

**GREATER SHEPPARTON**

**VICTORIAN**

**GOVERNMENT**

**PRIORITIES**

**2025/26**







### **Traditional Owners**

We, Greater Shepparton City Council, acknowledge the Yorta Yorta Peoples of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton, we pay our respect to their tribal elders, we celebrate their continuing culture and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors





# Summary

Greater Shepparton is experiencing significant growth, and this growth brings opportunity, however there are still challenges that need to be addressed. This document highlights the key infrastructure priorities and important public policy topics for Greater Shepparton. These projects will collectively contribute to strengthening economic and social activity and improved liveability for our region.

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  - Create, diversify and retain jobs.
  - Leverage private sector investment and diversification of local industry.
  - Improve liveability in our cities.
  - Improve economic and social outcomes.



# Greater Shepparton, Greater Opportunities

Greater Shepparton is Victoria's fifth largest regional centre and acts as a major population service centre for the wider Goulburn Valley and southern New South Wales region, covering a population of approximately 250,000 people. Our community is experiencing substantial change, growing in both population and economic activity (2022 population of 68,873) with an expected population growth of 1.2 per cent per year until 2031. This growth brings with it a range of complex issues that impact on our community including planning and construction, protecting the environment, creation of local jobs, fit-for-purpose road and transport solutions, social and affordable housing, and the increasing need for our industries to adapt.

A diversified economy and an emphasis on sustainability, renewable energy and environmental conservation have significantly influenced the future direction for Greater Shepparton. This region, being known as Australia's Agricultural Powerhouse, has become a centre for advanced manufacturing and health care, and a hub of innovation, visitation and cultural activity.

As a region traditionally dependent upon water, we are at a cross road, where we are confronted with a future with less water as a result of Government policy and environmental factors. We are a region in transition, which is presenting both challenges and opportunities.

Our power is in our partnerships and collaboration, and our ambitious goals for Greater Shepparton cannot be achieved by one organisation alone. To turn our vision into reality, we must engage, mobilise, and collaborate with all levels of government, the private sector, and the community.

Through advocacy and partnership, we aim to secure policy commitments, funding, and decisive action from key decision-makers. This enables us to deliver projects and priorities that will make Greater Shepparton a liveable, prosperous, inclusive, and resilient place to live, work, study, play, and do business.



# What We Are Advocating For:



**SHEPPARTON SPORTS  
& EVENTS CENTRE**



**GREATER SHEPPARTON  
ROAD NETWORK  
RESILIENCE PACKAGE**



**REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT,  
CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC  
HEALTH SERVICE**



**BUS TRANSPORT  
NETWORK REVIEW**



**ADAPTING TO A  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**



**ENABLING  
INFRASTRUCTURE FUND**





# Shepparton Sports & Events Centre

## Investment:

**\$32m**

- **Australian Government**  
**\$15m**
- **Victorian Government**  
**\$5m**
- **Greater Shepparton City Council**  
**\$12m**

## Challenges and Opportunities

The Shepparton Sports Stadium opened in the early 1970's and whilst Council maintains the current Sports Stadium to a high standard, with regular investment, the shortcomings of this aging facility (listed below) creates barriers to improving social and economic outcomes for our region:

- Non-compliance with disability access standards.
- Non-compliance with basketball major tournament requirements.
- Non-compliance with other major sporting codes such as netball and badminton.
- Insufficient parking (including accessibility parking) and connectivity pathing to access the facility.

The current four court configuration constrains player capacity and multiuse capability, particularly for the growing number of junior participants who are regularly turned away through clubs being unable to provide playing and training opportunities. In addition, the popularity of basketball has had the effect of 'crowding out' other sports that require indoor facilities.

These sports are popular predominantly amongst our vast multicultural community and include pickleball, badminton, volleyball, futsal, table tennis and a number of wheelchair sports.

Economic benefits accrue when tournaments or events generate demand for commercial accommodation and retail goods and services. The aging Shepparton Sports Stadium creates a distinct disadvantage for our region when it comes to attracting significant tournaments and events in comparison to other regional venues such as Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Mildura and Traralgon. Accordingly, the economic benefits accruing to our local economy are far below what would be the case if the redevelopment was realised.

“

**DAVID HUXTABLE**

*General Manager Basketball Victoria  
General Manager*

*Basketball Victoria fully supports Greater Shepparton City Council in their pursuit of the development of the Shepparton Sports and Events Centre. Basketball Victoria has seen consistent strong growth and demand for a number of years and at a state-wide level our participation numbers represent around 4% of the population. The Shepparton area exceeds the State average for participation and has seen strong growth over a number of years. As such, additional courts in the Shepparton area to cater for this growth is the highest priority for Basketball Victoria.”*



The current stadium also inhibits complementary support for the newly developed Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence (MCRE) which was funded by the Victorian Government. MCRE is located within the envelope of the Shepparton Sports City precinct and is the first Indigenous-led pathways-based education facility for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, in Australia. With Shepparton housing one of the highest Indigenous population in Victoria, outside of metropolitan Melbourne, this Centre creates a significant uplift in opportunities and pathways for the community.

Council have recently revisited the detailed design following extensive community and stakeholder consultation and have prepared a more sustainable staged approach to the redevelopment, which is cognisant of the constrained economic conditions of the Australian and Victorian Governments.

## **Solution**

Greater Shepparton City Council is proposing to create a regionally and nationally significant sporting, entertainment and events complex that caters for a multitude of users. The staged redevelopment will include:

- Construction of four basketball/netball/multiuse national standard compliant courts.
- Show court with seating for up to 3,000 people.
- A multi-purpose room that can host stadium programming, events and corporate functions.
- Inclusion of a sports house/administration space for the stadium, event organisers and other sporting users.
- New change rooms with the capacity and flexibility to cater for males, females and gender fluid sporting players/teams, officials and for elite standard competition.
- Family friendly and accessible (including “changing place”) change rooms for visitors with mobility and special needs and visitor amenities.
- Entry, lobby, café and reception.
- External works including access roads, signage, landscaping, pedestrian footpaths and crossings, bicycle parking, bus drop off, and car parking.

## **Projected Outcomes**

The redevelopment of the Sports Stadium is the final missing piece for the regionally significant Shepparton’s Sports City, which in partnership with the Australian and Victorian Governments, has undergone a significant transformation over the last 15 years to become the premier sporting precinct in regional Victoria.

This project will provide a significant regional hub that services the wider Goulburn and Murray regions of Victoria incorporating the six surrounding municipalities. The catchment’s combined population is in excess of 250,000.

The redevelopment will allow the region to host large-scale events at state, national and international standards from elite to a participation level across various sporting genres including basketball, netball, badminton, table tennis, volleyball and futsal. It will also allow new events and sporting disciplines previously not been able to be hosted at the venue including activities such as dance, boxing, judo, taekwondo, pickle ball and a variety of multisport and non-sporting events to be attracted to the region.

This will build on Greater Shepparton’s reputation as a sporting capital of regional Victoria. It will provide increased opportunities for children, young people and adults to be connected and enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle, developing skills and capabilities supporting job growth and economic prosperity.





## **Economic Benefits**

Once construction is complete, it is estimated that a redeveloped Shepparton Sports and Events Centre will support the expansion of existing events and allow the proactive attraction of more than 200 major events to northern Victoria over a 10-year period.

This redevelopment will create significant positive economic benefits to the state and region to support and diversify our visitor economy, enhancing the growth of important industry sectors through:

- Generate \$73.96 million in output during construction, supporting 210 local jobs
- Over a 10 year period once constructed new tournaments and events hosted by an expanded sports and events centre are expected to attract approximately 134,200 new visitors to Greater Shepparton
- Over a 10 year period an expanded sports and events centre would generate \$84.35 million in economic stimulation (direct and indirect spending) whilst also ensuring existing events can be retained and hosted in the region which is also valued at \$65.43 million helping generate a combined \$149.78 million in economic impact into the Greater Shepparton economy. This will support increases in visitation and spending across a variety of key sectors such as retail, hospitality, accommodation, visitor attractions, entertainment along with supporting event services and supplier industry's helping support an additional 79 local jobs.











# Greater Shepparton Road Network Resilience Package

## Investment:

With the loss of the \$208 million bypass funding and a further \$130 million cut from the Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) Toowoomba to Seymour program, there are opportunities to advocate to both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments for the delivery of key road infrastructure projects in Greater Shepparton that will significantly improve our regional road transport network.

- **New Goulburn River Bridge** <sup>1</sup>
- **Key Road Projects: Road enhancements/Intersection upgrades;**
  - River Road, Kialla (estimated \$15m to \$20m) <sup>2</sup>
  - Ford Road/Wanganui Roads, Shepparton (estimated \$7m additional funding) <sup>3</sup>;
  - Shepparton Alternative Route and Goulburn Valley Highway, Congupna (estimated \$20m) <sup>4</sup>;
  - Toolamba Road/Echuca Road/ Midland Highway, Mooroopna <sup>5</sup>
  - Inner East Link Road, Shepparton <sup>6</sup>
  - Welsford Street, Shepparton <sup>7</sup>
- **Local Road Maintenance Investment Package**

## Challenges and Opportunities

Greater Shepparton is positioned at the junction of two major north-south and east-west arterial roads, namely the Goulburn Valley Highway (forms part of the Newell Highway corridor that provides links to Melbourne and Brisbane) and the Midland Highway. With an expected population growth of 1.2 per cent per year until 2031, Greater Shepparton also acts as a major service centre for the wider Goulburn Valley and southern New South Wales region, covering a population of approximately 250,000 people.

Greater Shepparton is a strategic hub in the national freight and logistics chain supporting the agricultural and manufacturing industries with freight movements between all capital cities and ports. Efficient and effective transport movement, particularly of freight within, to and from the Greater Shepparton, is critical to the ongoing growth and competitiveness of the city and of the surrounding region.

As our region continues to grow so does the pressure on the local and broader road network. This is further compounded by the growing freight and logistic activities, important cost inputs to the domestic and international export oriented industries in the Goulburn Valley. The increased freight generation from our existing and expanding industrial areas including the significant industrial precinct at GV Link will further increase congestion and substantial demands on our already strained road maintenance program. This coupled with the identified increase in population will impede future regional economic growth, reduce liveability and detrimentally impact the amenity and attractiveness of our city - deterring investment in our commercial areas.





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**JOSH KRESKAS,**  
Managing Director  
Kreskas Brothers Transport Pty Ltd

*The resilience package put forth by the Greater Shepparton City Council highlights the extreme poor conditions of local roadways and major arterial routes, as well as the necessity to undertake immediate planning and remediation works.*

*As Greater Shepparton grows and further private investment is made by industry in the region, the demand for inbound and outbound road freight increases. With increasing pressure on an already inefficient and deteriorating road network, it is paramount that investment is made to support the road infrastructure, ensuring the long-term viability and safety not only for transport operators but also for all road users.”*





The capacity of the Goulburn Valley Highway in and around Greater Shepparton can no longer safely and efficiently support existing traffic volumes. It is important that the existing and proposed transport network is managed and integrated in conjunction with the various growth areas both urban and rural through the backing of the Greater Shepparton Road Network Resilience Package. This package includes the following projects:

- **New Goulburn River Bridge:**

The October 2022 Floods highlighted the critical deficiencies in the safety and capacity of our evacuation routes and transport network. During the flood the only existing Goulburn River crossing option of the Midland Highway (the Causeway between Mooroopna and Shepparton that currently takes over 30,000 vehicles per day) was inundated with water leading to a multi-day closure. These closures had significant impacts on key supply chains and the freight industry as well as the connection of communities, as was seen in Shepparton and Mooroopna where the community was separated by floodwaters for several days. The detour for freight vehicles was significant adding hundreds of kilometres to the trip detrimentally impacting supply chain efficiency.

- **Key road projects:**

The growing freight task places pressure and presents safety challenges on local traffic and freight vehicle interactions. These intersection upgrades will crucially provide a more efficient and safer road network along the Goulburn Valley Highway corridor, and serve as a major connection point to the rest of the primary road network improving congestion and connectivity in and around Shepparton.

- **Local Road Maintenance Investment Package:**

Council manage an extensive series of both sealed and unsealed roads that link our community to the arterial, corridors and freeways of the broader road network. Many of the roads are in a state of disrepair with many badly damaged during recent flood events. Key national and state freight routes continue to deteriorate through lack of maintenance.

The population and growing freight demand on our local roads is increasing along with the cost of maintaining roads, the contributory funding to help Council from Victorian and Commonwealth Governments has not kept pace. Insufficient funding has contributed to more patch jobs and/or delaying repairs that essentially leads to more costly problems in the future. Major repairs necessitated by neglect can lead to longer road closures or restrictions, disrupting traffic flow.

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**STEPHEN SCHNEIDER**

*President, Greater Shepparton  
Business Network*



*Greater Shepparton has a vibrant and diverse business sector that serves as a major service centre for our community, as well as the wider region. Positioned on important north south and east west transport corridors road transport accessibility is critical for business continuity and pivotally important to the region's economy. The 2022 flood event inundated the existing bridge on the Midland Highway which cut access for days severely impacted business and the community. Having an alternative flood proof additional river crossing is of paramount importance for the continued prosperity and growth of our business sector and also the wider community and industry operations.”*





## **Solution**

The solution to address Greater Shepparton's existing road limitations and create a more efficient and safer more resilient network is the construction of a new Goulburn River Bridge, the upgrade of key intersections and investing in road maintenance services for the prosperity of the community and the local economy.

### **Victorian Government Projects**

- New Goulburn River Bridge, development funds to revise the design, costing and scope.
- New roundabout at River Road (Shepparton Alternative Route) and Goulburn Valley Highway intersection at Kialla to improve safety.
- New roundabout at Shepparton Alternative Route and Goulburn Valley Highway intersection at Congupna to improve safety.
- Additional funding for Ford Road/Wanganui Road signalised intersection upgrade.
- Upgrade the intersection at Toolamba Road/Echuca Road/Midland Highway Mooroopna to increase capacity and reduce congestion.

These priority projects are also identified in the Shepparton Mooroopna Regional City 2050 Growth Plan and include (but not limited to) state and local projects.

### **Local Projects (Victorian / Australian Government Road Safety Programs)**

- Intersection and safety upgrades on the inner east link road Shepparton, including shared user paths.
- Welsford Street upgrade including integration with the shared pathways.
- Local Road Maintenance Investment Package (State Government Only)

To provide the evidence to strategically understand the needs and future demands on the transport network, Council is partnering with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) to develop the Greater Shepparton Integrated Transport and Land Use Study. This project will assess the present multi-modal transport network and land use trends to develop an integrated transport and land use vision with a focus on managing the sustainable growth of Shepparton and surrounding townships, achieving sustainable mode shift, and providing resilient and efficient freight network.

Importantly, this study will provide the necessary evidence to guide future decision making for Greater Shepparton by outlining an implementation plan that includes an investment pipeline of projects over the short, medium and long term.

## **Projected Outcomes**

Rather than having individual road projects identified, these projects are being packaged so that they can be scoped and developed and delivered through a strategically integrated program of works. The package of road projects demonstrates the long-term benefits of the investment in Shepparton/Mooroopna as a major regional transport and freight hub and recognises the city as an important junction of the state and national highway road network.

The vital project will be the realisation of the new Goulburn River Bridge as this will underpin and provide the foundation in creating a resilient freight network for Shepparton and the broader region, providing improved safety and security for our community, particularly in emergency situations.

## **Economic Benefits**

From a whole of transport network prospective these projects will have wide economic impact by reducing travel times, support local businesses, enhance community wellbeing as well as increase the overall productivity of the area through:

- Enhancing the competitiveness of businesses in the Goulburn Valley area by providing efficient access to transportation networks.
- Attracting more businesses and thereby employment to improve economic competitiveness within the broader Hume Region.
- Supporting national freight logistic operations that rely on access to Principal Freight Network and necessitate improvement to connections.
- Enhancing supply chain resilience by providing an alternative and efficient route for transporting goods in the Goulburn Valley Region.
- Providing a resilient and reliable and strategic link for freight movement particularly in cases of disruptions or congestion in other transportation corridors.
- Putting downward pressure on freight costs and assist in maintaining export competitiveness.



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*GV Health patient feedback\**

*“I was moved to the respiratory ward where my condition eventually stabilized. The staff were great, however the ward is very outdated and certainly well below the standards of the Emergency Department and Critical Care Unit. It was previously the children’s ward, opened in 1950, so well overdue for an upgrade.”*

*\*Source: GV Health consumer feedback portal*







# Regionally Significant, Contemporary Public Health Service

- **Completion of the remaining 50% of the GV Health Shepparton Hospital Redevelopment**

## Current situation

In 2021, a new masterplan for GV Health's Shepparton Hospital was developed, after significant portions of the existing facility were identified as being no longer fit-for-purpose and in need of replacement.

The first stage of the GV Health Shepparton Hospital Redevelopment commenced in 2018 with major construction completed in 2024. Despite this, around 50% of the site still needs to be redeveloped, and new capital funding is required to deliver this vital work. Completing the full redevelopment is necessary to address critical gaps in the availability of contemporary care and treatment facilities for the communities of the Goulburn Valley and surrounding regions, particularly in relation to cancer care treatment, inpatient capacity, specialist clinics, pathology services and car-parking.

## Proposed solution: Completing the Shepparton Hospital Redevelopment

A new funding commitment to complete construction of the full masterplan is vital to closing the gaps in care in our region and improving access to care and services for local people.

Three components of the masterplan are required as urgent priorities:

- **Integrated Cancer Centre:** a comprehensive Integrated Cancer Centre, constructed on-site and in one building, at Shepparton Hospital.
- **More Inpatient Beds:** New inpatient wards and buildings to meet growing demand, replace outdated ward infrastructure such as four-bed patient rooms, and ease pressure on existing wards.
- **Regional Pathology Hub:** a new Pathology Laboratory and Hub, increasing regional capability for pathology services in line with region-wide service planning, to reduce wait-times for patients, while also enabling delivery of subsequent components of the masterplan.

Other critical elements of the masterplan which are also priorities include: a cardiac catheterisation laboratory (cath-lab) to support local delivery of critical cardiology services; expanded MRI capacity; and a new multi-deck car park to improve hospital access for patients, families and staff.

*\*Cost estimates for project planning were prepared by an independent quantity surveyor, commissioned by GV Health.*





# GV Health Integrated Cancer Centre - Stage 2

## **Investment:**

\$90 million\*

## **The aim:**

Fully deliver the Integrated Cancer Centre at Shepparton Hospital

## **Current Situation**

Cancer and related wellbeing services at GV Health are currently provided from limited multidisciplinary care and treatment spaces, including chemotherapy, a restricted haematology service, and an inadequate wellness service. Existing consulting rooms and treatment spaces are undersized, and there are not enough to meet clinical service delivery needs.

GV Health is the only Regional Public Health Service in Victoria that does not have an Integrated Cancer Centre offering comprehensive cancer treatment facilities. This limits the scope of cancer services provided and requires patients to travel long distances for care, such as for treatment of head and neck cancers and other tumor streams.

While an initial stage of the GV Health Integrated Cancer Centre has been funded by the Australian Government, it will only expand the capacity of existing services, and does not deliver the fully integrated Cancer Center in the Shepparton Hospital masterplan. Further, this will mean cancer and related wellbeing services will be delivered from two locations on the Shepparton Hospital site which is suboptimal for patients and staff, while also noting publicly funded radiotherapy services are provided in the Shepparton CBD by a private provider.

Completing the full Integrated Cancer Centre project is essential for addressing inequitable access to integrated, comprehensive cancer care in our region.

*\*Cost estimates for project planning were prepared by an independent quantity surveyor, commissioned by GV Health*



## **Proposed solution:** **Fully Deliver the GV Health Integrated Cancer Centre**

- Delivery of a comprehensive Integrated Cancer Centre constructed on-site in one building at Shepparton Hospital, GV Health's main campus, in line with the GV Health Masterplan.
- One of the most significant facilities still to be delivered as part of the partially-completed Shepparton Hospital redevelopment.

## **Project outcomes**

- The full range of cancer care services offered in a single building, including: more day haematology and oncology treatment spaces and services; specialist and supportive consulting; radiotherapy services onsite; wellness and support centre; clinical and non-clinical support areas for research, teaching and staff spaces.

- Provides integrated, local access to essential cancer care services.
- Reduces the need for patients to travel long distances for cancer treatment.
- A fully Integrated Cancer Centre would eliminate additional costs associated with the current model of coordinating care across multiple public and private providers.
- Addresses disruptions to continuity of care for patients currently relying on off-site publicly funded radiotherapy treatment services delivered in the Shepparton CBD by a private provider.
- Improved amenity for staff including a contemporary Multi-Disciplinary Planning and Review space for patient diagnosis and care planning.







# New Inpatient Wards and Clinical Support Building

## **Investment:**

\$440 million\*

## **The aim:**

Contemporary inpatient and clinical support facilities at Shepparton Hospital that meet expectations of patients and staff for quality, comfort, and privacy

## **Current Situation**

In 2024, new inpatient facilities were completed at GV Health's main hospital campus in Shepparton, partially replacing aged infrastructure as part of the first stage of the Shepparton Hospital Redevelopment. However, older parts of Shepparton Hospital do not meet contemporary standards for hospital care in Australia. Current facilities include shared inpatient rooms with up to four beds, and the absence of ensuite bathrooms, requiring patients to use shared facilities.

These older inpatient facilities at Shepparton Hospital are at the end of their useful life and are physically separated from the newer parts of the hospital, creating challenges for clinical teams. Additionally, there is limited capacity to support patients requiring bariatric care.

New inpatient wards and clinical support facilities are urgently needed to replace this outdated infrastructure, meet the expectations and needs of patients and staff, ease pressure on existing wards, and accommodate growing demand for acute care across the region.



*\*Cost estimates for project planning were prepared by an independent quantity surveyor, commissioned by GV Health*



## Proposed solution: New GV Health Inpatient Facilities at Shepparton Hospital

- Construction of a new inpatient and clinical support building to deliver a significant increase in acute-care bed capacity, replacing existing aged infrastructure.
- A critical element of the next stage of the Shepparton Hospital Redevelopment.

## Project outcomes

- Significantly improved patient experience with access to contemporary facilities that meet expectations for quality, comfort, and privacy.
- Enhanced staff and clinician experience with modern facilities that support efficient and effective care delivery.
- Improved access to care, with better patient flow throughout GV Health's Shepparton Hospital, to meet growing demand and reduce pressure on existing wards.







# Regional Pathology Hub

## **Investment:**

\$18 million\*

## **The aim:**

Equitable access to the full range of pathology services at GV Health and enabling improved services for public hospitals in our region

## **Current Situation**

Existing pathology facilities at GV Health's Shepparton campus are no longer fit for purpose and their condition has been rated as "very poor", with no material investment in the pathology building facilities in around 30 years.

As a result, the range of pathology services available at GV Health and in the region is suboptimal compared to other similar regional health services. This means delayed access and prolonged waiting times for diagnostic results.

## **Proposed solution:** **GV Health Regional Pathology Hub**

- Construction of a comprehensive regional pathology hub, on-site at GV Health's main campus in Graham St, Shepparton, in line with the GV Health masterplan.
- The full range of pathology services offered in one place for patients within the GV Health catchment.

## **Project Outcomes**

- Faster access to more pathology services, reducing wait times and improving patient outcomes.
- Eliminate additional costs associated with the current model of coordinating care across multiple public and private providers.
- Facilitates enabling works for subsequent stages of the full Shepparton Hospital redevelopment at GV Health.

*\*Cost estimates for project planning were prepared by an independent quantity surveyor, commissioned by GV Health*







# Bus Transport Network Review

## Investment:

Development funding to review, design and implement the network.

## Challenges and Opportunities

The Victorian Government has committed to the implementation of Victoria's Bus Plan, released in June 2021, which sets out how the Government will shape the bus network in ways that increase the number of people choosing to take the bus by delivering simple, safe, reliable and comfortable journeys.

Greater Shepparton has experienced enormous growth in the past 15 years, but public transportation has failed to meet the needs of the growing community. Despite new housing estates, schools and other developments, it has been more than 15 years since the last bus review was carried out in Greater Shepparton.

Currently, bus services in Shepparton and Mooroopna are limited on Saturdays, do not operate on Sundays and several housing estates and other amenities are not connected to bus routes.

For smaller towns outside of Shepparton, public transport options are significantly more limited. Despite being the third largest town in the Greater Shepparton, and the drive one way taking only 20 minutes, Tatura residents looking to go to Shepparton on the bus face travel times of over 40 minutes to as long as two hours depending on the time of departure. The regularity of connections does not enable use for many purposes and particularly not work. The lack of services also do not support active use.

There is an urgent need for expanded bus services and additional routes across the Greater Shepparton region.



The lack of a well-connected bus service is also affecting businesses especially those that rely on a workforce that requires transport via the bus network.

Access to public transport is particularly important for groups like the elderly, young people, itinerant workers, those with a disability, tourists and people living in smaller towns to connect to larger centres and transport to our major cities.

## **Solution**

Council requests that the Victorian Government commit development funding to a major review of the bus network and also fund the implementation of the plan to develop a modern, faster, more reliable and environmentally sustainable network for the community.

Community engagement is imperative to give a better understanding of how people currently use their bus services, and what would encourage them to use buses more – including where, when and how they would like to travel.

## **Economic Benefits**

Improved connections will mean that workers can get more easily to their place of work, and create job opportunities for others who have limited transport options, not to mention the ability of visitors to the region to navigate their way across the area, not just back and forward to metropolitan areas.

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**JOHN CALLEJA**

Chief Executive Officer  
Gouge Linen and Garment  
Services

“Currently Gouge employs approximately 480 staff with around 50 per cent female participation and an extremely high multi-cultural footprint.

We operate three shifts, 24-hour a day, five days a week and there are no viable public transport options for our staff to get to work in Mooroopna. The closest drop off point to the production plant is an 18 minute walk via unpaved sections, unlit and along a major highway. This limits the employment pool available to Gouge and creates challenges for staff retention but most importantly limits equal opportunities for employment in our region.”



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**JEREMY RENSFORD**

Chair  
Greater Shepparton  
Minister's Association

“We have prevailing issues in the Greater Shepparton area pertaining to the transport of community members wishing to get to places of worship, particularly vulnerable members of our community. Greater Shepparton has a large Christian population, with over 40 per cent of our population identifying as Christian in the most recent census. Members of our community that would like to attend church services, but are unable due to transport issues, presents the challenge of a lack of connection and increased social isolation which increases the risk of reduced mental health and loneliness.”



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**CARL WALTERS**

Chair  
Tatura Community Planning  
Group

“The regularity and timetable of our existing bus transport network does not adequately support our smaller communities including our workforce, youth and aging population. It also prevents visitors to our regional city venturing further to smaller towns, which provide unique visitor experiences and attractions. The welfare of our community and liveability of our town is being limited by the lack of services that are considered 'as of right' elsewhere.”







# Adapting to a Sustainable Future

## **Investment:**

This is a pivotal moment for the future of our region, and it is critical that we take a strategic, well-resourced approach to planning. To implement a model similar to the Murrindindi Forestry Transition Program, we require specialised expertise and adequate resourcing to ensure that our planning is informed, robust, and results driven.

As outlined, time is of the essence. We are therefore seeking a contribution of \$250,000 per annum over the next two years to build the necessary capability to respond to the ongoing impacts of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan (MDBP), the Restoring Our Rivers legislation, and the long-term challenges posed by drought.

Greater Shepparton is eager to work in partnership with the Victorian Government to achieve the outcomes set out in the Planning Our Basin Future Together Prospectus. This initiative represents a vital step towards sustainable development and responsible resource management within the Basin.

We respectfully request that the Victorian Government submit an application to the Federal Government’s \$300 million Sustainable Communities Program, which is specifically designed to help minimise the socio-economic impacts on Basin communities.

This funding would enable the State Government to establish a tailored program, modelled on the successful Forestry Transition Program, targeted at regions like Greater Shepparton that are directly impacted by MDBP policies, related legislation, and water buybacks.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

The implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) continues to be a complex and challenging endeavour, reflecting the intricate interplay of environmental, social and economic factors for our region. These challenges are further compounded by our region now facing drought conditions that are also occurring more frequently, which further strains water availability and increase pressure on local ecosystems and agricultural output. Stakeholders, including the Victorian Government, local communities and agricultural and associated industries, face ongoing challenges in balancing water allocation and usage while ensuring sustainable practices that protect the health of river systems.

“

**MICHAEL CRISERA**

*Grower Services Manager  
Fruit Growers Victoria*



*“Further buybacks would mean even less water is available on the allocation market - the impact on permanent horticulture, which has fixed water demands, and is highly reliant on the allocation market, especially in seasons when allocations are reduced, is potentially disastrous. In years of drought, with less water allocations/availability and higher water market prices, the horticulture businesses in regional communities are particularly vulnerable because permanent plantings require water to keep trees alive.”*

Importantly, the Greater Shepparton community has taken the position to strongly oppose water purchasing occurring within the Murray–Darling Basin. Initially there was an understanding that any water buybacks would come from river diverters but now we see the Federal Government trying to buy water out of irrigation networks which threatens the viability of the entire system. This threat is exacerbated during drought periods, when reduced inflows make the irrigation system even more vulnerable to degradation and inefficiencies, a situation we are currently confronted with.

It is anticipated that buybacks will drive up the cost of water, increase the cost of maintaining irrigation networks, and ultimately raise food prices. The policy is also expected to reduce farm production and lead to job losses in both agricultural and secondary industries. Drought conditions will amplify these outcomes, reducing farm productivity further, placing additional financial stress on rural businesses, and escalating the risk of long-term economic downturn in the region.

Victoria has already contributed more than its fair share to water recovery, having returned 440GL more than South Australia and 170GL more than New South Wales.

We know there are alternatives to open tender water purchases which is also acknowledged by the Victorian Government, as detailed in the *Planning our Basin Future Together Prospectus* which is in direct response to these changes to the MDBP. This plan needs to be fully funded so that our region can deliver on its water recovery obligations, while minimising the economic and social impacts on our community and industries. Any further buybacks need to be paused to make way for the implementation of the Prospectus that provides alternative water recovery solutions, with the need to cease buybacks even more important as we head into drought.

As the nation's Agricultural Powerhouse, our role in providing secure food supply is under threat. The reality for Greater Shepparton is a future with less water. We need to understand the impacts and how we adapt to this while continuing to provide food to Australia. We can't risk this occurring in an ad hoc and untimely manner, we need to start planning for a different future now!

## **Solution**

Council recognises the value in adopting the existing Forestry Transition Program model, as implemented by Murrindindi Shire Council and more recently in the Yarra Ranges, to support Greater Shepparton's transition to a future with less water. By leveraging the insights, frameworks, and lessons learned from these successful transitions, we can develop a strategic plan that helps future-proof our region.

This proven model, endorsed by the Victorian Government, is highly relevant to the unique challenges and opportunities facing Greater Shepparton. It provides a practical foundation to guide industry adaptation, encourage economic diversification, and support long-term regional resilience.

By embracing this approach, Greater Shepparton will be well-positioned to thrive in an evolving economic landscape while continuing to make a strong contribution to Victoria's economy.

This strategic plan or business case will:

- Assist impacted industries to adapt to a future with less water
- Diversify our industry base
- Ensure the resilience of our community
- Secure a sustainable future for our region
- Consolidate our strategic importance to the region, state and nationally
- Ensure that the significant investment that has been made into the \$2B state of the art irrigation infrastructure across the GMID to safeguard the Agricultural Powerhouse of Australia is not wasted.

“

### **ANDREW MANN**

Co-Chair of Goulburn  
Murray Irrigation District  
Water Leadership Group



*“Community is critical to the region's successful transition and requires a skilled ongoing focus in its own right - to work with and complement the work with irrigators and industry.”*





## Enabling Infrastructure Fund

### Investment:

A new grants-based regional Victoria community and private infrastructure fund to assist with large-scale local government and industry projects with a focus on fast tracking planning, supporting enabling infrastructure, job creation and retention.

### Challenges and Opportunities

The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF) was established to create and retain jobs, leverage private sector investment, grow and diversify our significant regional economy, enable regional population growth, improve liveability, economic and social outcomes for over 1.5 regional Victorians.

This funding package provided Greater Shepparton with significant investment to realise the redevelopment of game changing infrastructure including the Maude Street Mall, Shepparton Art Museum (SAM), and Shepparton Food Share, along with a number of integral private sector investments to support our large industry base.

This package which was very beneficial to all of regional Victoria has since been discontinued by the Victorian Government and without a suitable replacement package, our region is at risk of not securing meaningful financial support to plan for and drive long-term regional growth through key economic development projects and community-led projects in response to social and economic challenges.



## **Solution**

A reimagined program that can enhance priority projects to meaningfully support regional Victorian communities to address complex local challenges and lay the groundwork for future growth. This refreshed program should broadly focus on the following key strategic objectives:

- Capitalise and increase private sector project investment across regional Victoria.
- Enhance productivity and improve regional Victoria's long term competitive advantages through innovation and diversification to new growth opportunities.
- Support the development of regional Victorian communities to become more liveable cities and precincts supporting the attraction and retention of families and young people to live, work and play.
- Support the response to market failures that prevent high quality and transformative economic projects in Regional Victoria from reaching shovel ready investment stage.
- Drive long term regional growth through the support of key economic development projects and the delivery of community led responses to social and economic challenges.

## **Economic Benefits**

- Create, diversify and retain jobs.
- Attract investment to regional Victoria.
- Leverage private sector investment and diversification of local industry.
- Improve liveability in our cities.
- Improve economic and social outcomes.
- Assist with delivering on the Australian and Victorian Government Social and Affordable Housing targets.
- Expenditure planning processes.







GREATER  
SHEPPARTON

## CONTACT US

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