the business community think this is an opportunity and should be assessed as an economic development project.

Social housing is an issue of focus. Rental property is in very short supply in Buloke. People living in substandard or insecure housing are being identified and while there is some social housing stock in Buloke, it is currently fully occupied.

The projections suggest demand for housing will average 14 dwellings per annum over the next fifteen years compared with the current 8 dwellings over recent years.

14
DWELLINGS
PER ANNUM
over the next
fifteen years



Table 2.2 Buloke Housing Demand Projections

	2016	WDA Projection 2031	WDA Projection 2036	% p.a. 2016-31	% p.a. 2016-36
Estimated Resident Population	6,284	5,894	5,755	-0.43%	-0.44%
Occupied Private Dwellings	2,827	2,797	2,772	-0.07%	-0.10%
Persons in Private Dwellings	6,135	5,706	5,544	-0.48%	-0.51%
Vacant Dwellings and Stock Losses	359	667	700	4.22%	3.40%
Total Private Dwellings	3,186	3,464	3,472	0.56%	0.43%
Household Size	2.17	2.04	2.00	-0.41%	-0.41%
% in Private Dwellings	97.63%	96.80%	96.32%		
Estimated Average Annual Dwelling Demand		19	14		

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 1

Projected populations for Buloke's five largest towns are summarised in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

Table 2.3 Buloke Towns Population Projections

Town	2016	2021	2026	2036	% p.a. change 2021-36
Birchip	702	691	710	695	0.04%
Charlton	1,050	1,034	1,057	1,011	-0.15%
Donald	1,498	1,468	1,500	1,514	0.21%
Sea Lake	640	624	648	643	0.20%
Wycheproof	635	615	631	611	-0.04%

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 2

Table 2.4 Buloke Towns Population Projections by Age (%)

Age Group	Birchip		Charlton		Donald		Sea Lake		Wycheproof	
	2021	2036	2021	2036	2021	2036	2021	2036	2021	2036
0-14 years	16.5%	15.2%	13.0%	13.5%	14.3%	15.0%	13.4%	12.7%	12.5%	14.5%
15-34 years	22.4%	22.4%	16.0%	20.7%	19.3%	22.9%	18.6%	20.1%	16.7%	17.2%
35-54 years	20.1%	25.0%	20.6%	20.4%	19.3%	23.7%	22.3%	25.2%	20.8%	24.3%
55-74 years	26.2%	22.6%	34.2%	26.4%	29.7%	21.9%	30.9%	25.8%	30.8%	26.4%
75+ years	14.8%	14.7%	16.2%	19.0%	17.5%	16.5%	14.8%	16.2%	19.3%	17.6%

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 2



UPDATED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGIES



**STRATEGIC
THEME 1:**

COVID-19 RECOVERY

**STRATEGIC
THEME 1:**

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 1:

POSITIONING BULOKE FOR DOMESTIC VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Post-pandemic restrictions, and with lingering health warnings and potentially new variants of COVID-19, there will be timid and slow returns of international visitation. Conversely, the experience over summer seasons in 2020 and 2021 proved that Australians willingly substitute overseas and interstate travel for visits to regional areas. Increased domestic tourism is a likely component of COVID-19 recovery. High level promotion of local tourism in Buloke will complement the tourism strategies which involve regional collaboration, improved accommodation and food service businesses, and formalising new trails (recreational lakes and play spaces).



STRATEGIC THEME 1:

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 2:

CAPTURING A SHARE OF REGIONAL MIGRATION - PLANNING FOR A SHIFT IN POPULATION CHANGE

One immediate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has been an increase in regional migration. It is too early to tell whether this will be sustained, however early data supports the anecdotal evidence, with internal migration to regional Victoria up by 600% (from a small base), the value of Buloke's residential building approvals up by 35% on pre-pandemic levels, and the resident Buloke population edging closer towards stability.

Prospects of vastly reduced State and National growth (which has been negligible in past two years) tempers the ability to target growth in Buloke, especially with the probable slow return of international migration to Australia. However, adopting the relatively ambitious projections prepared by WDA will be important for Buloke Shire in capturing a small share of regional migration, and these projections should be explicitly used by any consultants or contractors to Buloke Shire who are working on infrastructure, investment, service provision and other plans for the Shire in 2022 and 2023. The projections will need to be revised after the *2021 Census of Population and Housing* full results are available.

STRATEGIC THEME 1:

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 3:

ADDRESSING THE HOUSING CHALLENGE

Projections for Buloke suggest demand for housing will average 14 dwellings per annum over the next fifteen years compared with an average of 8 dwellings over recent years. Buloke should ensure shortages of rental and for sale housing is not an impediment to COVID-19 recovery opportunities by working to:

- Attract social and affordable housing investment,
- Revising and adopting acceptable housing and business incentives, and
- Encouraging provision greater housing range and choice from medium-density units through to large-lot rural residential developments.

STRATEGIC THEME 1:

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 4:

SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY

After decades of transition to a global economy, Australia's sensitivity to product shortages from one or two international sources has been somewhat exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, many Australian producers in trade exposed sectors (especially agricultural and mining commodities) benefit from the scale and competitive advantages offered by global markets and building a self-sufficient Australian economy is not an option. However, it would be timely for Buloke Shire to review its approach to supply chain security following COVID-19, by assessing the potential for supply chain diversification among its broad-acre growers (through new grower collaborations and alliances to service new export and domestic markets) and local value-adding. Supply chain vulnerability has been exacerbated by staff and skills shortages, including harvest labour and workers at food processing plants (where COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred) during the pandemic. Securing local supply with ongoing viable local freight and logistics services is also important, as well as maintaining and improving health and social services facilities and staffing in Buloke.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 2:**

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

This Strategic Theme builds on two of the Strategies from 2018-21:

- Strategy 2. Building community capacity to facilitate economic development
- Strategy 6. Maximise regional economic development and tourism potential through partnerships.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 2:**

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY 1:

ESTABLISHING A RESTRUCTURED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EDATAC)

The EDATAC established in 2019 began as an information exchange forum in its early meetings but by 2020-21, creation of sub-committees helped to encourage greater sense of purpose among members.

Re-establishing the EDATAC with limited core membership and Buloke Tourism Board as a standing committee offers a structure that enables flexible sub-committees dedicated to short or medium-term specific projects jointly agreed by the EDATAC and the Council. This will involve three to four meetings per annum, revised terms of reference and determining identified prioritised projects for the next two years.

STRATEGIC THEME 2:

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY 2:

A LEADING ROLE IN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Active participation in regional partnerships relating to economic and tourism development initiatives require broader collaboration to achieve collective impact (e.g. WMT, Bendigo Region of Gastronomy, INVEST Loddon Mallee, Traditional Owner relationships, and participating in Wimmera Development Association projects) is essential in driving economic development in Buloke.

Buloke has the potential to not only actively participate in regional initiatives, but to drive them where resourcing allows. This has been exemplified in recent years by Buloke's leading role in WMT, and participation in WDA's housing study, and its ability to offer diverse opportunities in regional tourism and gastronomy.

STRATEGIC THEME 2:

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY 3:

ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR LIAISING WITH TOWN FORUMS/ COMMITTEES AND MANAGING INVESTMENT ENQUIRIES

An action from the 2018-21 Strategy was to agree on a whole-of-Council coordination approach to new business and business expansion, with nominated case officers. This has been implemented though more streamlined regulatory processes. It is now suggested that guiding principles be drafted on the scope of business investment that Council supports (industry sectors/types of businesses such as agribusiness, manufacturing, tourism) so that these businesses receive the greatest level of support. Developing a framework to enable Council to engage with town forums to work in partnership with Economic Development staff in facilitating investment enquiries may be both appropriate and effective, particularly the current human resources available in this department at this time.



**STRATEGIC
THEME 3:**

COUNCILS ROLE IN FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: CREATING A CLIMATE FOR INVESTMENT

This Strategic Theme builds on three of the Strategies from 2018-21:

- Strategy 3. Ensure Council's investment in economic development and tourism,
- Strategy 4. Secure appropriate services to improve liveability and investment, and
- Strategy 5. Secure funding for our infrastructure to attract economic development.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 3:**

COUNCILS ROLE IN FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 1:

BUDGETING AND BIDS FOR SUSTAINABLE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPTIMISING USE OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Buloke has been quite successful in attracting infrastructure support for economic development projects in the past four years (over \$8 million since 2018), although the investments are often not recognised as economic development facilitators. Buloke will continue to take opportunities to access relevant infrastructure projects to enhance private investment, liveability and tourism visitor experiences, subject to Council being in a position to meet any required co-contributions and having the internal resources to successfully manage the projects (including collaborative projects across more than one local government area).

STRATEGIC THEME 3:

COUNCILS ROLE IN FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2:

CONTINUING GAP IDENTIFICATION COMPLEMENTED BY INVESTMENT GUIDES AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Demonstrating that Buloke is a competitive location for targeted industry sectors and specific business opportunities can be a significant factor in attracting new investment. This can take the form of investment guides, industry facts and specifics of potential sites and infrastructure within Buloke.

STRATEGIC THEME 3:

COUNCILS ROLE IN FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 3:

REFINING AND ADOPTING DRAFT HOUSING AND BUSINESS INCENTIVES

An EDATAC Housing sub-committee developed draft incentives for consideration by Council in mid-2021. These will be revised, to the extent considered necessary by Council for adoption in order to promote Buloke as a supportive location for investment, and as a residential location.



**STRATEGIC
THEME 4:**

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT

This Strategic Theme builds on three of the Strategies from 2018-21:

- Strategy 1. Enhancing the role of agriculture in Buloke,
- Strategy 7. Tourism experience development, and
- Strategy 8. Promote the economic advantages of sustainability in Buloke.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 4:**

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY 1:

ENHANCE AGRIBUSINESS DIVERSIFICATION AND VALUE ADDING

Support and facilitate business cases and private investment in identified agribusiness sectors which have strong supply chain links in Buloke and expected growth opportunities.

STRATEGIC THEME 4:

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2:

DEVELOPMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGIES, MINERAL SANDS AND RARE EARTH MINERALS

Support and facilitate business cases and private investment in identified renewable energy and mining sectors which have underdeveloped resources in Buloke and expected growth opportunities. We are well-placed to accommodate renewables. Presently, 60 new wind turbines are expected to be sited around the Wimmera Southern Mallee region over the next five years. At least 10 of these could be located in Buloke Shire, and growth in solar power installations is inevitable.

Buloke has some of the world's greatest concentrations of undeveloped heavy and rare earth minerals (particularly the most valuable, zircon and titanium). Exploration and project development activities are continuing in this sector. There is also some prospect of further exploration of gold resources and assessment of a feasible gold extraction enterprise.

STRATEGIC THEME 4:

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY 3:

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AND RESPONSIVE TOWN BUSINESSES

Buloke Shire will lead and support local (e.g. Play Spaces Trail, Lake Tyrrell experiences and Charlton Arts Precinct), and contribute to regional (e.g. Silo Art Trail and Recreational Lakes Trails) projects to expand tourist attractions and work with local businesses and Buloke Tourism Board to respond to growing visitation numbers.

The most pressing of these for 2022-23 are:

- The construction of the Play Spaces Trail,
- More diverse visitor accommodation,
- A greater range of food service businesses in Buloke,
- Formalisation of trails and events at pipeline filled lakes (in collaboration with other WSM lakes and weir pools), and
- Additional placement of trainers at Charlton Harness Racing Club to increase the status, employment, visitor numbers and viability of the facility.

STRATEGIC THEME 4:

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY 4:

CREATE CIRCULAR ECONOMY OPTIONS FOR A RANGE OF PRODUCT CATEGORIES

In 2022 and 2023 Buloke will support the trialling of selected products which can be recycled within the municipality. These could create new business opportunities, product applications in their own right or transformed products will be able to return to the original supply chain.

Trials which are already underway in Buloke are:

- Recycled glass from household waste processed into road surfacing material (a not-for-profit venture in partnership with other local Councils in Wimmera Southern Mallee),
- Textiles and clothing, and
- Used litter from poultry sheds spread as fertiliser or converted into biomass products.

Links between the former (2018-21) Strategies, the new 2022-23 Strategic Themes, and the Actionable Strategies for 2022 and 2023 are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Updated Strategies



STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

FRANK HUNT

Frank Hunt and twin brother Ryan were born in Wycheproof on the 5th of January 1950 and moved to Birchip in 1952. They and three more brothers and four sisters were schooled at Wycheproof and then Birchip High School.

In 1967, due to severe illness, Frank joined the Army to become a regular soldier. He was sent to Vietnam and on July 21st 1968, while on scout in 6th Battalion, Frank received multiple injuries when a platoon member stepped on a mine. The day that Neil Armstrong

ACTION PLAN

Strategic Theme	Actionable Strategy	Actions	Resource Lead	Resource Partner	Timing
 THEME 1 COVID-19 Recovery	Positioning the Shire for domestic visitor experiences.	Promotion of local tourism in Buloke to complement regional collaboration, improved accommodation and food service businesses, and new trails.	BSC	BTB, EDATAC	2022-2023
	Capturing a share of regional migration: Planning for the evident shift in population trends.	Reviewing and developing the application of projections prepared by WDA.	BSC	EDATAC	2022
	Addressing the housing challenge.	Address shortages of rental and for sale housing through: (1) Supporting the Birchip Community Housing Project. (2) Attracting social and affordable housing investment which improves the range and choice of residential lots. (3) Revising and adopting acceptable housing incentives.	BSC (1)(2)(3)	Birchip Community Housing, EDATAC	2022-23
	Building secure supply chains.	(1) Review Buloke's approach to supply chain security following COVID-19. (2) Secure local supply with ongoing viable local freight and logistics services. (3) Maintain and improve health and social services facilities and staffing.	BSC (1)(2), Regional Partnerships and Government Initiatives (2), Facilities owners (3)	EDATAC, Regional Partnerships (1)(2), Health and Social Service Providers (3)	2023

Strategic Theme	Actionable Strategy	Actions	Resource Lead	Resource Partner	Timing
THEME 2 Partnerships to Deliver Economic Development and Tourism	Establish a restructured EDATAC dedicated to specific projects.	Re-establishing EDATAC.	BSC		2022
	Take a leading role in regional partnerships.	Active participation, and leadership where appropriate, in regional partnerships.	BSC		2022-2023
	Engaging town forums and facilitating investment enquiries.	Development of guiding principles for business investment that Council supports. Engage town forums in assisting with investment enquiries.	BSC	EDATAC, Town Forums	2022
THEME 3 Council Roles in Facilitating Economic Development: Creating a Climate for Investment	Budgeting and bids for sustainable new infrastructure and optimising use of existing infrastructure	Continue to pursue relevant infrastructure projects subject to Council being in a position to meet any required co-contributions and internal resourcing.	BSC		2022-2023
	Continuing gap identification complemented by investment guides and supporting materials.	Preparation of investment guides, industry facts and specifics of potential sites and infrastructure within Buloke.	BSC	EDATAC	2022-2023
	Refining and adopting draft housing and business incentives.	Revise and adopt the package of incentives developed by the EDATAC Housing sub-committee.	BSC	EDATAC	2022

Strategic Theme	Actionable Strategy	Actions	Resource Lead	Resource Partner	Timing
 THEME 4 Targeted Industries Investment	Enhance agribusiness diversification and value adding.	Support and facilitate business cases and private investment in identified agribusiness sectors.	BCG	BSC	2022-2023
	Development of renewable energies and mineral sands and rare earth minerals.	Support/facilitate business cases and private investment in identified renewable energy and mining sectors.			2022-2023
	Tourism attractions and responsive town businesses.	Lead local and regional projects to expand tourist attractions and work with town businesses and Buloke Tourism Board to respond to growing visitation numbers.	BSC	BTB, EDATAC, WMT, Township Forums	2022-2023
	Create circular economy options for a range of product categories.	Support trialling of selected products which can be recycled within the Shire.	BSC	EDATAC	2022-2023

Notably this Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy does not itemise budgets for projects which might arise if Council opts to take up funding support in implementing opportunities, from either government programs or private sector investment, particularly those in Strategy Themes 3 and 4. Projects arising from actions in the strategy which are beyond Council's existing budget provisions will need to be funded either by community and private sector funding,) or be approved by Council on a case-by-case basis.

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS OF ACTIONS IN 2018-2021 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY

1. Enhance the role of agriculture within the Buloke Shire Council	1.1	Ongoing	Continue to actively seek intensive animal husbandry opportunities including achieving critical mass for value adding options from waste stream or for feed and litter.
	1.2	Ongoing	Support and advocate for automation ventures such as AgTide.
2. Build community capacity to facilitate economic development & tourism	2.1	Complete	Conduct research to identify gaps in services and products across the Shire and build business cases to attract private investment. Outcome: Adopted Industry, Products and Services Gap Analysis and Investment Attraction Plan Next steps: 1. Integrate findings from Gap Analysis into EDT Strategy 2. Integrate Actions from Investment Attraction Plan into EDT Strategy 3. Implement Investment Attraction Strategy
	2.2	Complete	Identify knowledge and skill gaps amongst business as well as a preference for training solutions. Outcome: Developed Skills Gap Analysis and Workforce Plan. Next steps: 1. Continue to work with key partners including the North Central Local Learning and Employment Network to implement actions
	2.3	Complete	Establish a Buloke Economic Development and Tourism Board with representatives from a range of towns and areas (Agriculture, Retail, Tourism) to provide advisory input in to Council on local priorities. Outcome: Established Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee. Next steps: Review committee performance and provide recommendations on ongoing establishment in EDT strategy.

2. Build community capacity to facilitate economic development & tourism	2.4	Not started	Implement a business support system to interface with business and Council.
	2.5	Not started	Support town communities to establish and oversee community enterprises in meeting local needs.
3. Ensure Council's continued and strengthened investment in Economic Development Support	3.1	Complete	Agree on a whole-of-council coordination of new business and business expansion, with nominated case officers. Outcome: Better Approvals Program implemented and 'Buy Buloke' website developed. Next steps: 1. Review effectiveness and consider recommendations for further development in EDT strategy
	3.2	In progress	Decide on the most appropriate package of business and investment incentives to send a welcoming message to businesses.
	3.3	Complete	Review the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and other Council documents to ensure land use strategies are attractive to investment. Outcome: Adopted Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy. Next steps: 1. Review outcomes and recommendations for inclusion in EDT strategy where appropriate
4. Secure appropriate services to improve liveability and investment	4.1	Ongoing	Lobby for equity of access for Buloke businesses in accessing new technology.
	4.2	Not started	Develop a partnership to attract new technology providers and system developed to overcome current IT challenges.
	4.3	Ongoing	Ensure the Buloke Planning Scheme provides for quality housing options and potential rural residential allotments near townships.

4. Secure appropriate services to improve liveability and investment	4.4	Complete	Secure funding support to map current and develop new opportunities for Early Childhood education provision. Outcome: Funding secured for new Kinder and Childcare centres in Charlton, Sea Lake and Wycheproof. Next steps: 1. Continue to partner with providers to ensure service provision
5. Secure funding for infrastructure to attract economic development	5.1	Ongoing	Regular seeking of investment for critical town and rural assets through grant programs Outcomes to date: Funding received for 1. Streetscapes in Birchip, Sea Lake, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof 2. Lakes infrastructure 3. Destination play spaces 4. Implementation of the Wycheproof Saleyards Masterplan 5. Charlton arts/culture hub 6. Sea Lake Visitor Information Centre 7. Lake Tyrrell facilities 8. Recreational facility improvements
	5.2	Ongoing	Having a clear asset management plan and project priorities pipeline to ensure shovel readiness when grants are released. Outcomes to date: 1. Asset management committee established 2. Asset Management Strategy and Policy adopted 3. Strategic Asset Management Plan and suite of asset management plans in development 4. Advocacy Strategy updated annually 5. Project pipeline created and updated regularly 6. Dedicated roles within Council identifying pipeline projects, funding opportunities, developing masterplans and designs 7. Project Management Framework developed 8. Project planning and delivery teams established

5. Secure funding for infrastructure to attract economic development	5.3	Ongoing	Actively lobby all levels of government for improved rural funding models that address asset renewal.
	5.4	Ongoing	With Rail Freight Alliances, campaign for improved rail freight and infrastructure.
	5.5	Not started	Seek opportunities to promote public transport including sustainable funding models for community and transport.
	5.6	Complete	Prioritise advocacy for streetscape updates. Outcome: 1. Funding secured for streetscapes in Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Wycheproof and Sea Lake 2. Construction underway
6. Maximise regional economic development and tourism potential through partnerships	6.1	Complete	Present the benefits of all formal partnerships to Council for consideration. Outcome: Reviewed annually
	6.2	Ongoing	Active involvement in directing and participating in work programs and potential projects with partners. Consideration of how the projects lead to economic development for BSC such as preparing investment guides for legumes and oil seeds.
	6.3	Ongoing	Work with NPC on attracting intensive animal value add products. Outcome: Over 1 million new poultry livestock accommodated within the Buloke Shire, with more than \$15 million in investment since 2018.
	6.4	Ongoing	Participate and support WMT initiatives including production of new prints and online visitor information. Outcomes to date: 1. Augmented Reality at Silo Art Trail 2. Development of new Visit Wimmera Mallee website and online trails 3. Secured funding through Silo Art Gap Analysis 4. Secured and implemented Trading off the Trails funding

7. Tourism experience development	7.1	Ongoing	Continue targeted community grants program to support events.
	7.2	In progress	Assist with event promotion including calendar of events online and in print.
	7.3	Ongoing	Feasibility of chartered air services to tourism destinations.
	7.4	Not started	Incentivise shop owners to upgrade shop facades. Council could subsidise as part of streetscape improvement program.
	7.5	Ongoing	Address the gaps in infrastructure facilities in towns to ensure the provision of essential, quality visitor amenities such as caravan parking, signage and improved public toilet facilities. Outcomes to date: 1. New amenities block/toilet facilities in towns along the Calder Highway funded and constructed.
	7.6	Started	Develop tourism signage strategy to encourage consistency in appearance. Outcomes to date: 1. Audit of existing signage completed 2. Partnered with Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) in broader Visitor Signage project
	7.7	Complete	Prepare Buloke Country marketing plan which includes as style guide, brand name, inclusive information and utilises commissioned photography. Outcomes: 1. Marketing plan developed 2. Town brochures created 3. New Style Guide and branding created 4. New image library developed Next steps: 1. Integrate into EDT strategy 2. Partner with Buloke Tourism Board to implement marketing plan and branding

7. Tourism experience development	7.8	Ongoing	Improve the online content about Buloke Shire's attractions and services.
	7.9	Ongoing	Develop thematic trails with adjacent shires to connect self-drive and coach visitors with key attractions and supporting services. Outcomes to date: 1. Thematic trails developed with WMT 2. Buloke Play Spaces Trail funded and under development
	7.10	Ongoing	Improve the distribution of visitor information. Outcomes to date: 1. Development of new tourism brochures and marketing plan 2. Secured funding for, and constructed Visitor Information Centre in Sea Lake
8. Promote the economic advantages of sustainability in the Buloke Shire	8.1	Ongoing	Continue the land use policy support for alternative energy provision in the Buloke Planning Scheme whilst also providing support and active engagement with potential small scale programs.
	8.2	Ongoing	Develop a partnership to attract new technology providers and system developers to overcome IT challenges.
	8.3	Started	Investigate the options for farmers to secure native vegetation offsets on their property for investment. Outcomes to date: 1. Established relationships with DELWP to negotiate education for farmer on their options



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Buloke Shire Council

Welcome
Lake Tyrrell