In Plain Sight

Investing in social equity
to drive economic growth

Bernadette O'Connor
Executive Director

Liz Everist
Senior Consultant

Management
Governance
Australia Pty Ltd

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Acknowledgement of Country

Management Governance Australia (MGA) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of our lands, waterways and skies. We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Management Governance Australia is committed to acknowledging, building and sustaining respect and understanding between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians.

We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' calls for self-determination, and a 'Voice, Treaty and Truth Telling' through the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
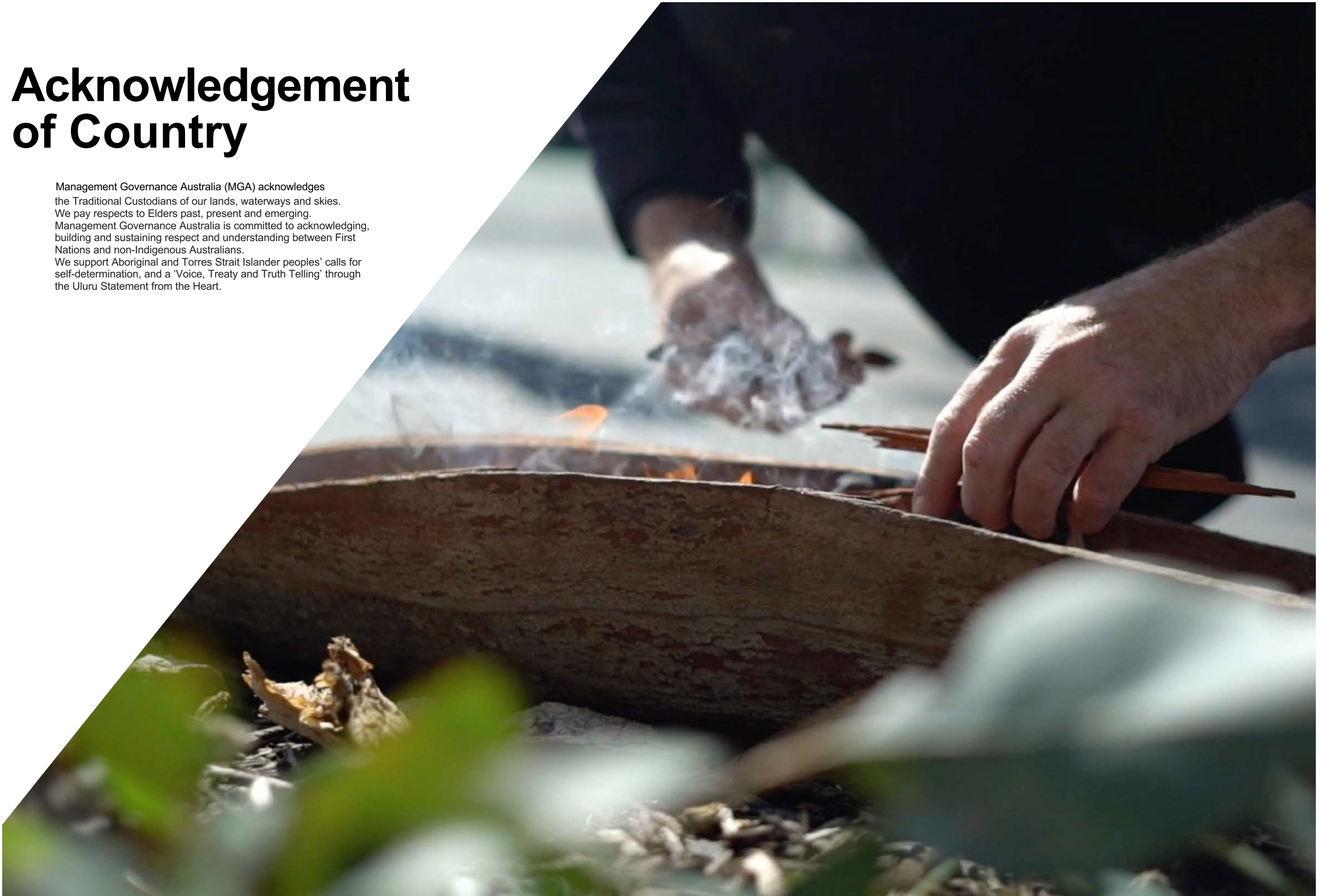
Overview

Executive Summary

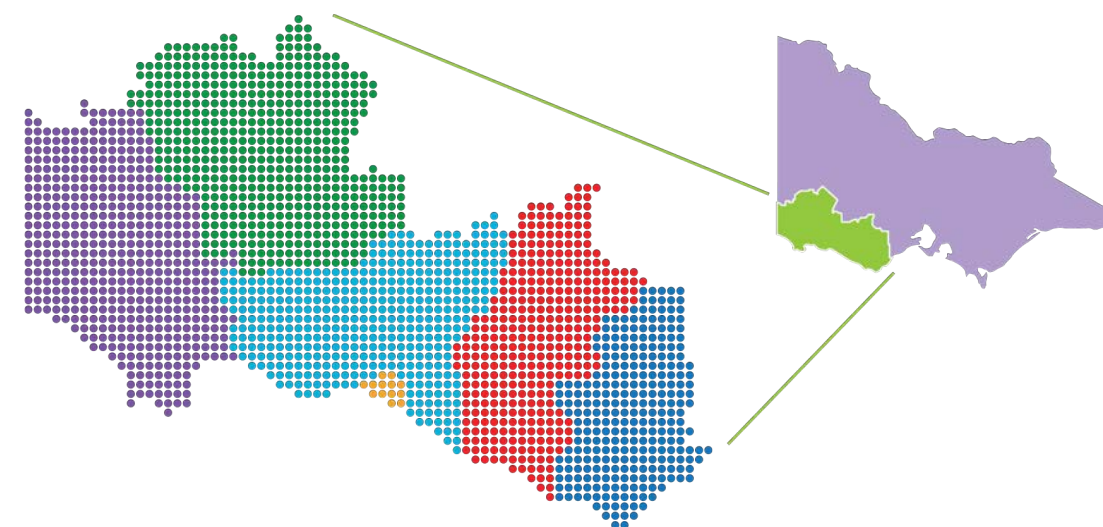*"Economic growth alone does not necessarily translate into more and better jobs, especially for the poor, vulnerable and those at risk of being left behind... The extent to which economic growth is associated with and driven by a productive transformation is of major importance to the sustainability of economic development in the medium and long term."*[1]

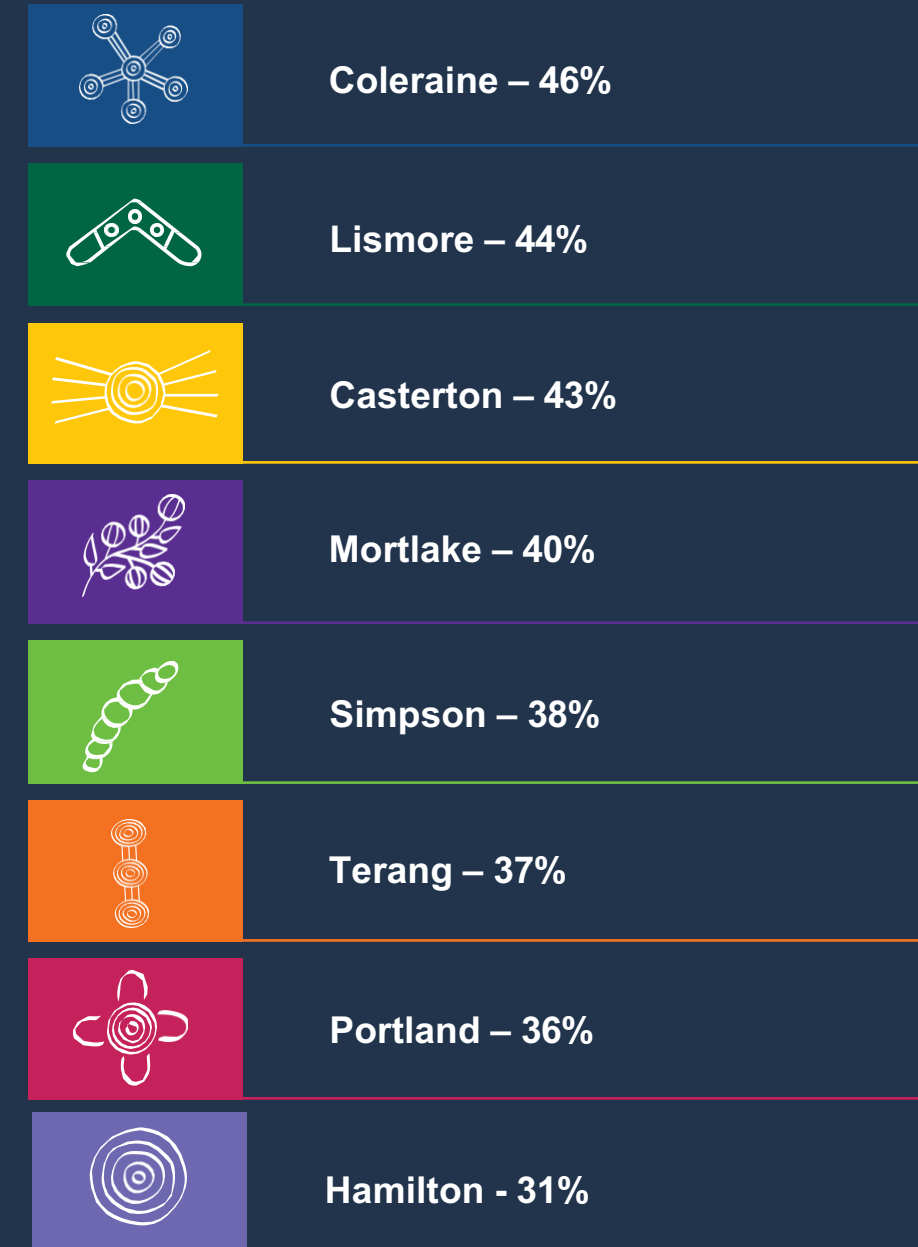[1] International Labor Organisation 2023

1.1 In Plain Sight

Victoria's Great South Coast Region (GSC) encompasses five local government areas: Warrnambool City Council and Corangamite, Moyne, Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shire Councils. Its rugged windswept coastline, wild seas and iconic stacks, deep Indigenous cultural heritage, rich volcanic plains, intriguing stony rises and generally mild climatic conditions define a region that is "blessed with many significant natural and inherited comparative advantages which, if harnessed, can drive more prosperous and diversified futures for its communities."[2]

Despite its beauty and natural advantages, however, the region "faces considerable socio-economic challenges if new approaches to higher-value industry investment, greater productivity and skilled labour cannot be developed."[3] Outside the City of Warrnambool (at 28%), the percentage of people over the age of 20 living below the poverty line is higher than the Victorian average (29%), indeed up to 17 percentage points higher in Coleraine (46%)

"Jane is Indigenous and doesn't have a car or a license…she is limited to applying for jobs in locations that have public transport"

People in our towns living below the poverty line:

Coleraine – 46%

Lismore – 44%

Casterton – 43%

Mortlake – 40%

Simpson – 38%

Terang – 37%

Portland – 36%

Hamilton - 31%

[2] Great South Coast Economic Futures, FINAL REPORT | MAY 2020
[3] Ibid

In Plain Sight

Poverty and inequity are acting as a heavy drag on economic development, retarding the realisation of education, skills and capability development in a number of local towns, thus constricting pathways into employment and consigning vulnerable individuals, families and older people to low household incomes. The impacts are felt across the region on schools, health services, housing, community amenities and on the ability of small to medium enterprises and services to grow.

There is a strong argument for investing in promoting social equity as a key underpinning driver to economic growth.

Higher-value industry development relies on winning the commitment of investors and developers in a global competition for capital and talent. Whilst the factors influencing investment decisions are varied, a region that is committed to building strong communities with active, engaged, skilled citizens, is well positioned to secure the development resources necessary for a sustainable future.

Data explanations:

- The Poverty Line Indicator measures the percentage of adults over the age of 20 living below the poverty line ($480 per week for adults).
- The Workforce Participation Rate measures the number of adults within working age not
- participating in the workforce. This is a very different measure than the unemployment rate.
- The data on Assistance Needed measures the percentage of people who need assistance in their day to day lives in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication because of a long-term health condition, disability or older age.

Who is in the Workforce:

62.5% Victoria

51.1% Camperdown

44% Casterton

52% Portland

51% Mortlake

56% Hamilton

(% Labour force participation)

People in our towns who need assistance:

8% Camperdown

11% Terang

9% Cobden

10% Lismore

9% Portland

12% Casterton

8% Mortlake

8% Hamilton

11% Coleraine

7% Warrnambool

(6% Victoria average)

"We have plenty of work on, but it is too hard to find staff, we don't think we can keep growing... The last 12 months has been the hardest year I've ever had in business."

"My family lives in a caravan at Hamilton caravan park. We are regularly late on rent or just unable to pay."

1.2 Background

Established by the Victorian Government, Regional Partnerships (RPs) connect state and local government, business, industry, and community leaders to identify strategic plans and regional priorities in support of Victorian Government decision-making.

The vision of GSC RP is "for a region that has the prescience, steadfastness and determination to invest in platforms that enable intelligent and harmonious development……a region that has the courage to take informed risks, embrace difference and foster innovation in search of a viable and better future."[4]

The GSC RP, on behalf of Regional Development Victoria (RDV), commissioned the "Social Futures Project" with the primary purpose being to *"develop advice and strategies to uplift place-based economic participation"* across the Great South Coast region to increase economic outcomes for all community members.

Whilst overall unemployment rates in the GSC region are low and industries report workforce and skills shortages, available data highlights areas and towns *where disadvantage and poverty are evident*, and where people are experiencing low participation rates in education and employment.

The aim of this Project Report is to provide *"tangible advice and strategies that will address inequities that contribute to peoples' ability to participate in GSC regional economy".*

The Report identifies a small number of pathways to transform the social fabric of the GSC, providing opportunities to mobilise the region's resources and strengthen the effectiveness of existing initiatives, programs, services, and assets.

These pathways seek to:
- Optimise the benefits to the region a) from the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework, and b) by harnessing industry's need to create social license in local communities through Community Benefit Fund/s,
- Better equip local businesses with the capability to engage vulnerable cohorts in sustainable employment and engage in large infrastructure projects to the benefit of the region,
- Strengthen families, carers and care ecosystems to support young people into learning and sustainable work.
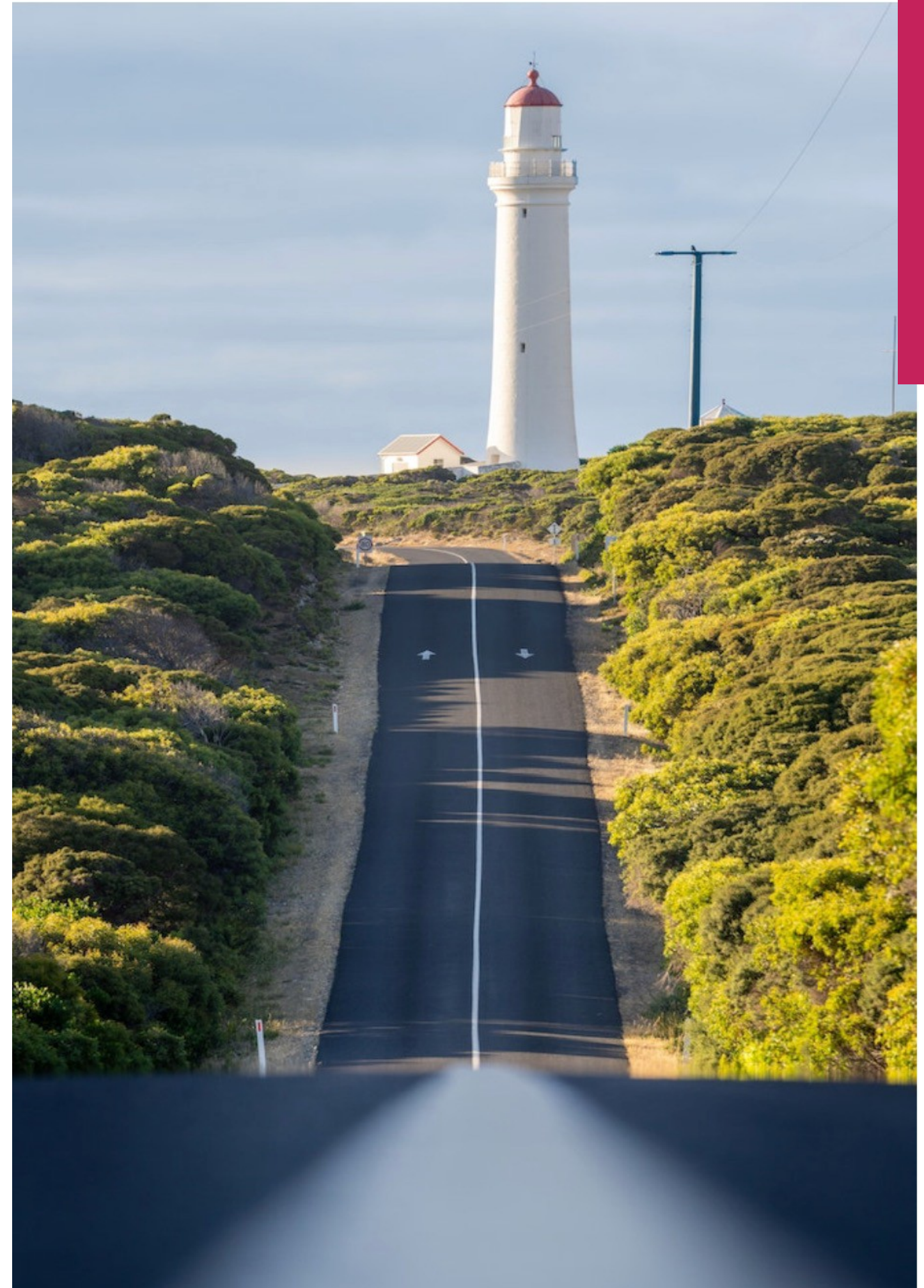
[4] Benoit Report

1.3 Leveraging local strengths

Consultations throughout the Social Futures Project identified the strength and diversity of programs and services in the Great South Coast (where they exist), and passionate individuals and organisations working to make a difference directly in their communities. Rather than discussing current programs which are often time-limited, this Section identifies networks and agencies which could lead, support and/or be involved in driving the Goals and Recommended Actions (Section 1.4) with the aim of delivering greater economic and social equity for the Great South Coast region.

Networks:

Great South Coast Regional Partnership

(GSC RP) involving CEOs of Warrnambool City Council (WCC), Glenelg Shire (GS), Moyne Shire (MS), Southern Grampians Shire (SGS), Corangamite Shire (CS), community and business members. Aim: identify priorities for their regions, develop collaborative solutions to local problems and provide advice directly to the Victorian Government for government policies, programs and planning.

South West Vic Alliance

(SWVA) involving CEOs and Mayors of the LGAs of WCC, GS, MS, SGS and CS, also Colac Otway Shire (COS) plus community members. Aim: to provide regional leadership, advocacy, partnerships and local delivery of programs.

Wimmera South West Local Site Executive Committee (LSEC)

involving Department of Health (DH), Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Resources (DJSIR), Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), Department of Fairer Families and Housing (DFFH), Department of Education (DE), Victoria Police and local Aboriginal organisations. Aim: as part of the Better, Connected Care reform, LSECs will take a whole of government approach to supporting vulnerable members of the community involved in the health, social justice service systems. This cross-portfolio reform will provide integrated service delivery systems through the coordinated and collaborative efforts of government departments, agencies and the community sector to improve outcomes for individuals and communities across South West Victoria.

Community South West

(CSW) involving 15 members from not for profit, community services organisations across Great South Coast. Aim: working collaboratively to maximise shared supports, services and capacity building in order to contribute to a healthy and sustainable community.

Thriving Communities Partnership South West Victoria (TCP SWV)

is part of the national TCP initiative, led by a local steering group including representation of people with lived experience, business, academia, government and community sector across the Great South Coast. Aim: to collaborate with purpose and compassion for an aligned, strategic and coordinated approach, so that everyone in our community is valued and has the opportunity to thrive.

The Region's Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce

(LJST) is federally funded and chaired by an Employment Facilitator. It involves representatives from local employers or industry groups, education and training providers, employment services providers, and local and state governments. Aim: to support solutions to move people into work or training by putting local employer needs at the centre of their actions and addressing the employment barriers of local people. The Taskforce plays a central role in connecting, coordinating, and leveraging existing programs and aligning efforts on the ground to ensure collaboration is maximised, duplication is minimised, and outcomes are achieved.

Beyond the Bell

(BtB) uses a collective impact (community led) framework involving local partners and agencies in South West Victoria to support children and young people to be engaged with education from birth to young adulthood. Aim: to ensure all young people in the Great South Coast are supported and inspired to achieve their full potential.

Local Learning and Employment Networks

(LLEN) including South West LLEN and Glenelg and Southern Grampians LLEN are strategic networking organisations who broker partnerships for and between: education and training providers, industry and community organisations. Aim: to improve education, life and transition outcomes for young people in the region. The LLENs support the Youth Strategic Advocacy Group, that works with local networks and organisations.

Agencies/Organisations:

South West TAFE

provides vocational education and training for the region, delivering over 150 nationally-recognised qualifications and short courses. Services also include: South West Skills and Jobs Centre which provides free services including advice on job opportunities, vocational training and links to a range of services for individuals, employers and schools; and Reconnect which supports individuals (17-64 years) not in education or training or in full-time employment with mentoring for study or jobs, and referrals to services.

Deakin University Warrnambool Campus

offers tertiary education in nursing, social work, commerce, health sciences, education and a number of other degrees. Deakin takes a leadership role in projects that strengthen the local economy, environment and culture.

Learn Locals

deliver pre-accredited, accessible and affordable training in welcoming local environments, focussing on return to study, digital, reading, writing and maths skills, job seeking, career changes and more. In South West Victoria, Learn Locals include WDEA in Warrnambool, Portland and Hamilton, and RIST and SCAA offering industry-specific training. Worn Gundidj is in the process of of applying to become a Learn Local to support First Nations learners in the region.

Neighbourhood Houses and Men's Sheds:

Across the Great South Coast, Neighbourhood Houses in Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Hamilton, Casterton, Camperdown and Simpson offer a range of activities and welcoming community supports for all community. Men's Sheds are located in Portland, Heywood, Koroit, Port Fairy and Warrnambool, to specifically support men's mental health and connections.

Traditional Owner Organisations:

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
Gundidj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Aboriginal Health Organisations:

Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation
Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative Limited
Kirrae Health Services Inc
Dhauwurd-Wurrung Portland & District Aboriginal Elderly Citizens Inc

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Other First Nations organisations:

Worn Gundidj
Budj Bim

1.4 Goals and Recommended Actions

The following goals and recommended actions are underpinned by an ethos of *shared action, shared accountability, and shared outcomes* to achieve a coherent regional approach to local community action.

The region is on the cusp of major economic change and the following goals and recommended actions are focussed on implementing new place-based collaborative initiatives to lift people in the GSC above the poverty line and realise greater equity in social and economic benefits.

The recommendations consider how the GSC can address factors that lead to poverty by leveraging the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework (SPF) to better benefit the region, directing industry's social license commitments to address regional priorities, building the capability of business including to employ vulnerable cohorts, addressing the disengagement of youth and other vulnerable cohorts, and identifying gaps and joining up service provision in local towns.

The recommendations draw on the enthusiasm of local and regional organisations to be involved with the Victorian Government in leading initiatives to promote social equity in the GSC.

Goals	Recommended Actions
Goal 1: Ensure the benefits of economic developments are distributed fairly, to uplift regional prosperity and overcome barriers to growth caused by poverty and disadvantage.	1.1 Work with the Victorian Government to improve social procurement benefits to the region, through the inclusion of: i) Place-based (postcode) priority cohorts targeted for employment and relevant to the GSC. ii) Provisions for regional businesses to be engaged in developments being undertaken in their region. iii) The requirement to invest in local initiatives that support vulnerable cohorts to stay in education and/or move into vocational pathways. iv) A mechanism for Social Procurement Framework compliance fines (anticipated in 2024) to be returned to the region for investment in local outcomes. v) Accountability to the region through reports on the local social benefits to GSC Regional Partnership. *Key contributing stakeholders: GSC Regional Partnership (for changes in policy)* *Resources/Funding: Supported by DJSIR.* 1.2 Develop Local Government Community Benefit Fund/s (CBFs) and identify regional priorities. 1.3 Use existing local government levers (e.g. permit system) to direct industry's social license commitments (funds and advocacy) into the CBF to address regional priorities. *Key contributing stakeholders: South West Vic Alliance (for changes in policy)* *Resources/Funding: Leverage MAV, Moyne Shire's Community Benefit Policy and local government resources.*
Goal 2: Optimise local economic benefit by building Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) capability.	2.1 Provide seed funding to establish GSC BUILD (Business Upskill & Innovate for Local Development) - a local business capability building initiative, informed in design by the Victorian GROW initiative, co-designed with vulnerable cohorts to ensure cultural safety and efficacy and predicated on a sustainable membership model, with the objectives being to: i) Improve the ability of local SMEs and organisations to recruit, support and retain vulnerable people in employment to meet workforce shortages. ii) Build the capability of local SMEs and organisations to provide career pathways for their workers through skills development, job design, mentoring, new work models and workplace innovation, to ensure *sustainable* employment. iii) Support local businesses to meet Social Procurement Framework requirements and win competitive supply chain contracts. 2.2 Co-ordinate relationships between business and education and training providers to provide businesses with innovative thinking and new solutions to practical problems. *Key contributing stakeholders: GSC Regional Partnership, South West Vic Alliance, Thriving Community Partnership, Local Jobs Taskforce, Jobs Victoria, with support of employment/training organisations including Deakin University and South West TAFE, as well as LLENs.* *Resources/Funds: Initial start-up funds required for partnership arrangements and co-design, options including philanthropy and/or Government sources, to create a sustainable model.*
Goal 3: Drive economic benefit by strengthening the ability of families and carers and service ecosystems to support young people and other vulnerable people into learning and work.	3.1 Analyse existing service provision in GSC towns to provide evidence of a) lack of access, and b) need for place-based services to address poor workforce participation rates. 3.2 Use evidence to build and advocate for regional policy and funding structures and and place based contracts to incentivise appropriate levels of service provision in small towns. 3.3 Develop an early intervention "supported ecosystem" model for vulnerable young people at high risk of disengagement from education. The model will leverage existing programs, local services and education providers (schools) to systematically connect with individuals and the families and caregivers of vulnerable young people and, working together, improve school retention and pathways. For example, locally based workers (with existing trusted relationships/ networks) could be supported to provide 'concierge' support for young people and their families/carers, seeking access to appropriate services. 3.4 Co-ordinate place-based supports in GSC towns where poverty factors are well above the Victorian average to target, test, trial and measure pathways into employment for vulnerable people not in work or learning, or who are in highly precarious work, in particular young people, Indigenous job seekers in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Owned Organisations and agencies, people with disability and women seeking to re-enter the workforce. *Key contributing stakeholders: Thriving Communities Partnership, Community South West, Beyond the Bell, LLENs/DET, Local Jobs Taskforce, Jobs Victoria, with support of local employment/training/health and other services, networks (eg Youth Strategic Advocacy Group) and/or programs.* *Resources and funding: In kind or resources from Victorian Government as part of Early Intervention Investment Framework (ref: Wimmera South West Local Site Executive Committee)*
Goal 4: Address lack of childcare as a major barrier to accessing economic benefit	4.1 Advocate for increased childcare and after school care places across the GSC. 4.2 Support the recruitment and retention of a local childcare workforce by: i) Creating a regional Early Childhood Educator/Mentor to provide support for work placements across the GSC Centres in mentoring students/trainees/job seekers to enable more trainees to complete placements. ii) Attracting potential new workers to the sector through local partnerships with community-based programs, for example, Learn Local, LLENs and Neighbourhood Houses. iii) Exploring innovative approaches to support the upskilling of existing workers to Diploma level qualifications. *Key contributing stakeholders: GSC Regional Partnership, South West Vic Alliance, Local Jobs Taskforce, with support of LLENs, TAFE and training organisations, plus others to be determined.* *Resources: LGAs in partnership with training and employment providers*
Governance	5.0 Use existing GSC networks (and potentially Wimmera South West Local Site Executive Committee) to provide an integrated regional governance model, i.e., each network to include agreed Social Futures actions as ongoing agenda items for meetings and each network to participate in an annual forum to review actions and report to the community.

2.0 Context

2.1 Great South Coast Economic Futures Report

In 2019, the GSC RP along with stakeholders from across the region developed the Great South Coast Economic Futures Report. Released in December 2019, this Report outlines pathways for securing investments to achieve "higher value, greater productivity and skilled job creation for the region" including:

- High value economic development pathways,
- Significant and targeted green hydrogen industrial research and development investments,
- A collaborative regional renewables generation, transmission, storage, investment, and policy forum,
- High-value, water-secure agriculture, and horticulture precincts,
- Sustainable land-based aquaculture precincts,
- High-value tourism networks - including hot springs and Indigenous cultural tourism,
- Closer tertiary institution support for these high-value sectors: an emphasis on the valorisation process,
- Cross-border collaboration with south-east South Australian communities[5] (Juturna, Deakin University, 2019).

The Economic Futures Report acknowledges that "maximising local awareness of the proposed paths forward is key to success - gaining as much 'social licence' as possible from communities themselves" (Juturna, Deakin University, 2019)[6] to avoid reluctance or even resistance from communities to engage.

Following the Economic Futures Report, the Great South Coast Regional Partnership decided to seek a complimentary report, the Great South Coast Social Futures Report, to encompass impacts and opportunities for all members of the community. The Social Futures Project is to benefit the region by:

- Stimulating social innovation, leadership, and futuristic thinking amongst cross sector leadership in the Great South Coast
- Connecting the social sector with economic and environmental sectors around high leverage pathways,
- identifying high leverage social innovations to investors (government, business, philanthropy) and the wider community
- Addressing ongoing impacts of COVID 19, whilst leveraging the innovative thinking and adaptability that has thrived within the region during the pandemic.

[5] Juturna, Deakin University, 2019
[6] ibid

2.2 Rapid economic and social change

The Social Futures Report has been commissioned at a time of rapid and disruptive change. In 2020 the COVID 19 pandemic and associated lockdowns led to an unprecedented uptake of digital technology
as the region (world) sought continuity to economic, health and social systems.

Prior to the pandemic, debates focussed on the nature of change and time required by local businesses and communities to participate in an Industry 4.0 economy. In the space of a few weeks at the start of the pandemic, however, Australia moved its economy, society, health services and education sectors seismically into the digital world, consigning Industry 3.0 ways of thinking and working to the past.

The COVID crisis sparked a wave of innovation generating tremendous growth in digitisation - everything from online customer service to telehealth to remote working to supply-chain reinvention to machine learning – embedding smart, connected technology in the transformation of our economies, jobs and societies. Physical and digital technologies are combining in new ways through "analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), cognitive technologies, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to create economies and societies that are more interconnected and capable of increasingly informed decision-making"[7].

The human machine interface is now the major focus of many of the jobs and creativity is a critical sought-after skill. Consumers are beginning to respond to opportunities offered by hyper-personalisation "through products such as collaborative robots (cobots)"[8] and faster, smarter AI, offering the ability to realise the basic human urge for unique expression.

These drivers of change, along with the move to a new energy economy and continuing climate change challenges, offer enormous opportunities for regional, rural and remote Australia, including the Great South Coast region.

2.3 Vulnerability with Rapid Growth and Change

Vulnerability is recognised as being exacerbated by changes occurring in global, regional and local economies. Structural adjustment, with digitisation at the heart, plays a big part in exposing the low skills and vulnerability of workers and job seekers. Whilst digital innovation is often characterised as replacing workers with robots, it also includes the worker use of automation equipment and AI. The World Economic Forum (WEF) and OECD recognise that, rather than completely destroying jobs, "automation redefines them in ways that reduces costs and boosts demand for workers in related occupations and/or industries"[9].

Insecure work has grown out of economic and industry structural adjustments occurring post the Global Financial Crisis and is described as working arrangements that are highly casual or short term in nature, including a) where people have to be available for shifts at any time during the week and b) piecework-like arrangements.

People who are going to thrive in the future need a knowledge and learning base that includes an understanding of technology and science, language skills, soft skills and the ability to interact with others and build communities.

The McKinsey Global Institute stresses the need for Education Systems to focus on improving basic skills, including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) whilst at the same time developing "creativity, agility, resilience and flexibility"[10].

Education 4.0, with its focus on lifelong and life wide learning, responds to the challenges posed by Industry 4.0 through underpinning principles of: "anywhere anytime, personal and personalised learning, flexibility, peer and mentor learning, practical applications, modular and projects, learner ownership and evaluated not examined"[11].

Now is the time to leverage the disruption to business, industry, education and community and take deliberate steps to build stronger communities through strategies that intrinsically link social, educational and economic domains

[7] www2.deloitte.com, *Industry 4.0 Are You Ready?, 22nd January 2018*, Accessed 17th March 2018
[8] www.Info.universal-robots.com, Accessed 16 March 2018, *Welcome to Industry 5.0, From Mass Production to Mass Personalisation*
[9] ibid

[10] ibid
[11] www.thegeniusatwork.com, Accessed 16 March 2018 *Education 4.0 … the future of learning will be dramatically different, in school and throughout life, January 24, 2017*, Fisk Peter

2.4 Evaluation Methodology

Management Governance Australia (MGA) customised its *Edge Interface* methodology to ensure that the **Great South Coast Social Futures Project Report:**

Articulates with clarity the voices of the communities of the Great South Coast including local people, service providers, TAFE and Deakin University, schools, local, state and federal government representatives, industry leaders and employers in developing strategies to uplift economic participation and social outcomes.

Focuses on determining and defining the needs of communities in terms of education, employment, and engagement outcomes.

Facilitates collaboration in the identification of solutions that support sustainability of Social Futures strategies.

MGA's approach to the Great South Coast Social Futures Project included the following phases**:**

1. Establishment and governance: Confirmed the Project Working Group and 'Work Plan' including identifying risks and risk mitigation, refining methodology, identifying key stakeholders and planning for engagement and consultations.
2. Literature and Best Practice Review: Relevant best practice in economic participation models, an environmental scan of ABS and Labour Market data, local collective impact and collaborative initiatives, specific local needs, gaps and opportunities with emerging industries and skills of the future.
3. Consultations: MGA used online and face to face workshops in all major locations across the region, 1:1 consultations, interviews and local township visits to ensure the voices of a wide range of stakeholders have been captured. The purpose of the consultations has been to:
   o source current information from employers and industry about the workforce needs and barriers to employing vulnerable cohorts.
   o meet with a diverse range of community including active and non-active jobseekers to understand barriers and enablers for engaging in training and employment.
   o understand the system, capability and capacity issues that are challenging the economic participation of vulnerable community members.
4. Co-design local solutions: Based on the information received during consultations and thorough investigation of best practice models, MGA and the Working Group have engaged in a discussion on potential solutions for economic participation of key cohorts. Concepts have been tested for sustainability and transferability.
5. Presentation of Final Report: A Final Report including place-based models and strategies for sustainability.

Context
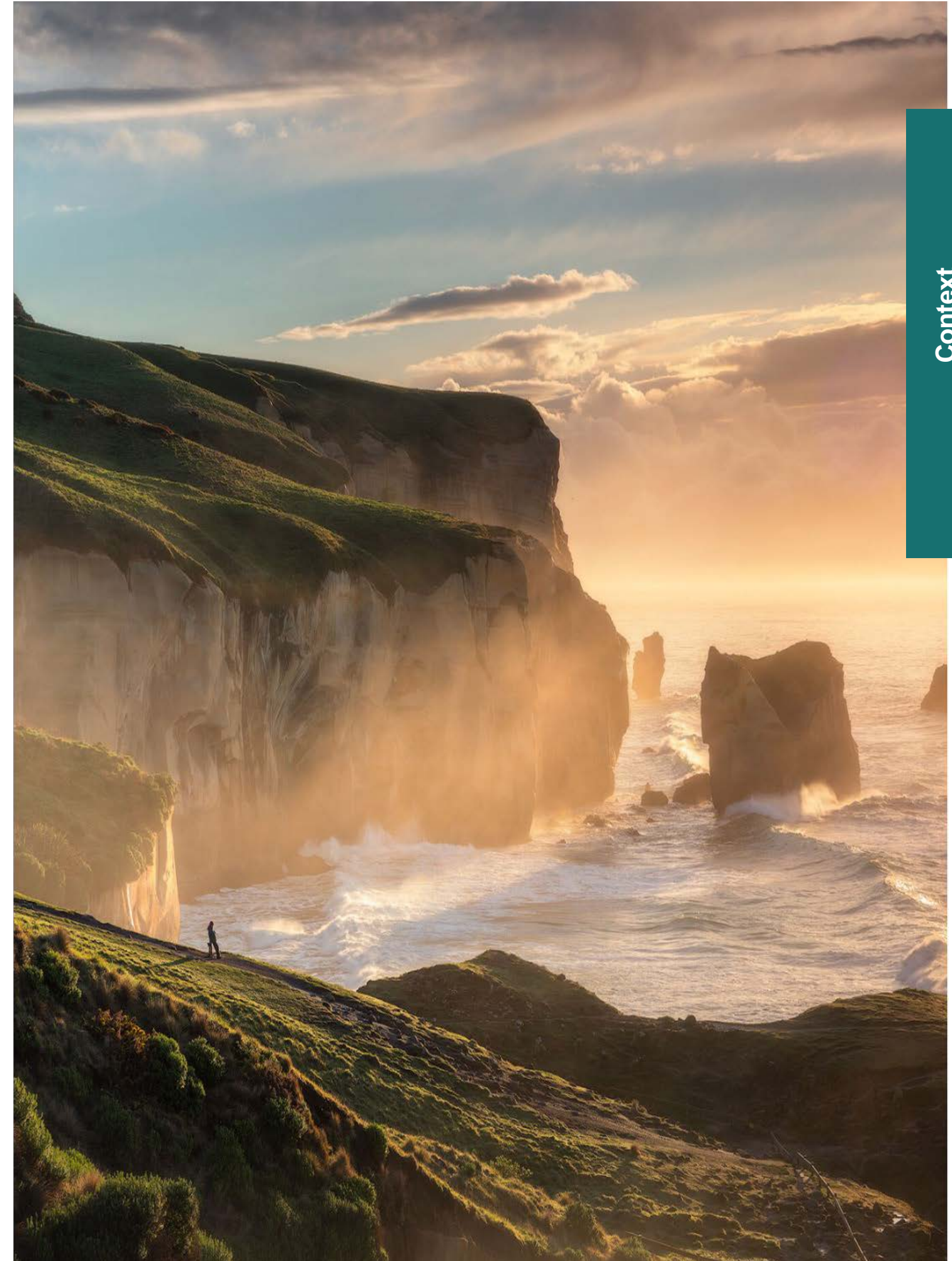
3.0 About the Great South Coast

What the Data Reveals

Attachment 3 to this report provides the data sets used to develop a picture of the local government areas and each of the major towns and townships making up the Great South Coast.

3.1 Poverty Line Indicator

The Poverty Line Indicator (PLI) measures the weekly earnings of people over the age of 20 years compared to the poverty line, which has been set to $480 per week for adults. This data is not taking into consideration the poverty circumstances of young people under the age of 20 years.

The PLI shows Glenelg, Southern Grampians, Moyne and Corangamite with a higher percentage of the population than the Victorian state average (at 29%) living below the poverty line.
The PLI for four towns in the GSC is more than 10% higher than the state average – Coleraine at 46%, Lismore at 44%, Casterton at 43% and Mortlake at 40%.

The PLI for four other major towns in the region is greater than 5% higher than the state average with Simpson at 38%, Terang at 37%, Portland at 36% and Camperdown at 35%.

The PLI for Hamilton is sitting at 2% above the Victorian average and the City of Warrnambool is at 1% point below the state average at 28% of its population living below the poverty line.

% Below Poverty Line
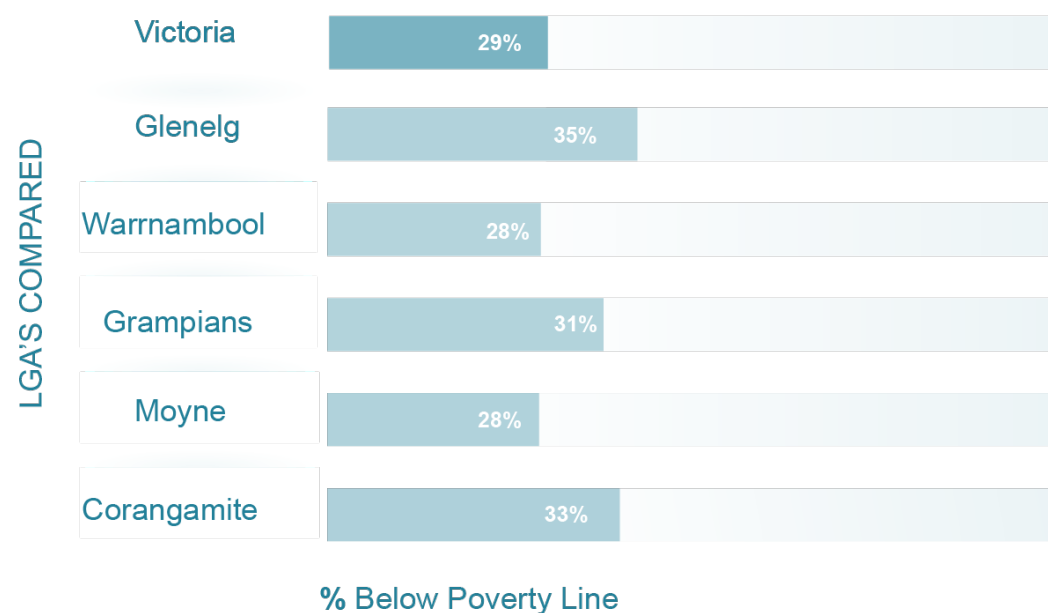
3.2 Workforce Participation Rates

Whilst unemployment rate across the region is lower than the state average, the workforce participation rate paints a picture of a large number of people not participating in the workforce. The participation rate for each GSC local government areas is at or below the state average of around 64%.

Glenelg Shire has the lowest participation rate in the region, at under 55%. This means that 55% of adults between the age of 18 – 65 years are in the workforce, registered as unemployed or in full time study. The Southern Grampians and Corangamite Shire Councils are both sitting at under 60%.

The workforce participation rate shows that there are many people in the region not in work who potentially could be in work.

LGA'S COMPARED

Legend:
- % Labour force participation(g)
- % Employment to population(h)
- % Unemployment(f)

3.3 Assistance Needed

The data on Assistance Needed measures the percentage of the population with a profound or severe core activity limitation. People with a profound or severe core activity limitation are those needing assistance in their day to day lives in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility, and communication because of a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more), a disability (lasting six months or more), or old age.

It shows each local government area in the GSC, except for Moyne, is home to a higher percentage of population in need of assistance than the state average. Glenelg Shire is at 8% and Corangamite, Southern Grampians and Warrnambool are sitting at around 7%. The Victorian average is 6%.

Victoria	Glenelg	Warrnambool	Grampians	Moyne	Corangamite
6%	8%	7%	7%	5%	7%
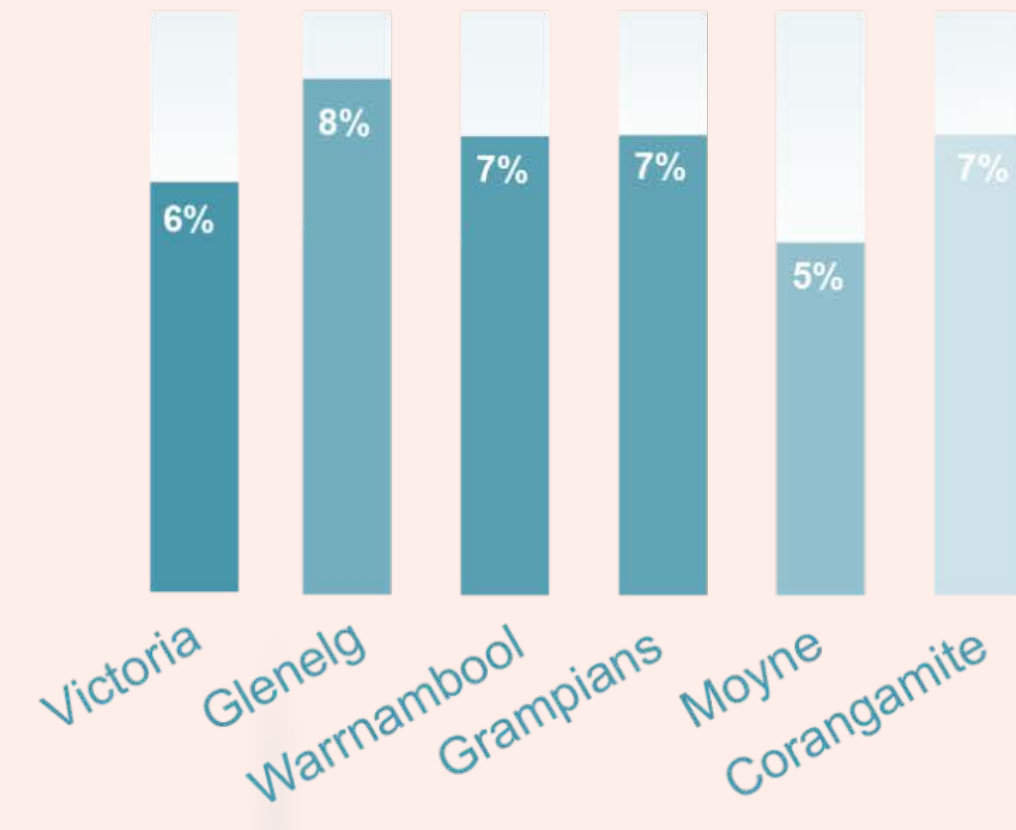
3.4 Age Profile

The age profile data provides a snapshot of the distribution of the population according to age. The profile for the City of Warrnambool shows that in all but 2 age groups it is above the state average.

The Glenelg Shire sits below the state average on all age groups up until the 55 – 64 age group. In each of the age groups from 55 years of age to 85+ it is sitting above the state average.

LGA'S COMPARED

Legend: Corangamite, Moyne, Grampians, Warrnambool, Glenelg, Victoria
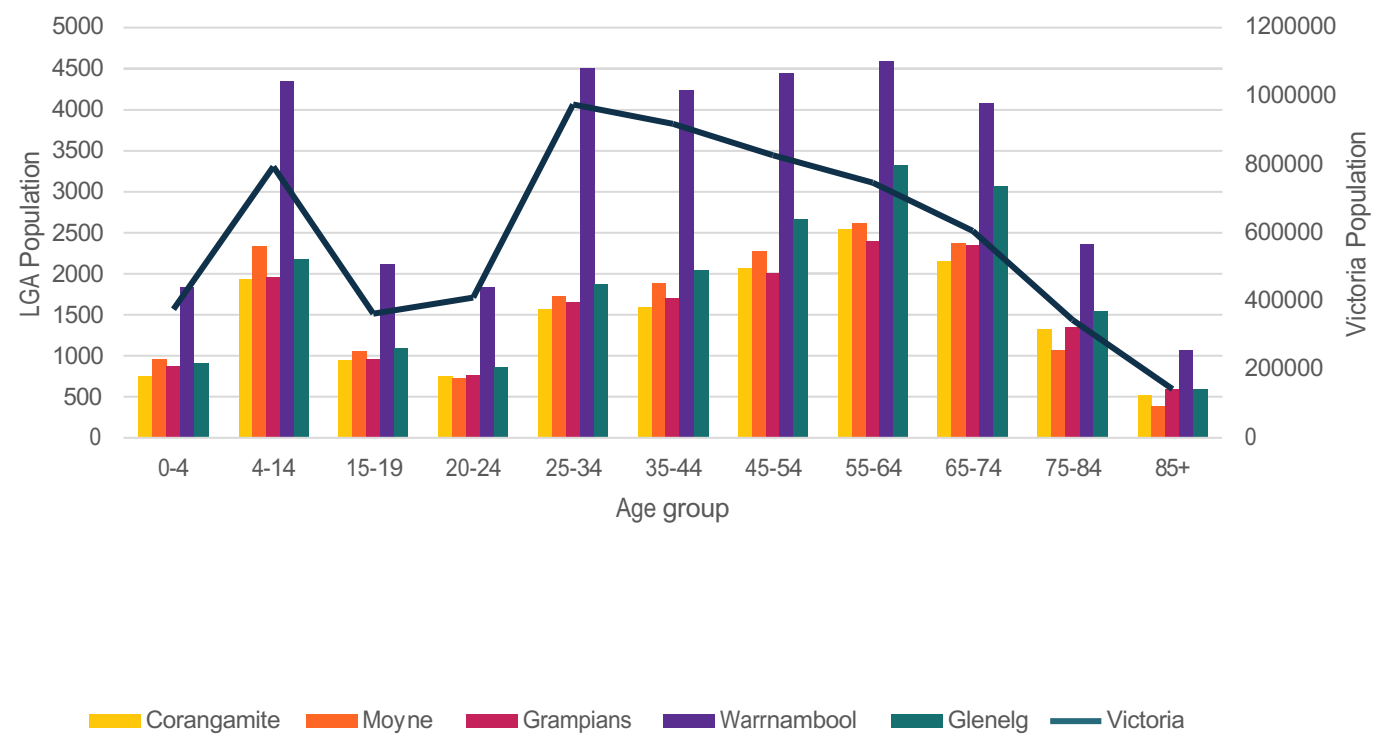
About the GSC

3.5 Gender

The gender profile for the region does not vary widely from the Victorian state average. The City of Warrnambool is home to 52% of females compared with the state average of 51%. The Glenelg and Corangamite Shires sit at 50% female and 50% male. The current available data doesn't provide a breakdown of gender diversity beyond the traditional male versus female identification. Future data capture will provide an understanding of this diversity across the region.
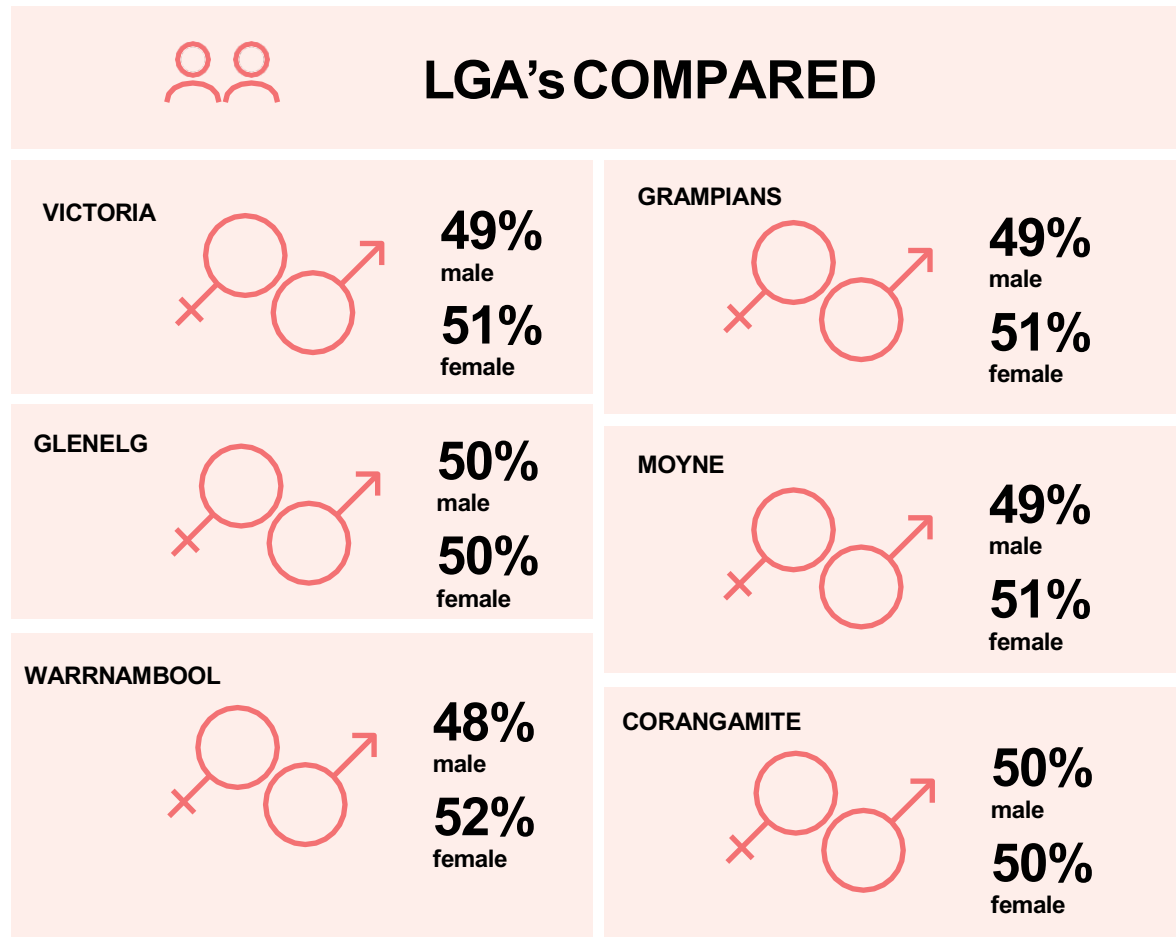
LGA's COMPARED

VICTORIA
49% male
51% female

GRAMPIANS
49% male
51% female

GLENELG
50% male
50% female

MOYNE
49% male
51% female

WARRNAMBOOL
48% male
52% female

CORANGAMITE
50% male
50% female

3.6 First Nations People

The data on population diversity reflects the most common 30 Ancestry responses reported in the 2016 Census.

The Australian Aboriginal population in each GSC local government area is higher than the Victorian state average (0.72%). Glenelg has the highest at 2%, Southern Grampians 1.54%, Warrnambool is 1.43%, Moyne 1.14% and Corangamite 0.81%.

3.7 Cultural Diversity

Around 30% of the population in each of the GSC local government areas identify as having an Australian heritage in comparison to 20.26% as the Victorian average. The remaining ancestry responses reflect the English, Scottish and Irish heritage with smaller numbers from Germany, Holland and Italian.

It will be interesting to look at the diversity of population in the region in ten years from now as increased numbers of people from non-Anglo Saxon backgrounds are drawn to the area.
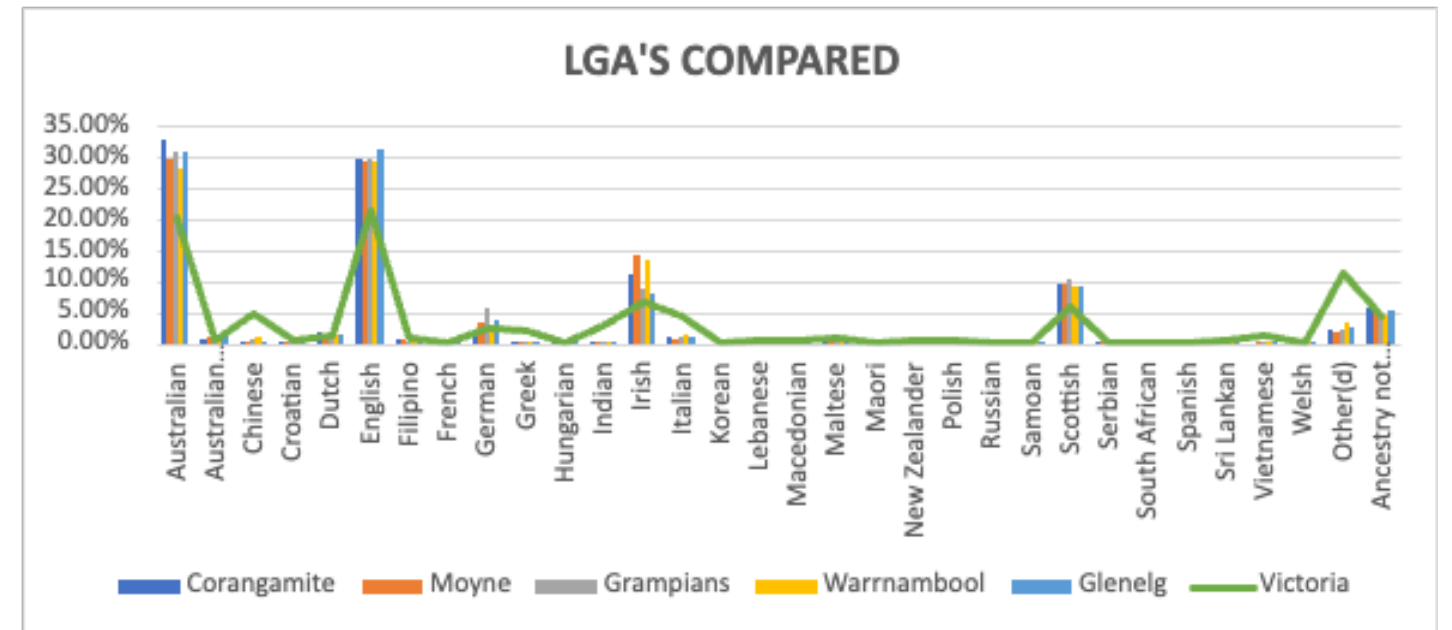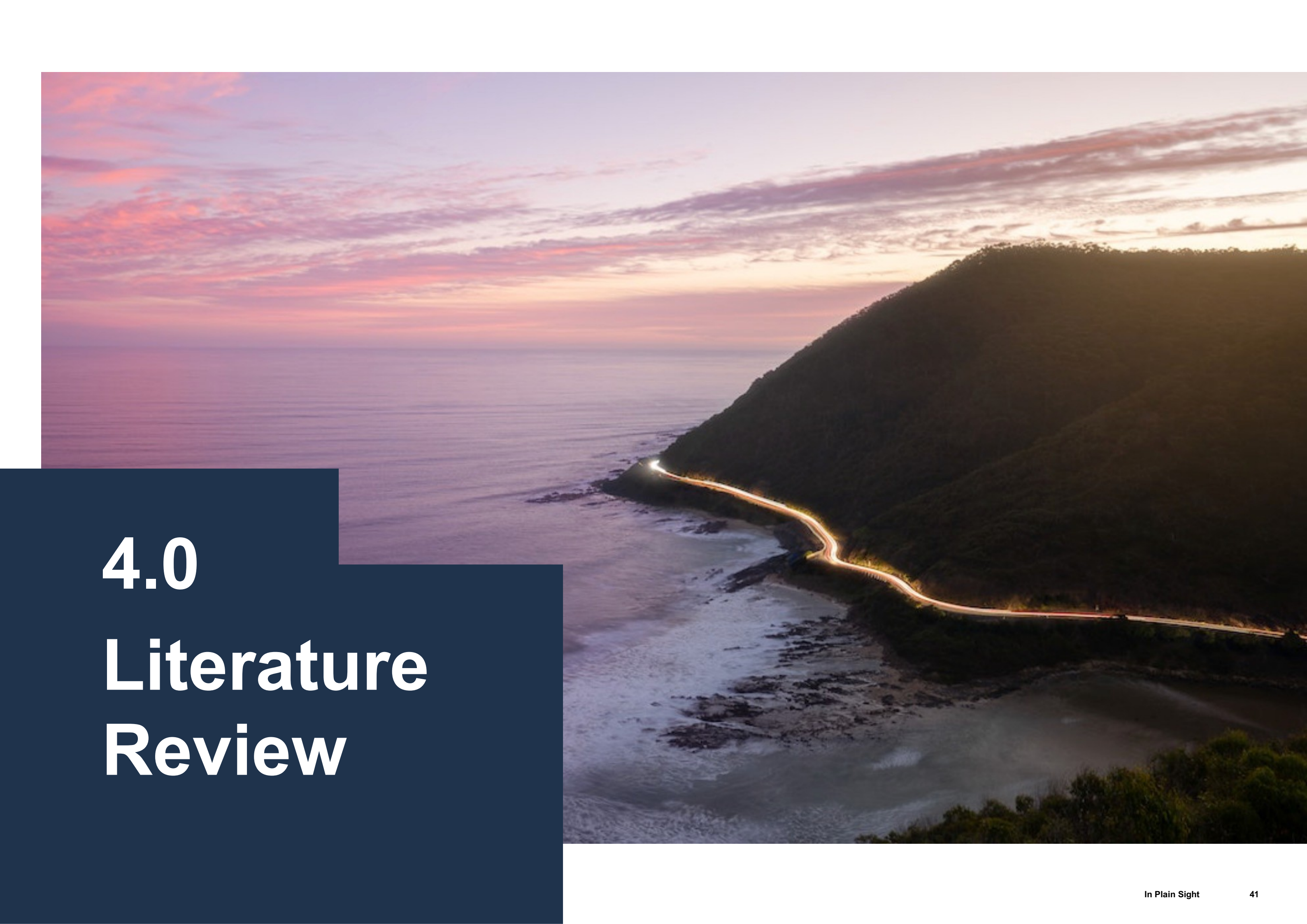
4.0
Literature
Review

Literature Review

The literature review explores how economic participation, or the involvement of individuals in economic activities, such as work and/or training, can benefit communities. The research suggests that economic participation is key to thriving economies and communities, with a "prosperity dividend" (WEF, 2021)[12] for the community if vulnerable cohorts are supported into employment.

The benefits include productivity growth, but the OECD also argues "there are both economic and social reasons to look at how to better use skills and talent in the workplace. Workers who better use their skills are more likely to have greater job satisfaction, earn better wages and are more prepared to adapt to changes in the nature of work. Employers benefit from a more productive and innovative workforce, enabling them to maximise business performance and profitability." (OECD-ILO, 2017)[13]

The Sustainability Development Goals (SDG)s, also known as the Global Goals, demonstrate the interconnectedness of jobs and economic development. The SDGs, were "adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity." There are 17 SDGs, and each of these acknowledge that action in one area will affect outcomes in others. Importantly, the SDGs aim to balance the social, economic, and environmental impacts. (UNDP, 2023).[14]

"The very formulation of SDG 8 "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" recognizes that economic growth will be inclusive only if it creates jobs and decent work. Because of the strong link between growth, employment and poverty reduction, activities in support of SDG 8 will also support the achievement of SDG 1 (poverty) and 10 (equality)." (ILO, 2023)[15]

An analysis of the barriers preventing economic participation included: low skills, lack of experience, care responsibilities (predominantly women with children), poor health and disability. These issues also impacts underemployment and "almost one third of jobless or low-intensity workers face three or more simultaneous barriers", adding to the complexity of responses. In the Great South Coast, primary issues also include lack of childcare and lack of transport, and equitable access to key services.

[12] World Economic Forum 2021
[13] OECD – ILO 2017
[14] UNDP 2023
[15] ILO 2023

The literature suggests a range of strategies to increase economic participation:

1. Agile and responsive **skills and training** for job seekers, with a focus on work experience, and partnering with wrap-around supports for vulnerable cohorts. Training needs to be demand driven and include employer engagement.

Skillnet Ireland offers specialised workforce development in partnership with industry to create upskilling programmes which are responsive to business needs and designed to develop future-ready talent. 'Skills Connect" offers free online training programmes and enterprise-led virtual job placements to jobseekers looking for new jobs and careers, in partnership with local business networks. (Skillnet Ireland, 2023)

3. Place-based local **collaborations** help ensure efforts are aligned and complementary, rather than duplicative and competitive.

Grow Your Own Workforce (GYO) is a place-based workforce model in Queensland that focuses on attracting, developing, supporting and retaining local residents to create a sustainable pipeline of workers, especially into the health sector. It combines an 'outside-in approach' which is an inclusive recruitment approach, with strategies to increase attraction, development and inclusive employment opportunities specifically for locals, and an 'inside-out approach' which focus on the retention and advancement of staff "through succession planning, mentoring, training, job coaching and career progression opportunities, (to) can keep the local workforce pipeline moving." (GYO, 2023)[17]

2. Direct and tailored **support for employers**, especially SMEs, to help them understand their workforce needs and expectations, and then develop and upskill their staff. Support needs to be flexible and targeted to the local economic priorities.

In the USA, the Michigan New Jobs Training Program (MNJTP) program provides free, tailored and flexible funding to employers who identify they have employed new additional staff, to meet an assortment of employee training and development needs. This is funded "by capturing the state income tax associated with the new employees' wages". The local community colleges work directly with employers and economic development organisations to support job creation and retention. (MEDC, 2023)[16]

4. Government Policies and Programs can be directed to incentivise SME training, provide credentialling for skills, or resolve key issues, such as lack of childcare or transport.

A form of transferable skills credentialling is the aim of the Australian National Skills Commission project 'JEDI', which will "identify what skills from a person's current or previous employment can transfer to different jobs that use similar skills…For each of these jobs, the classification presents core competencies, specialised tasks and technology tools. (National Skills Commission, 2022)[18]

Overall, the literature supports using a combination of strategies to support effective, equitable and sustainable economic participation in the Great South Coast.

Literature Review
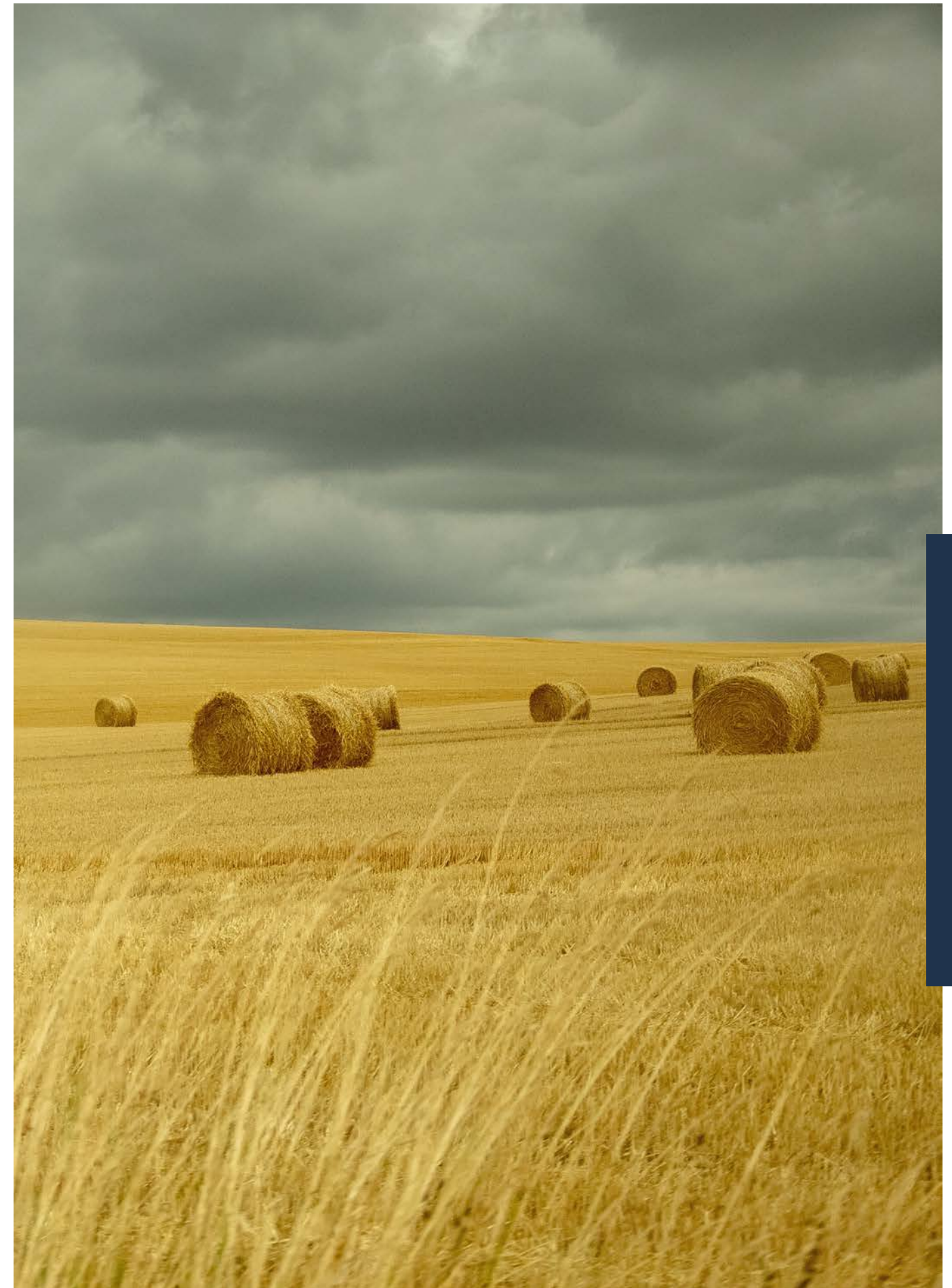
[16] MEDC 2023
[17] GYO 2023
[18] National Skills Commission 2022

5.0
What the people of the Great South Coast have to say

MGA consulted over 120 stakeholders **(Attachment 2: Consultations)** across the Great South Coast, including community leaders, local, state and federal government representatives, service providers, Southwest TAFE, Deakin University, schools, business and industry and local community members. The Consultations revealed enthusiasm for the pursuit of greater social and economic equity in local towns and communities of the Great South Coast. Stakeholders from different areas within the region identified similar issues contributing to local inequities. Whilst consistent, these issues, however, require solutions that need to be developed and activated in place-based models.

5.1 Barriers to Workforce Participation in Local Areas

The following table provides a snapshot of the cohorts identified by stakeholders in each of the Great South Coast Local Government Areas as being excluded from the workforce or being disadvantaged in seeking employment that provides a livable wage.

Cohorts experiencing exclusion from workforce	Warr'bool	Glenelg	Southern Gramps	Moyne	Cor'mite
Women who want to work but can't find early years/after school care.	X	X	X	X	X
First Nations job seekers (eg unable to obtain Working With Children/Police Check.)	X	X	X	X	X
CALD groups with specific cultural and language needs	X				
Older people transitioning into new roles (eg from farms or trades).	X		X		
Older people transitioning early into retirement	X	X	X	X	X
Young people, disengaged from school (eg lack of life skills and confidence).	X	X	X	X	X
Jobless families, long term unemployed, with multiple barriers (intergenerational).	X	X	X		
People with disability or mental health issues.	X	X	X		

The non-identification of cohorts in some local government areas doesn't necessarily mean that the cohorts are benefiting from sustainable employment, rather that the stakeholders in that local areas didn't specifically identify them or issues relating to their engagement into work.

What People Say

5.2 Factors identified as contributing to inequity across GSC Region

5.2.1 Lack of Services

Childcare

The lack of childcare options was identified as a major barrier to women (and some men) returning to fulltime work. The gaps are in early years, kindergarten and after school care. Wait lists are reported to be in excess of 12 months.

The issues impacting access to childcare include:
➢ The number of places available, in particular, fulltime places, and the geographic location of those places. Examples included people driving an hour to drop children at childcare and to work and then another hour in the afternoon to pick them up, not having full time places available and being on a waiting list for over 12 months in order to access long daycare options. Consultations reported centres being unable to meet demand for care for priority 1 vulnerable children.
➢ The quality requirements on family day care providers leading to a reduction in the availability of this option.
➢ Staff shortages to fill the workforce demand for additional childcare places.
➢ Issues with meeting training and skill requirements. The introduction of new training requirements has created barriers to upskilling for existing staff, particularly those who have been in the industry for many years and now need to go back and re-skill.

Regional Services and Resources: "Bigger is not Better"

Service providers point to the increased costs of transport and time to provide services in rural areas in comparison to urban areas. One example provided is in Child Protection where 200 hours are allocated for working with a family and 2/3 of these hours are typically used on travelling to and from families - costs are increased but funding is not. Centralised government contracts which favour larger providers rather than place based supports are less effective and further exacerbate existing inequities faced by vulnerable cohorts in rural communities who already experience poorer life, health and education outcomes than their metropolitan counterparts.

Similar examples were provided by employment

services workers where high caseloads over a broad area means the cost of travelling erodes the ability to provide quality services. A number of human services providers said that they can fill their caseloads and meet their KPIs in Warrnambool and asked the question of where the incentive is to go beyond.

5.2.2 Supporting young people to stay in education

COVID Impact on young people

The legacy of COVID and its impact on young people is identified as significant. Consultations reveal continuing high levels of absenteeism at both primary and secondary schooling levels, increase in instances of poor behavioural regulation and difficulties in engaging parents to assist in addressing issues.

Stakeholders identified a gap in support for parents and carers to work with schools to reduce absenteeism and improve consistency of engagement by young people in learning. Stakeholders also report an increase in mental illness but a lack of access to appropriate services and supports, particularly in the smaller towns in the region.

Need to co-design with young people

Many stakeholders talked about the need to engage with young people in the design and development of programs and services, in particular young people who are most at risk of disconnecting from school, or from other learning options and from their peers. Their needs increased as a result of Covid, which has led to social anxiety and inability to manage risks. The key issues identified for young people are: the loss of social skills – how to talk and listen; lack of choice and local opportunities for tertiary education require young people to move away from home leading to lack of retention; lack of choice, diversity of offerings and local opportunities for vocational and tertiary education; lack of services that reach the young people or offer drop in; disengagement starting younger than programs can access; gaming as the main social interaction for some leading to a growth in social anxiety; and learning how to disengage from mobile phones.

Consultations also reflected on the need for services for the 'middle years', currently under-resourced, to prevent disengagement.
for the 'middle years', currently under-resourced, to prevent disengagement.

Whole ecosystem response

Current service provision for vulnerable people in the GSC is siloed and patchy. Whilst there are some examples of cross-sectoral partnerships, by and large services don't link up systematically around the client to meet their needs in an efficient and comprehensive way. This is exacerbated in smaller towns where services are not always available full time, with case workers outreaching so not necessarily knowing who other caseworkers are or how particular local communities work.

Stakeholders are keen for services to systematically link up to ensure a whole ecosystem approach to engaging and supporting vulnerable people, and for young people, engaging and supporting their families and carers.

5.2.3 Public Transport and Infrastructure Issues

Public transport

Stakeholders raised the lack of public transport as impacting on people engaging in education and employment. An example is the one bus in Hamilton arriving after SW TAFE courses have begun.

Key worker housing

Lack of housing options is identified as a major barrier to recruiting people to take up work in towns across the region. Local Government in Glenelg and Corangamite identified lack of housing, lack of quality housing and lack of affordable housing as major issues restricting economic growth and development.

Digital infrastructure

Mobile phone and internet coverage is not consistent across the region and is particularly poor in some areas. Whilst there are possible options for local solutions these need to be used in conjunction with broader system upgrades to be fit for future digital demands. A common cited example is a single electricity line into farms and residences leading to peak demand issues and a drop in efficiency. As farms become more reliant on digital technology to manage animal, cropping and harvesting systems, and as households move to electric vehicles and greater digitization, residents will be facing major energy gaps without the infrastructure to respond to demand.

5.2.4 Barriers to Business Growth

Workforce shortages alongside poor workforce participation

Businesses and service providers reported workforce shortages and skills gaps as the biggest barriers to expansion. Some business owners talked about the last 12 months as being the most difficult they had experienced with high levels of demand for products and the need to manage workforce growth where new employees were not equipped with the skills and personal attributes needed for work.

Businesses also identified that they do not have the capability and capacity needed in the workplace to support the level of vulnerability in today's jobseekers.

Service providers identify bias against some job seekers as they try to enter the workforce. Examples include where families "well known" for intergenerational unemployment, gender bias and bias against some cultural groups and ex-offenders.

Employability: Literacy, numeracy, digital proficiency and mismatch to changed workplace cultural norms

The new economy requires literacy, numeracy and digital proficiency across all jobs. Stakeholders and businesses report gaps in these basic skills for young people, entry level employees and people who are unemployed over the long term. Whilst young people have grown up in a digital world, issues associated with digital literacy and the ability of young people to apply digital technology appropriately in the workplace are identified across the region.

In addition, employers are reporting that many new employees are entering the workforce without a strong understanding of what is expected of them in a contemporary workplace. Use of inappropriate language and workplace conversations, a need to understand the importance of regular attendance, problem solving skills and lack of confidence were identified as common issues for people who have been out of the workplace for some time.

Employers also highlight the need for lifelong learning for all workers to ensure they are ready to adapt to the changing nature of work.

Local businesses locked out big infrastructure tenders

Businesses identified barriers to tendering for big infrastructure builds. Scale and location impact their ability to meet the quality requirements for Tier 1 and 2 contracts. This means the employment benefits and profits from these infrastructure builds are not experienced in local areas.

5.2.5 Changing nature of industry in the GSC

Industry in the GSC is changing. Two examples agriculture and agrifoods as the largest traditional industry for the region and renewable energy as a new industry provide examples of how the local economy will be driven in years to come.

Changing nature of agriculture

Agriculture as a major employer and contributor to the region's GDP needs to navigate significant challenges in the coming years. These include:
Climate change and water as a contestable commodity,
Decreasing number of farms and, for dairy, number of cows – changes to the size of the industry and nature of farming systems, e.g intensification v traditional farming,
Need for young farmers to enter the industry,
Renewable energy including biomass and methane capture and reduction and the changing nature and cost of energy provision,
Workforce availability and skills,
Export market dependencies,
Bio Security,
Rapid changes in technology driving change in industry practices.

These challenges will demand a workforce with broader and deeper skills particularly in relation to high level analytics, digital and technical skills, people, business and environmental management capabilities combined with practical problem solving in the farm and enterprise-based environment. The decrease in family farm numbers has led to a reduction in young people growing up "in the business" leading to questions facing the industry in the GSC on how to ensure there is an industry workforce that is fit for modern farming.

New Energy Developments in GSC

The GSC region forms part of the proposed Renewable Energy Zone for Western Victoria. Onshore wind is a feature of the region with offshore wind developments now attracting international investment. Examples include:

Spinifex Offshore Wind Farm Pty Ltd (a wholly owned subsidiary of Alinta Energy Ltd) has secured a $1.5 million grant from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to conduct a wind resource assessment and accelerate early-stage development activities for a 1,000MW offshore wind farm. Spinifex has announced $4 billion of investment to create one of Australia's first aluminium smelters (Alcoa) to be powered by up to 100 per cent renewables. The project plans to generate thousands of jobs and be a significant step towards decarbonising Victoria's grid, as the smelter currently uses around 10 per cent of the state's electricity.

VIC Offshore Windfarm Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Australis Energy Ltd, is proposing to develop the Victorian (VIC) Offshore Wind Farm project approximately 5.5 km off the coast of Portland. The project comprises: an offshore wind farm in Discovery Bay near the coast of Portland.

The GSC is also of interest to the green hydrogen industry. In December 2019 the Commonwealth government announced2 initial funding towards building an industrial-scale Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) fuel cell manufacturing, safety compliance and industry piloting program - known as

HyceL@Warrnambool. The aim is to position the Great South Coast at the leading edge of Australia's scientific and industrial push into the green hydrogen space. It will bring eminent scientific skills and experience to address critical knowledge gaps in Australia's hydrogen economy around fuel cell industrial manufacturing, safe testing and distribution through pipelines as well as much-needed large heavy vehicle cell applications. Deakin University estimates that when the HyceL@Warrnambool is fully established it will generate up to 200 jobs.

5.2.6 Ensuring Local Benefits

Stakeholders queried the extent of social benefits being realised from the Victorian Government infrastructure spend in the region. The SPF guidelines do not include place-based (postcode) priority cohorts located in Southwest Victoria, making it difficult for contractors to target local cohorts for employment. Local businesses also reported that they are not in a position to compete with Tier 1 or Tier 2 contractors for Victorian Government contracts.

Currently there is no mechanism for local stakeholders to understand and beneft from the commitments made by contractors involved in the Victorian Government's big build through the SPF. The focus of SFP is on achieving employment and skills outcomes for priority cohorts. Where these cohorts are not living in a particular region the focus could be redirected to address local priorities as determined by key stakeholders. For example, in the GSC region concerns include childcare; keeping students at school; investing in pre-employment literacy and numeracy, L2P driving mentors linked to apprentices getting licenses; and/or working with families.

SPF compliance fines are expected to be introduced from 2024. There may be an opportunity for the fines to be returned to the region where the benefit was to be realized.

New Industry and Social License

Similarly with non-government builds, the social license commitments of developers are opaque and are being met in different ways. There is nothing in place to point them towards contributing to addressing the region's priority issues. Where the SPF is not delivering direct outcomes for the local communities, there could be an opportunity to trial a regional model, informed by the new Moyne Community Benefits Policy for renewable energy projects.

¹ Offshore wind could power Portland aluminium smelter - Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA)
¹ https://www.spinifexoffshore.com.au/
¹ https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/
¹ Great South Coast Economic Futures, FINAL REPORT | MAY 2020

5.3 It's Personal

stories of local people

The following personal stories illustrate the barriers faced by some people to participating in paid work in the GSC:

Jane

Jane is Indigenous. Her youngest child is 16 years and she is keen to find a job in Warrnambool. Jane left the workforce in 2005 with her first child, and since that time her only work experience has been volunteering to teach Aboriginal art at the local primary school.

Just to start applying for jobs Jane discovered she needed personal documentation. She was supported by Worn Gundidj to access her birth certificate and other documentation for the first time.

Jane doesn't have a car or a license, so she has begun learning how to drive. For now, she is limited to applying for jobs in locations that have public transport. Even if she can get to work, feedback from employers who have interviewed Jane is that, without her own car, she is considered likely to be unreliable.

Nearly 10 years ago, Jane was charged with minor theft. It will soon be considered a 'spent conviction' (ie not included in a police check) but in the meantime, she the conviction has resulted in many employers rejecting her.

Jane's confidence is low, and she is keen to get some experience to rebuild her skills. She had two interviews recently. One was 12 minutes and the other 10 minutes long. She was rejected by both employers.

Sarah

Sarah is a young pregnant mother. She is heavily reliant on very limited public transport and family members to drive her and her eldest child to medical appointments, 50 minutes away from her hometown of Casterton. Relying on family members to help her care for her young family put an extensive strain on time, routines, ability to plan and relationships.

Upon completion of the L2P program, Sarah was able to get her children to medical appointments and other activities, without relying on others, which gave her the independence that she so desperately needed. As a result, she has now gained independence and much more confidence, enabling her access to employment opportunities, which have helped her to continue to provide for her growing, young family.

John

John found travel a major barrier when he tried to gain employment. John is doing his apprenticeship in Portland but trade school is in Warrnambool. On public transport, to arrive in time for trade school, John had to catch the 4:15 am bus to Warrnambool and then depart from Warrnambool on the 5:30 pm bus.

Eventually, John was able to get his license through the L2P program at Glenelg Shire. Without the L2P program across Great South Coast, many young people wouldn't be able to achieve their aspirations and goals.

Billie

Billie was 19 years old when he attended Yumcha (youth LGBTQIA+ support group) questioning whether he may be trans. He was living in a caravan at Hamilton caravan park with his siblings. They were regularly late on rent or just unable to pay. He felt very isolated and struggled with mental health challenges. Billie worked sporadically at McDonald's since age 15, but regularly called in sick or had panic attacks while working.

Billie and his siblings were removed from their birth parents. One parent has a long history of incarceration, and suffered severe trauma, including sexual, mental and physical violence. Billie has recently been diagnosed with severe Autism.

Through the Brophy's self-funded program youThrive, Billie was connected to Centrelink to complete an application for Youth Allowance, and to other programs including NDIS. Although Billie now has NDIS funding for speech pathology, occupational therapy and other supports, he has been unable to access School Leaver Employment Services (SLES) funding as there is currently no service offered in Hamilton.

Jack

Jack also lives in Portland, and is an active young man – his school and family agree that the VET (Vocational Education and Training) pathway is the best fit for him. The TAFE is offering three VET pathways subjects with the local College auspicing another. Jack wants to study Engineering with his mates, but the number of students at TAFE is capped at 16 for Engineering, and he has missed out. Other popular trade courses such Automotive and Building and Construction are not offered in the region for either the 2023 or 2024 school year.

The next closest provider of offerings is located over an hour away, with minimal public transport. This doesn't work for Jack owing to his commitments to sport. Despite funding provided by the state government for travel, many students are unable to access or maintain this additional three-hour travel time as it clashes with other family, work, study and social life in their own community.

Young person in Hamilton

I look back now and think, 'If I didn't put my name on the signup sheet for Live4Life when I was in year 8, I would not have been nominated for Young Citizen of the Year.' Through Live4Life, I have been able to do a lot of speeches, and writing, and sharing of personal poems. I have had to push myself to share my thoughts and feelings with the world.

Being part of Live4Life provided me with the skills to navigate depression, feelings of guilt and being down on myself. Live4Life has taught me how to look out for myself and look out for others.

I feel awkward when talking about mental health, but I get a lot of kids asking me about Live4Life, especially after the celebration event. They want me to get them into the crew. I even had kids I have never talked to before ask me about it. Change is healthy, and that is what we want - healthy minds.

6.0
Findings

Findings

The Great South Coast region, with a population of 105,300, is a significant contributor to Victoria's prosperity and liveability. The agriculture, manufacturing and healthcare sectors contribute around $5.85 billion Gross Regional Product (GDP) per annum.[19]

The economic benefit of this GDP contribution, however, is not evenly spread across the region. In December 2022 unemployment in Warrnambool was at 1.6%, in Portland 3.4% and, 3.0% in Hamilton.[20] The Poverty Line Indicator and Workforce Participation rate, however, shows that there are many people in towns and communities across the GSC who are living below the poverty line and many people in the region who could be in the workforce and are not. These people include mothers seeking to return to the workforce, First Nations job seekers, older people wishing to remain in the workforce, young people including those disengaged from school, jobless families and long term unemployed, people with disability and people experiencing mental health issues.

There are multiple factors inhibiting participation in the workforce by vulnerable cohorts in GSC ranging from lack of childcare, poor public transport, lack of housing, the need to build employability skills and address transition to work issues, COVID impact on young people and high levels of absenteeism from school, low levels of literacy, numeracy and digital proficiency, poor digital infrastructure and inequities in regional services.

Businesses, however, are reporting workforce shortages as a major barrier to growth and industry is reporting major changes to the way work is performed.

Whilst the complexity of factors could be daunting, the stakeholders in the GSC Region are enthusiastic about working together on practical solutions to building social and economic equity in towns and across the region.

They are committed to *taking shared action, holding shared accountability, and celebrating shared outcomes* and seek a coherent regional approach to driving local community action.

Based on the themes from the consultations, literature, and available data the following goals have been identified:

Goal 1:

Ensure the benefits of economic developments are distributed fairly, to uplift regional prosperity and overcome barriers to growth caused by poverty and disadvantage.

There is strong evidence of the benefits to distributing economic benefits more fairly, with the literature clearly pointing to greater local and regional prosperity in areas where there is a conscious focus on addressing poverty and disadvantage.

A key Victorian Government initiative is the Social Procurement Framework. The Framework commits businesses contracting to the Victorian Government to deliver social benefits by setting employment and skills targets for vulnerable cohorts. These targets are set at the statewide level and don't always reflect local priorities, which often impact directly on the ability of vulnerable people to participate in either skills development or employment. An example is addressing the lack of childcare as a barrier to many parents returning to work or taking up full-time work. A second example is the drop in engagement of young people, including primary age, in school and the need to support parents, carers and schools to work together to reengage vulnerable young children and youth so that they are on a pathway to learning and employment. A third could be an investment in L2P so that young people, including apprentices, can travel to take up work.

Actions associated with Goal 1 focus on:

a) refining the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework to direct benefits into the GSC area by targeting **local cohorts** as beneficiaries of the Framework, creating provisions for regional businesses to be involved in developments, **directing social investment into local priorities** and being accountable to local areas by regular reporting on benefits.

Non-Victorian Government funded infrastructure developments are not bound by the Social Procurement Framework, but industry and developers are increasingly obliged to deliver on social license commitments. There is an opportunity to leverage Moyne Shire's Community Benefit Policy to create a Community Benefit Fund/s that sets social license priorities. Local governments could leverage available mechanisms (e.g. permits) to obligate contributions to the Fund for delivery on identified priorities.

b) developing a mechanism for gaining a better return from industry/developers' social license commitments by **establishing a Community Benefit Fund/s** to aggregate resources and use them to **address agreed social equity priorities**.

19 Great South Coast Regional Partnership - Regional Development Victoria (rdv.vic.gov.au)

20 https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/

Goal 2:

Optimise local economic benefit by building Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)

responds to the capability development issues identified by businesses and recognises the importance of SMEs to the region achieving greater equity in economic and social outcomes for local communities. Businesses identified the need to build their capability to engage in big infrastructure builds, improve workforce engagement and retention, particularly where the available labour is drawn from vulnerable cohort groups, explore possible new models of work to attract a broader pool of possible workers and gain benefits from students bringing new knowledge into the workforce.

tions focus on:

a) strengthening the capability of SMEs **to employ and retain vulnerable people in employment and careers** to address workforce shortages, including potentially through onsite mentoring.

b) supporting local businesses to meet Social Procurement Framework requirements and **win competitive supply chain contracts**,

c) fostering collaborative relationships between business and education providers to **find mutually beneficial opportunities for young people to experience work**.

Goal 3:

Drive economic benefit by strengthening the ability of families and carers and service ecosystems to support young people and other vulnerable people into learning and work.

Goal 3 focuses on addressing workforce participation, supporting young people to stay connected to education and employment and facilitating a 'whole ecosystem response' to providing the supports required by vulnerable people in local towns.

The actions seek to respond to the issues identified in the consultations associated with:

a) understanding the service profile and gaps in GSC towns, advocating for and **fostering innovative service solutions** such as identifying key people in each of the townships who are trusted and have the ability to reach into the community to facilitate joined up services for people who need cross sectoral supports, and consider the design and awarding of service contracts for rural communities to require place based services and equitable delivery mechanisms.

b) focussing on **addressing the issue of disengagement from school** for vulnerable young people by joining up services to support families, carers and the young person directly.

c) **responding innovatively to the need for place-based supports** in GSC towns where poverty factors are well

Goal 4:

Address lack of childcare as a major barrier to accessing economic benefit

The actions under Goal 4 are directed towards **solving the lack of childcare options** plaguing the region. They focus on advocating for solutions that will address the need for an increase in childcare places, supporting the recruitment and retention of a local childcare workforce, and identifying innovative solutions to upskilling existing workers.

The Governance Model

Existing partnerships and networks offer a strong basis for working together on place-based solutions and for providing shared governance and accountability for implementing and evaluating initiatives focused on lifting economic and social equity.

These networks have the potential to provide an integrated regional governance model where each network agrees to include Social Futures actions as ongoing agenda items for meetings and participates in an annual forum to review actions and report to the community.

A networked governance model would ensure actions leverage existing structures and are incorporated into annual work plans and commitments. Underpinning principles for the governance arrangements would be:

• **Cross-sectoral partnerships and collaborations** support, guide and drive agreed actions;

• **Accountability (through an annual forum)** on the outcomes of actions and progress towards achieving local goals;

• **Advocating for, promoting and positioning** priorities for achieving greater economic and social equity, particularly where state and federal government policies impact the ability of people to realise social benefits, e.g. housing, transport and childcare.

It will be beneficial to measure the impact of recommended actions using the existing Economic Futures 7-6-4 Framework (Refer Attachment 4) which provides the opportunity to develop and measure meaningful indicators of change.

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