Regional Development Australia - An Australian Government Initiative

RDA BARWON SOUTH WEST

Business Plan 2024-25

# Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We support initiatives that encourage greater unity, knowledge, cultural awareness and respect for the first occupants of our land.

We work with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation to encourage stronger community links and local representation.

# Message from the Chair

The 2023-24 year has been rewarding for our committee as we delivered strong outcomes across our region. Our continued support and advocacy for local industry, businesses, and communities have been positive. By prioritising regional collaboration and information sharing, we have ensured our efforts are aligned with the needs of our region.

Our established partnerships with local government, the Barwon and Great South Coast Regional Partnerships and our stakeholders have been influential in advancing key projects such as the Great South Coast Economic Futures and the Great South Coast Social Futures projects to drive economic diversity, high-value economic outcomes, and improved economic participation outcomes.

The Barwon South West region is focused on continued growth and development in the coming year. We want to continue to support the region to capitalise on Federal Government programs such as the National Reconstruction Fund, Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program, Growing Regions Program, and the new Housing Support Program.

We will continue our collaboration with the Victorian Government to deliver the comprehensive $2 billion Regional Package. This partnership is essential as we work together to maximise regional development and investment opportunities.

The Committee’s strategic priorities for the coming year are:

* Add value to and diversify within the agri-food supply chain.
* Accelerate the transition to new and high-value manufacturing.
* Realise the potential of the visitor economy.
* Improve workforce participation, skills development and growth.
* Build a sustainable and climate-resilient economy.

I thank long-term member Anita Rank for her years of dedication. Anita served on the Committee since 2015 and as Chair since 2020. To all of the Members, thank you for your ongoing commitment and dedication. Yours and the region’s commitment and collaboration is the pathway to building long-term success.

As we look to the future, we are confident in our region's potential and are committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to capture opportunities, address challenges and achieve lasting success for the Barwon South West region.

Liz Price

Chair, RDA Barwon South West.

# Strategic Context

The RDA Barwon South West Committee focuses on maximising Commonwealth assets for and in our region. Our strategic priorities for the upcoming year are informed by evidence from the Victorian Government’s Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) for the Barwon and Great South Coast regions, underpinned by alignment with the RDA Charter. Examples of the application of our business activities follow throughout this plan.

# Regional Development Australia Charter

* Focus activities and strategy on the delivery of the Regional Investment Framework (RIF), including investment in people, places, services, and industries and local economies.
* Support regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit-sector, to seek grant opportunities that advance strategic regional priorities.
* Support decarbonisation efforts and the transformation to a net zero economy and enable regional linkages between sectors to achieve these aims.
* Build the evidence for economic development, including innovation and diversification strategies.
* Facilitate meaningful engagement across the three levels of government to ensure investments deliver better outcomes for regions.
* Contribute relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.

# Top 5 Strategic Priorities for the upcoming year

* Add value to and diversify within the agri-food supply chain.
* Accelerate the transition to new and high-value manufacturing.
* Realise the potential of the visitor economy.
* Improve workforce participation, skills development and growth.
* Build a sustainable and climate-resilient economy.

# Top 5 Business Activities for the upcoming year

* Invest in and facilitate regional initiatives that enable economic growth and diversification.
* Drive strategic collaboration to advance shared priorities.
* Promote and support government funding programs.
* Facilitate the sharing of information and opportunities.
* Connect stakeholders to identified regional economic opportunities and recommendations.

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOME 1

Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, through investment in: Skills and local leadership, Opportunities for First Nations People, Infrastructure, Connectivity, Decarbonisation, and/or Industry growth.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Add value to and diversify within the agri-food supply chain.

1.1 Address supply chain opportunities and improve freight logistics.

1.2 Identify and support value-add opportunities in agriculture.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Accelerate the transition to new and high-value manufacturing.

2.1 Innovation and diversification strategies for economic development.

2.2 Explore and support investment into high-value manufacturing opportunities.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Realise the potential of the visitor economy.

3.1 Expand existing strengths in cultural and nature-based visitation.

3.2 Innovate to increase tourism sustainability and yield.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Improve workforce participation, skills development and growth.

4.1 Increase the availability of affordable housing.

4.2 Improve skills development pathways for areas of need and emerging sectors.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: Build a sustainable and climate-resilient economy.

5.1 Maximise the potential of the region’s renewable energy resources.

5.2 Support green hydrogen development initiatives.

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOME 2

Support regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit-sector, to seek grant opportunities that advance strategic regional priorities.

To achieve Outcome 2 and address the performance indicators we will:

Draft applications, write letters to support applications, review submissions, provide advice about application submissions, provide guidance about application processes and/or provide information and advice to stakeholders.

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOME 3

Contribute to, and where appropriate, drive local economic development planning and strategy development.

To achieve Outcome 3 and address the performance indicators we will:

Contribute to the development of local plans and strategies and specify the lead stakeholders, provide evidence to support regional economic development, facilitate (or be a member of) local leadership groups and forums, and/or provide other assistance.

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOME 4

Contribute relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.

To achieve Outcome 4 and address the performance indicators we will:

Provide online or in-person briefings to the relevant Minister and/or Government, meet with Members of Parliament to discuss regional matters, make submissions to Parliamentary enquiries, participate in departmental surveys and submissions, make additional contributions of local information as appropriate, and provide other support to Government as required.

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOME 5

Complete activities that will contribute to the achievement of identified state and local government outcomes and output requirements.

To achieve Outcome 5 and address the performance indicators we will:

Contribute to achieving outcomes and performance indicators being sought by state and local governments, support activities that will contribute to the achievement of common outcomes and performance indicators, and activities that will contribute to the achievement of state and local government specific outcomes and outputs.

# Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS)

The Victorian Government has developed Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) for the Barwon and Great South Coast regions, which identify strategic directions for future economic development based on a strong evidence base. The REDS have informed the identification of the strategic focus areas for our Committee. The REDS also identify four key factors that are critical to enabling economic growth in the region – digital connectivity, transport connectivity, workforce and housing. In addition to providing a consistent evidence base and the strategic framing of economic opportunities to coordinate investment and activity, the REDS also identify opportunities for Aboriginal economic development.

## Barwon Regional Economic Development Strategic Priorities

Barwon’s five strategic directions have been identified using an evidence base that considers the region’s unique attributes, existing and emerging industries, and socioeconomic context.

Barwon Regional Economic Development Strategy Strategic directions:

* Accelerate the transition to new and high-value manufacturing opportunities.
* Further the innovation and skills ecosystem.
* Realise the potential of the visitor economy.
* Maximise the economic benefit from expanding service-based sectors.
* Build a sustainable and climate-resilient economy.

## Great South Coast Regional Economic Development Strategic Priorities

Great South Coast’s five strategic directions have been identified using an evidence base that considers the region’s unique attributes, existing and emerging industries, and socioeconomic context.

Great South Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy Strategic directions:

* Add value to and diversify within the agri-food supply chain.
* Maximise the potential of the region’s energy resources.
* Grow and equip the workforce needed to enable future economic opportunities.
* Expand existing strengths in cultural and nature-based visitation.
* Capture the greater potential of the ‘Green Triangle’ cross-border economic zone.

# Statement of Collaboration

To amplify opportunities for collaboration and increase high-value outcomes for the region, RDA Barwon South West Committee, Barwon Regional Partnership and Great South Coast Regional Partnership will endeavour to coordinate their respective activities.

We will leverage Regional Development Victoria’s representation in all three groups to coordinate high-value communications with the Victorian Government and the Australian Government.

We will use RDV’s regional resources and skills to ensure our key projects and priorities are supported by:

* Shared evidence
* Data analysis
* United voice
* Joined-up priorities
* City connections

# RDA Barwon South West Committee 2024-25

* Liz Price (Chair)
* Grant Sutherland (Deputy Chair)Clive Pugh
* Keith Baillie
* Mary-Ann brown
* Peter Dorling
* Anne Howard
* Alison McLeod
* Clive Pugh
* David Spear

Executive Support Team consist of Brett Ince, Regional Director Barwon South West and Nada Malinac RDA Coordinator Barwon South West.

The RDA Barwon South West Committee consists of local business experts who are dedicated to developing and implementing local solutions for regional issues. They collaborate with government, businesses, and community groups to support the region's growth and development.

Acting as facilitators, they focus on building strong and confident regional economies by leveraging competitive advantages, seizing economic opportunities, and attracting investments.

The committee comprises experienced individuals with global, national, and local expertise in advanced manufacturing, digital capability, agriculture, education, tourism, and energy. Led by Chair Liz Price, the team brings valuable political and industry experience to their endeavours.

The Regional Director, Barwon South West (Executive Officer) provides strategic and operational leadership to our Committee and the executive support team. The team promotes the region’s activities to all levels of government, industry, business and community, highlighting competitive advantages and encouraging opportunities for decentralisation and relocation. They oversee RDA projects, report on activities, and manage and monitor the Commonwealth and State grants programs. RDV Barwon South West has executive support offices located in Geelong, Warrnambool and Portland.

# Prioritising our activities

The Barwon South West is renowned for the strength of its collaborative network of government, community and industry organisations. With nine independent local councils, two regional alliances, two Regional Partnerships and a diversity of peak industry bodies and authorities all contributing, a common evidence base and collaboration mechanisms reduce duplication of effort and improve consistency of messaging and advocacy outcomes.

RDA Barwon South West acts as a conduit across government, industry and the community to support the sustainable growth of the region. As real-time advisers to the Australian Government on critical local issues, opportunities and challenges, we provide advice that informs government policy, regional programs, information campaigns and grant funding opportunities.

Working closely with the Barwon and Great South Coast Regional Partnerships, we identify Australian and Victorian programs and strategies that allow our stakeholder network to address regional priorities in an informed, efficient and effective way.

Our role as a facilitator in implementing regional activities is based on alignment with the Australian Government’s Regional Investment Framework priorities, the RDA Charter and our assessment of the following criteria:

* Regional Significance
* Strategic Alignment
* Political Alignment
* Investment Readiness
* Stakeholder Engagement
* Defined role.

# Communications

The overarching aim of RDA communication products and activities is to encourage community support for and regional stakeholder engagement with RDA Barwon South West.

The objectives of communications activities are to:

* Increase understanding and awareness of the benefits RDA Barwon South West offers to regional communities.
* Promote the achievements of RDA Barwon South West.
* Encourage Australian Government agencies to consider utilising regional intelligence.
* Provide advice on Australian Government program design.
* Support the Australian Government to deliver programs in our region.
* Encourage and promote joint government, business and stakeholder collaborations.

RDA Barwon South West uses several communication channels and regional stakeholders’ group assets including:

* Direct email
* Promotional video
* Social media
* Workshops
* Websites
* Stakeholder meetings
* Site visits
* Newsletters
* Regional forums
* Reports
* Regional delegations
* Submissions
* Brown Bag Briefings
* E-books and printed booklets.

# Contact

Liz Price

Chair, RDA Barwon South West

Telephone: 1 800 950 145

[rda.barwonsouthwest@rdv.vic.gov.au](mailto:rda.barwonsouthwest@rdv.vic.gov.au)

Brett Ince

Regional Director, Barwon South West (Executive Officer)

Telephone: 1 800 950 145

[rda.barwonsouthwest@rdv.vic.gov.au](mailto:rda.barwonsouthwest@rdv.vic.gov.au)

Nada Malinac

RDA Coordinator, Barwon South West

Telephone: 1 800 950 145

[nada.malinac@rdv.vic.gov.au](mailto:nada.malinac@rdv.vic.gov.au)

RDA Barwon South West

Federal Mills, 33 Mackey Street, North Geelong, Victoria, 3215