

2023 Policy Priorities





One Gippsland Members

- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Baw Baw Shire Council
- Destination Gippsland
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Federation University
- Food and Fibre Gippsland
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Latrobe City Council
- South Gippsland Shire Council
- TAFE Gippsland
- Wellington Shire

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About Gippsland and One Gippsland

Gippsland is a geographically, socially and economically diverse region. At approximately 41,000 square km, it is the largest region in Victoria. Home to over 270,000 people¹ and 6 Local Governments, the region annually produces \$14 billion in Gross Regional Product (GRP).

One Gippsland is a peak regional advocacy body representing this diverse region. We aim to connect the dots between government, business and community, while also collectively working together to champion the interests of our region and our people.

It is our mission to create a thriving and dynamic region that harnesses the social, environmental and economic capabilities and assets. Gippsland has remarkable diversity so that we can offer our community opportunities for a great lifestyle and access to services at all stages of life.

Snapshot

Despite the many benefits of living and working in Gippsland there have been a range of challenges. A recent report produced by SGS Economics shows that Gippsland has undergone a series of economic shocks that have impacted the economic output of the region. Between 2015 and 2020 the combined effect of the COVID-19 restrictions, bushfires, dairy crisis, drought and hazelwood closure have had the following impacts:

- Direct output loss of **\$3.28 billion**;
- Combined direct and indirect output loss of **\$6.86 billion**;
- A total of **10,213** job losses (direct and indirect); and
- Gross Regional Product decrease of **\$2.66 billion**.

The closure of the native timber industry is expected to negatively impact direct output by \$548 million and will further shrink Gross Regional Product by \$431 million in the next 10 years.

Despite these challenges, Gippsland has great growth aspirations including:

1. Being Australia's **most liveable region by 2040**;
2. **Raising the Digital Inclusion Index Score** to be in parity with Melbourne;
3. Attracting an additional **75,000 residents by 2040**; and
4. Increasing the annual **Gross Regional Product to \$23.2 Billion** by 2040.

¹ quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/205?opendocument



One Gippsland is a peak regional advocacy body representing this diverse region.

Our mission is to create a thriving and dynamic region.

Executive Summary

This submission intends to guide government investment into the Gippsland region by setting out a range of projects and strategies that will not only improve the liveability within the region, but also the economic output and the creation of more jobs.

After enduring substantial economic challenges throughout recent years, including drought, bushfires, floods, major industry closures and the restrictions of businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic investment to aid recovery is crucial.

Section 1. Regional Priorities and Projects

One Gippsland has identified 7 priority investment areas that will enable a kick-start to the economic recovery of the region. These are:

1. **Freight Fast-track: Network investment, planning and road safety;**
2. **Rail: Improving reliability, speed and accessibility**
3. **Tourism Recovery: Tracks and trails and events;**
4. **Digital Connectivity: Mobile and broadband networks;**
5. **Health and Wellbeing: Meeting the varied needs of the Region;**
6. **Education: Building the the skills for the future;**
7. **Food and Fibre: Capitalising on the Region's strengths.**



One Gippsland has identified **five priority investment areas** to kick-start the region's economic recovery.

ONE GIPPSLAND REGIONAL PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS



Freight Fast Track: Network Investment, Planning and Road Safety'

The future economic success of Gippsland's, Victoria's and indeed Australia's industries are dependent on strengthening supply chains between regions, urban centres, distribution points as well as air and seaports.

Our increasingly interwoven domestic and international markets require better freight connections to drive reliability and cost-competitiveness for our growing industries.

Today, Australia's freight volume:

- Moves **163 tonnes of freight for every person** throughout the national network;²
- Is expected to **grow by over 35 per cent** between 2018 and 2040;
- Will reach a freight task of **1000 billion tonnes annually**, and
- Increase movement through **urban areas by nearly 60 per cent by 2040** without government action.³

In Victoria the freight task means that Melbourne alone requires approximately 15,000 tonnes of food to be delivered every day.⁴ Regional Victoria and particularly Gippsland are key to this supply. Ensuring Victoria's regions can meet this demand relies on our current road network. Of the 23,000 kilometres of arterial roads and freeways in Victoria, 19,000 are in the regions.

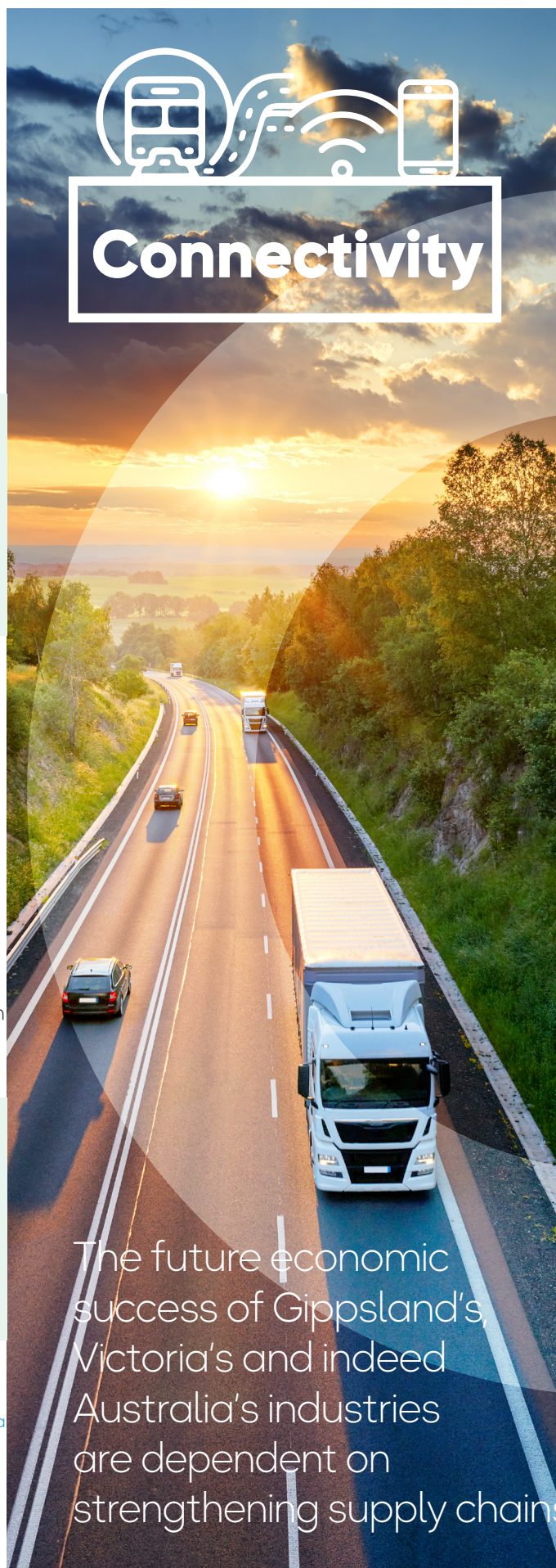
The Opportunity – Supporting Gippsland Freight Requirements

Gippsland's produce requires a freight network that can provide efficient access to **Port of Melbourne, Port of Hastings, Geelong and Melbourne Airport**. Gippsland's Food and Fibre producers have a goal of increasing their annual output but to achieve this, they must remain competitive when dealing in both domestic and international export markets.

Gippsland Food and Fibre:

- Has an annual gross value of **\$7 billion**,⁵
- Currently **exports \$1.3 billion** every year;⁶
- Has a goal to increase their gross value to **\$23.2 billion by 2040**;
- The region accounts for **4 per cent of total employment in Victoria** and 13 per cent of all people employed in the Victorian agriculture, forestry and fishing sector.⁷

2 Sheridan, JI, Carey, R. and Candy, S. (2016) Melbourne's Foodprint: What does it take to feed a city?
3 Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) data
4 Sheridan, JI, Carey, R. and Candy, S. (2016) Melbourne's Foodprint: What does it take to feed a city?
5 investgippsland.com.au/industries/agri-food/
6 Aither, 'Gippsland Regional Profile: an analysis of regional strengths and challenges March 2019'
7 awe.gov.au/abares/research-topics/aboutmyregion/vic-latrobe#employment



The future economic success of Gippsland's, Victoria's and indeed Australia's industries are dependent on strengthening supply chains

Investment is now required to support this key industry growth by moving more goods to market as efficiently as possible. **Investment must also include electric vehicle charging infrastructure when upgrading current freight routes and planning future freight routes.**

Challenges – The Impact of Growth

The movement of materials and produce through the region requires new investment to deal with the following challenges:

- 1. GROWING POPULATION:** Local Government Areas of Bass Coast and Baw Baw Shires are two of the state's fastest growing municipalities expected to grow by almost 30 per cent by 2036,⁸ and 55 per cent by 2041⁹ respectively;
- 2. SERVICING MELBOURNE'S BIG BUILD:** Gippsland is supplying materials for the state's infrastructure build. The region is expected to supply 24 million tonnes of extractive sand per annum by 2050 requiring almost 4000 truck movements per day (currently it is 600 truck movements per day); and
- 3. FOOD AND FIBRE GROWTH:** There is a target of 5 per cent growth per annum for food and fibre growth in the Gippsland region,¹⁰ which if achieved will also grow the freight task and the truck movements adding to the extractive movements.

Without intervention, the impact of these three growth areas means congestion and losses in efficiency and liveability are inevitable – planning and investment must start today to keep pace with these challenges.

Strategic Alignment

Improvements in Gippsland's freight networks have been identified as a strategic priority in the following documents:

- **GIPPSLAND REGIONAL PLAN** called for support towards road, rail and port improvements across Gippsland and beyond, particularly to markets and employment; and
- **INFRASTRUCTURE VICTORIA'S DRAFT 30-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY** found that:
 - Reliable, cost-effective freight networks are needed to support growth across Gippsland's agriculture, fishing, forestry, manufacturing, mining and energy industries;
 - Growing freight task and increasing size of heavy vehicles is increasing pressure on the region's road infrastructure, including the local road network; and
 - The freight network inefficiencies are constraining the growth potential of Gippsland producers.

The ability to meet the growing needs of our population, industry and supporting Melbourne's Big Build will require planning and investment into the freight network. The following projects have been identified to begin this task.



The movement of materials and produce through the region requires new investment.

⁸ forecastid.com.au/bass-coast/population-summary

⁹ forecastid.com.au/baw-baw

¹⁰ assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/au/pdf/2019/accelerating-growth-gippsland-food-fibre-industry.pdf



Regional Priority Projects - Shovel Ready



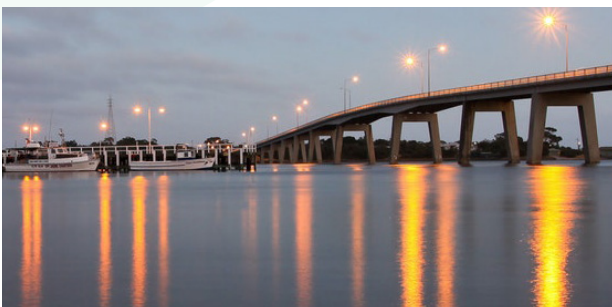
San Remo Road Infrastructure Improvements - \$23 million

Road transport infrastructure improvements are required in the San Remo township at the Back Beach Road intersection. These works will address the lack of capacity during key peak periods that significantly impact on visitor experience and business operations.

It will also address the inadequate access along the corridor which leads to unsatisfactory travel delays for visitors and residents.

The current design of Phillip Island Road cannot cope with the congestion during the busy periods and growing traffic demand has led to a high number of crashes. Works will include the following:

- Construction of traffic signals at Phillip Island Road and Back Beach Road – Marine Parade intersection;
- Intersection improvements to the nearby Phillip Island Road and Bergin Grove intersection;
- Place-making infrastructure improvements along the San Remo foreshore;
- Stability improvement works on the Western Port Bay embankment to protect the transport corridor of Phillip Island;
- Active transport improvements by linking existing facilities to the San Remo Commercial Precinct and the San Remo foreshore; and
- Public transport improvements with the introduction of new bus stop facilities.



Sale Alternate Truck Route - \$100 million

This alternate route provides a faster and more economic route for vehicles travelling between Melbourne and East Gippsland, as it is the shorter route, and avoids traffic delays and intersections through Sale.

The bypass provides access for both local and interstate traffic including agriculture, dairy, timber, vegetable production, resources, manufacturing, light industry and tourism.

The bypass however cannot account for large heavy vehicles such as b-doubles and Over Size Over Mass (OSOM) vehicles. This is due to the alternative route having two load limited bridges which can only support vehicles up to the size of a semi-trailer.

The alternative route does not presently meet minimum road design requirements for modern high productivity vehicles. Works will include the following:

- Upgrades to the interconnecting roads of Myrtlebank Road, Myrtlebank-Fulham Road and Sale-Heyfield Road.



Gippsland Logistics Precinct: - \$10 million

This precinct will facilitate long-term infrastructure development, create job opportunities at the site and create a new centre for freight that will act as a catalyst for the attraction of new industries to the region.

It will also contribute to maximise efficiency and assist in reducing freight and transport costs.

- The Victorian State Government provided a grant of \$5 million in 2018 to assist in the site activation (Stage 1)
- The Federal Government will be providing funding for internal road and utility infrastructure and flood mitigation earthworks (stage 2).

Stage 3: comprises of:

- A new Gippsland Intermodal Freight Terminal;
- New Signalling;
- Upgrade of the rail siding.



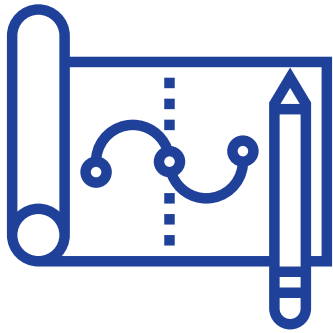


South Gippsland Highway Realignment – Korumburra – Coal Creek Bends – \$100 million

The South Gippsland Highway is the main arterial road through Gippsland's south. It connects Gippsland's major agriculture and food production industry to domestic and international markets and connects tourists to the illustrious attractions of the region such as the Wilsons Promontory National Park.

This project involves a road realignment to remove a series of bends on the South Gippsland Highway south of Korumburra to reduce congestion, improve critical safety issues, decrease freight transport costs and improve freight efficiency routes.

- Funding required for planning and design of intersection improvement, road widening, sections of road realignment, signage and delineation improvements and construction of a service lane and vehicle rest stop.



Regional Priority Projects – Planning Stage



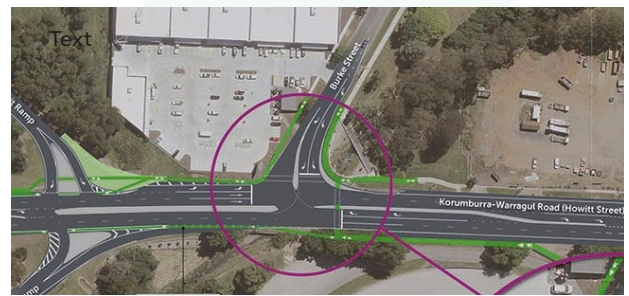
Drouin and Warragul Arterial Road Network Planning – \$3 million

It is expected that the development of the proposed Warragul and Drouin Bypass will address the historical road network challenges that see major arterial roads and agricultural routes run through the centre of both Warragul and Drouin's CBD area.

These challenges result in traffic congestion at peak times, inefficient agricultural routes, and limited private commercial investment in town centres, with many retail premises being vacant and prime commercial land remaining undeveloped.

The bypass would better connect the Gippsland region to intra/interstate and international markets. It will also cater for the efficient transport of goods from Gippsland's \$2.2 billion agriculture industry from north and north-eastern areas of Baw Baw Shire to key hubs across the region.

- Funding required for a business case to identify solutions to reduce congestion through the townships of Drouin and Warragul, including heavy vehicle routes, improved freight connectivity and to identify the social and economic benefits.



Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternate Route Stage 2 – \$2 million

Leongatha is one of South Gippsland's major industrial, government, medical, retail and service centres that currently contributes \$1.2 billion to the regional economy.

This hub has had significant traffic congestion and safety issues caused by the South Gippsland Highway cutting through the centre of the town. Stage 1 was completed in 2016 and has diverted heavy vehicle traffic out of the main centre of town.

- Funding required for planning and design to complete the main town centre bypass and reduce congestion by improving freight and visitor movements, while also resolving vehicle safety and accessibility issues.



Strzelecki Highway – Crightons Hill Realignment – \$500,000

The Strzelecki Highway connects South Gippsland Shire with the Latrobe Valley and this section of the highway connects Leongatha, the Shire's largest town, with Mirboo North, the third largest town. It is part of a critical link to the Latrobe Valley for industry and residents accessing Government and Health Services.

South Gippsland and Bass Coast coastal areas are very popular with residents of the Latrobe Valley and are a major market for tourism businesses across the district.

The section at Crightons Hill is steep and particularly tight with a number of fatal accidents occurring on this section of road. To reduce accidents, some road widening has been undertaken, wire rope barriers installed, and speed restrictions introduced but these are only temporary treatments.

- Funding required for planning and design for a realignment of the Strzelecki Highway at a location known as Crightons Hill, Leongatha North.

South Gippsland Highway – Grassy Spur Alignment – \$2 million

The South Gippsland Highway is the main arterial route through South Gippsland Shire and part of the Sydney to Melbourne Touring Route. Works on this section of road about 15 years ago removed some bends but others remain.

These routes are electronically sign posted and speed restricted. With improvements to the highway at other locations, this area will become the most difficult section of the highway and limit further economic expansion.

This section of road is a key connector to the southern districts of South Gippsland Shire including Wilsons Promontory National Park, Corner Inlet, and towns such as Foster and Toora.

Dairy tankers service this area heavily and the town of Foster is the regional commercial centre which includes a Hospital, Secondary College and Government Agencies.

- Funding required for planning and design for the realignment of the South Gippsland Highway between the towns of Stony Creek and Foster at an area known as Grassy Spur.

Duplication of the Mitchell River Bridge – \$1 million

The Mitchell River Bridge is the principal access across the Mitchell River in Bairnsdale. This bridge is ageing and will require extensive work in the future to ensure continued safety for road users, planning funding is required to map the investment required to solve this issue.

The section of road from the Mitchell River Bridge to the Princess Hwy and Great Alpine Road roundabout also needs to be redesigned and realigned as it is unsuited to the current volumes of traffic and acts as a significant bottleneck during peak tourism seasons, slowing freight times and increasing driver frustration.

Duplication of the bridge and realignment of these sections of road would alleviate heavy congestion during peak tourist times and also during times of natural disaster or emergencies.

- Funding required for planning and design for the duplication and solutions to cope with current traffic volumes.

Development of ports at Barry Beach

The South Gippsland ports Barry Beach Marine Terminal and Port Anthony have historically played a critical role in the Bass Strait oil and gas development and are the only ports located in under 10 hours sailing time from the new Offshore Renewable Energy Zone.

The ports are surrounded by a large area of Industrial 1 zoned land and strategically positioned to play a crucial role in the development of a new renewable energy industry in Gippsland.

The development of the ports will create a platform of economic development opportunities for the region including local career pathways that support the transition to renewable energy, boosting investment and attracting new industries, offering new import/export opportunities and alternate freight routes.



Rail - improving reliability, speed and accessibility

Issues with reliability, speed and accessibility are impacting the Gippsland Rail Line, which is evidenced by the following:

1. Commuter travel: currently only 1% of people are travelling to work via train, despite 17% of the Gippsland population working outside the region; and
2. Freight: freight trains currently compete for access with passenger services impacting reliability, accessibility and efficiency of freight services.

Demand for rail travel has been accelerated by COVID-19 which has seen a mass exodus of metro residents moving to regional Australia.

Improving both public transport access and freight networks is a critical economic enabler to facilitate sustainable growth in the Gippsland region.

RISING COMMUTER DEMAND

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) suggests that the region's population is growing at an annual rate of 1.4% from 2015 to 2020. (ABS)

The ABS Census data (2016) also indicated that 85% of people journeyed to work by car, and only 1% travelled by train.

An estimated 17% of people work outside of the region, with a high degree of labour mobility between Melbourne and Gippsland. (Infrastructure Victoria, 2019). This figure was higher in the Baw Baw shire with over 20% of workers traveling outside of the region for employment.

FREIGHT BLOCKAGES

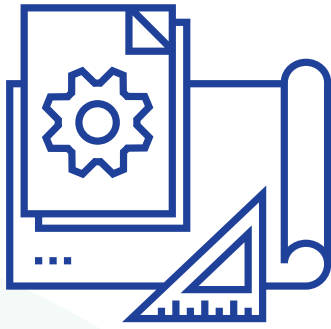
Freight train services on the Gippsland Line are in high demand including steel trains to the Port of Hastings, cement trains to Dandenong, bulk mineral sands, Maryvale paper manufacturing and the development of a waste to energy manufacturing plant which is expected to bring 300,000 tonnes of waste per annum from Melbourne.

Passenger trains are given priority on the network therefore freight train operations are limited or delayed because of this competition for access.

Currently, there is no holding or stopping point for freight trains approaching metro Melbourne at Pakenham East which further exacerbates delays and reliability issues, as well as impacting passenger services.



Improving rail networks is a critical economic enabler to facilitate sustainable growth in the Gippsland region.



Regional Recommendations

■ Tranche 1 (1-5 years)

1. Complete current works under the Regional Rail Revival Program;
2. Provide a full VLocity service to Gippsland;
3. Enhance the frequency of daily commuter services on the Gippsland Line;

■ Tranche 2 (5 -10 years)

1. Provide additional peak and off-peak services including provision of new rolling stock and stabling;
2. Duplicate tracks and bridges between Bunyip and Longwarry to enable more reliable service provision;
3. Progressively upgrade the track between Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale;
4. Develop a freight passing loop at Sale or Warruk;
5. Progressively upgrade the northern tracks to improve travel times and extend track duplication to Morwell.

Tourism Recovery: Tracks and Trails and Events

It is time that Gippsland's rich landscape, culture and history are amplified to set our region on a path to economic recovery. In fact it has been said that Gippsland's natural beauty, outstanding experiences and life changing moments have inspired the world to visit – in a post pandemic world the world just needs an invitation. Prior to COVID-19 this invitation was worth \$1.1 billion to the regional economy every year. It is the position of One Gippsland that the economy of tourism must go beyond traditional boundaries. Now is the time to enable local Indigenous groups to determine and appropriately yield benefit from their arts, culture and environment, while ensuring more sustainable cultural benefits and create a valuable employment base.

Challenges – The Economic Impacts of Disaster and Crisis

Although tourism in the Gippsland region was negatively impacted by bushfires and floods, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions caused dire impacts on the sector with major events and tourism attractions having to shut down. Due to the heavy reliance on Melbourne, interstate and international tourism that has been restricted during the pandemic, the Gippsland region saw a huge drop in visitation. The impact of these events have been:

- A **24% decline in visitation rates to 5.5 million per year** (7.2 million in 2019);
- The \$275 million per annum international market has significantly **decreased to almost zero**; and
- An almost **30% decline in employment** to just over 10,000 jobs (15,500 in 2019).

This year saw a number of flagship **major events cancelled** in the region. They include:

- Moto GP – \$30 million;
- Australian Table Tennis Championship Latrobe – \$4 million;
- Australian Surf Life Saving Championship – \$2 million; and
- 50 community/regional events cancelled.

The Opportunity and Invitation

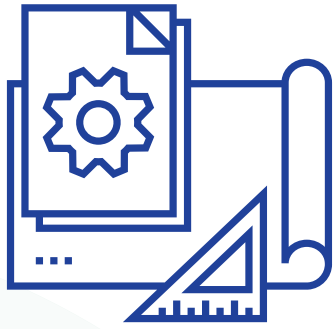
Gippsland has a diverse range of quality built and natural assets suitable for activation and events. The impact of lockdown and closed borders is expected to deliver an appetite for adventure both domestically and internationally.

One Gippsland understands there will be fierce competition for the visitation dollar but is optimistic that with strategic planning and investment, the sector can recover and as such, has set the following goals:

- To achieve **9 million visitor nights**; and
- **To increase visitor expenditure to \$1.3 billion** by 2024.



It is time that our region's rich landscape, culture and history are amplified to set our region on a path to economic recovery.



Regional Priority Projects

The following projects have been identified as **regional priority projects** to meet the opportunities and challenges for growth as outlined above.



Gippsland Events Strategy Stage 2 - \$7 million

To enable the tourism sector's road to recovery, an invitation to visit should be set through the **Gippsland Events Strategy** that will require an investment of \$6 million to acquire events to fill the calendar and utilise venues over the next three years – the funding will be allocated as follows:

- \$4 million for event acquisition
- \$1 million for marketing
- \$1 million for Commonwealth Games Planning



Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail - \$12 million

The Gippsland Lakes is inland from the 90-mile beach. The trails will combine a mix of walking, riding and paddling with cultural experiences in partnership with the Gunai Kurnai people on their country.

Works include:

- Kalimna-Nyerimilang trail and footbridge;
- Sperm Whale Head trails;
- Red Bluff Trail Link;
- Bunga Arm Trails;
- Kayak launch facilities;
- Feasibility study for overnight nodes of Kalimna-Nyerimilang trail and Sperm Whale Head trail;
- Overnight nodes at Rotamah trail;
- Overnight nodes at Nyerimilang trail;
- Latrobe River trails upgrade;
- Latrobe River jetties / boat launches;
- Cameron Arm campsite upgrade;
- GLAT Gateway at Forestec (\$200K for design manual and trail audit);
- Signage & wayfinding gap analysis; and
- Pre-trip information gap analysis & collateral.



Bass Coast Dinosaur Trail Stage 1 - \$20 million

The Bass Coast is one of the few places on earth where polar dinosaur fossils can be found. This leading tourism experience will entice local, interstate, national and international visitors and encourage extended visitation within the region.

The Trail will educate residents and visitors about the embedded value and diversity found within fossils and pre-historic fauna in the region.

Works include:

- Traverse 40kms from San Remo to Inverloch, featuring six creative art sites that link polar dinosaur fossils;
- Museum/cultural centre to be developed in Inverloch; and
- Sound and light installation (alongside museum/cultural centre) linking science, Aboriginal cultural history and the environment.



Gippsland Odyssey Trail - \$7.9 million

The \$7.9 million Gippsland 'Odyssey' Trail project is to be recognised nationally and internationally as a must do long distance multi-use trail showcasing the best of Gippsland while activating towns and communities.

It will do so by linking the entire existing rail trail corridors throughout Gippsland and taking advantage of the diverse landscape, our iconic lakes and beaches, lush valleys and ranges.

Whilst predominantly off road, the trail will also make use of roads less travelled and at times the rail network to link visitors from North to South and West to East, making the whole of Gippsland accessible by bike and funnelling visitors into villages and towns along it's route.

High priority sections are:

- East Gippsland Discovery Trail/leg to Lakes Entrance: \$3 million;
- Bass Coast Rail Trail/Inverloch to Wonthaggi: \$3 million;
- Rokeby-Noojee Trail extension: \$2 million.



**Phillip Island Nature Parks
Masterplan Penguin Parade
Viewing and Summerlands
Peninsula Trails - \$33.7 million**

This project would upgrade the iconic Penguin Parade viewing standards and boardwalks and create 18km network of immersive trails and viewing platforms, linking the Penguin Parade to the Nobbies.

Works include:

Part 1: Penguin Parade Upgrades (\$16.3 million):

Works to the ageing infrastructure at the Penguin Parade to ensure it remains the leading paid ecotourism attraction in Victoria and upgrades to infrastructure to ensure it is no longer at risk of non-compliance.

Part 2: Summerland Peninsula Trails Master Plan (\$17.4 million)

The creation of 18 kilometres of world class, accessible trails including bridges, lookouts and road crossings, linking the iconic Penguin Parade to the Nobbies through some of the most spectacular views and landscapes in Victoria.



**Nanjet Gunaikurnai Cultural
Tourism Project Yanakie SGSC/
Wilsons Promontory Stage 1
- 55 million**

In 2021 GLaWAC purchased a 103ha property located adjacent to the entry to Wilsons Promontory National Park. The property also adjoins the western edge of the Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park that is RAMSAR listed.

The former property owner undertook significant rehabilitation of the lower section of the property adjoining this wetland area to improve the habitat and attract wildlife and received approval for an extensive tourism development on the site - to exploit a longstanding shortage of visitor accommodation in the Wilsons Prom area.

After extended stakeholder consultation since the land purchase, GLaWAC is currently completing a business case for a phased development of Victoria's largest Aboriginal cultural tourism visitor experience.

This vision is currently being converted to a detailed plan in a business case which is well advanced and features:

1. Gunaikurnai mob camping with facilities to support caring for country initiatives to revitalise the natural appeal of the site
2. Interpretive and educational cultural experiences for visitors
3. Gunaikurnai inspired guest accommodation.



These projects have been identified as regional priority projects to meet the opportunities and challenges for growth.

Digital Connectivity: Mobile and Broadband Networks

In 2019, a **Gippsland Digital Plan** was developed to articulate the region's current gaps in digital infrastructure and where future demands may lie.

The development of the plan was a collaborative process that sought the views of the regional leaders, the business sector, community groups and local government. Market experts were also engaged and existing strategies and technical papers were reviewed to formulate the plan.

Gippsland's Shortfall in numbers:

The findings of the consultation revealed the key regional digital connectivity issues:

- **Place-based Mobile Blackspots:** 496 registered mobile blackspots throughout the region;
- **Place-based Fixed Line Broadband:** 72% of the regions cities and towns identified an "intermediate" supply shortfall in access to fixed line broadband;
- **Tourism Fixed Line Broadband:** 68% of key tourism locations identified a "major" supply shortfall and 32% have an "intermediate" supply in access to fixed line broadband;
- **Tourism Mobile:** 12% of key tourism locations identified had "major" supply shortfall and 24% had an "intermediate" supply shortfall for mobile coverage;
- **Agriculture Fixed line Broadband:** 100% have a "major" supply shortfall in fixed access broadband services for business users across the five key primary production regions;
- **Agriculture LP-WAN:** 60% have an "intermediate" supply shortfall for LP-WAN IoT supported services were identified across the five key primary production regions;
- **Freight Mobile:** Two class A roads and two key class B roads had "major" supply shortfalls mobile coverage; and
- **Road Mobile:** all 113 C classified roads within the region had "major" supply shortfalls in mobile coverage.

Further to the lack of access to this integral enabling infrastructure, this plan further revealed that **digital skills shortages are a persistent issue across Gippsland**, both in terms of basic digital literacy as well as specialist technical skills to support business growth and competitiveness across the region.



Regionally Specific Digital Challenges:

MOBILE BLACKSPOTS/MOBILE NETWORK OPERATOR (MNO) MOBILE COVERAGE MAPS

The region's city and towns (as well as significant road and rail routes within Gippsland) are categorised as having good mobile coverage according to publicly available mobile network operator (MNO) coverage maps.

However, consistent community feedback and anecdotal evidence suggests that coverage quality is significantly less than what is stipulated in these maps. **Investment in improving the accuracy of MNO maps and the obligation of reasonable standards of service** being delivered to lowly populated areas should be a priority.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Telecommunications must be recognised as an essential service and providers should be required to meet service continuity standards. This is required to prevent significant, prolonged and widespread outages during natural disasters.

Connectivity capabilities in rural areas within Gippsland are unsatisfactory, prohibiting the attractiveness of these areas to tourists and also creating unsafe emergency situations. This was extremely evident during the Black Summer Fires. With natural disasters prone to occurring in the Gippsland region, it is vital that infrastructure **have at least 48 hours of auxiliary back-up power to avoid outages during this time.**

During the Black Summer fires, Council officers were reminded that telecommunication is a commercial service, not an essential service, and as a result the necessary preparatory measures such as prepositioning of generators was not undertaken. This issue needs to be considered in the context of the use of digital communication by emergency services as a primary means to get information to communities about the fires.

Telecommunications need to be regarded as an essential service and providers need to put in place arrangements to ensure resilience to certain standards.

FIXED LINE BROADBAND:

Fixed line broadband has two key issues in Gippsland:

Access: This disparity outlined above between connectivity in metropolitan and regional areas is **also present between regional hubs and the smaller rural and remote towns** that surround them. As users move from higher density regional town centres to more remote areas, there is not only a reduction in the availability and quality of digital coverage, but also in the number of network providers who offer services.

Affordability: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) also shows that **affordability remains a key challenge and has almost certainly been exacerbated by**

the COVID-19 economic slowdown. The ADII shows that the proportion of household income spent on internet access by those living in the lowest household income quintile has increased every year since 2014 and underpinning this is a widening gap in affordability between Q5 low-income and Q1 high-income households. **Three of the six LGAs in the Gippsland Region are Q4 low-income.**

BUSINESS SUPPORT

One Gippsland notes that the NBN Business Fibre Zones program (that includes the towns of Morwell, Cowes, Sale and Wonthaggi) seeks to address the availability and affordability of adequate business-grade services across all NBN technology types. **It is recommended that this program is expanded to include all major regional centres in Gippsland.**

TOURISM

In 2019, Gippsland visitor expenditure reached \$1.3 billion and had 3,000 small tourism businesses employing over 13,000 people. This is a key industry for Gippsland, and fostering its continued growth is essential for building the region's economy.

Tourism in Gippsland has also been identified as having low digital connections. Some of the locations that were identified as having major shortfalls in supply are internationally acclaimed attractions such as the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix and Phillip Island Penguin Parade.

It is important that mobile roaming is available in remote locations for international visitors as currently this is not the case. Likewise, **poor in-carriage reception is experienced on trains operating east of Traralgon**, both in peak and non-peak times. Free passenger Wi-Fi on public transport would add to the liveability and visitor satisfaction within Gippsland.

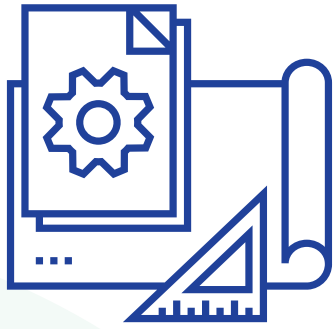
FOOD AND FIBRE

An analysis of digital intensity requirements reveals that food and fibre will rely heavily on digital services over the next 3-5 years to be able to retain competitiveness in the Australian and international market.¹¹ Of the 5 key primary production regions in Gippsland analysed:

- **100% have a major supply shortfall** in fixed access broadband services for business users; and
- **60% have an intermediate** supply shortfall for LP-WAN IoT supported services.

For these reasons, One Gippsland is calling for Gippsland to be prioritised in the next rounds of the *Mobile Blackspot Program*, the *Regional Connectivity Program* and the *Connecting Victoria Program*.

¹¹ McKinsey Digital – Digital Australia: Seizing the opportunity from the Fourth Industrial Revolution; OECD – A taxonomy of digital intensive sectors



Regional Recommendations

Mobile Black Spots:

- Prioritise Gippsland in the rollout of the Regional Connectivity Program and the On Farm Connectivity.

Business Grade NBN:

- Expand the Business Fibre Zone Program to include all major regional centres in Gippsland.

Mobile Connectivity: Rail:

- Enhancements for mobile services on V/Line trains east of Traralgon to Bairnsdale.



Health and Wellbeing: Meeting the varied needs of the Region

The population of the Gippsland region has grown to nearly 300,000 people impacting the demand for health services and associated infrastructure in the region.

The priorities outlined below have been nominated by One Gippsland to ensure the region can meet the health needs of residents into the future.

Challenges

The region's size and population structure require the delivery and location of health and aged care services across the region – there are a range of indicators that identify the need for investment into our region:

- A large share of Gippsland residents (40%) live in towns and settlements of less than 1000 people meaning geographical scope of services needs to be considered;
- There are higher numbers of avoidable deaths in the region, particularly from diseases like cancer which a 35.4 per 100,000 population outcome compared to 28.3 across Victoria;
- Gippsland has a higher-than-average rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations, there are 3010 per 100,000 compared to 2697 for Victoria;
- General practices in Gippsland experienced an increase in respiratory presentations as a result of poor air quality caused by the bushfires (January-March 2020); and
- The region has an ageing population with almost 25% of people aged 65 years or older living in Gippsland compared to 17% in the rest of Victoria.

The Opportunity

With funding support Gippsland can continue to build a more comprehensive and quality health and aged care services.

One Gippsland sees investment in the region's health infrastructure as vital to meet the needs of regions rapidly growing and geographically spread communities.



Priorities for health services need to ensure the region can meet the health and wellbeing needs of residents into the future.



Regional Priority Projects - Shovel Ready

The priorities identified by One Gippsland included four key shovel ready projects:

- West Gippsland Hospital: investment for a complete rebuild on a new greenfield site;
- Wonthaggi Hospital Extension: investment for stages 2 and 3 of the current development;
- Ageing in Place: investment to upgrade to Maffra, Heyfield and Yarram Hospitals;
- Additional bushfire recover programs through the extension.

Planning Support

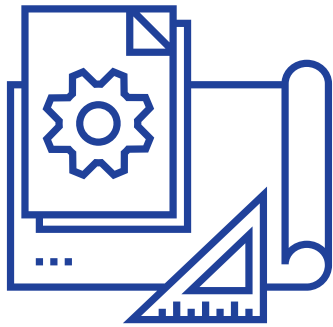
One Gippsland also acknowledges the importance of the following areas of investment which require planning support:

- Increase the availability of a skilled and job ready workforce in partnership with education providers in the region;
- Increase investment into mental health and family violence services and infrastructure across the region; and
- Support community members to continue to age in place (rather than in residential aged care).

The region has an ageing population with almost 25% of people aged 65 years or older living in Gippsland compared to 17% in the rest of Victoria.



Education: Building the Skills for the future



Regional Priority Projects

Manufacturing and skills development are both prominent sectors within the Gippsland region and a fundamental driver of its economy. One Gippsland have identified projects that are ready to go and seek government funding to implement.



New Energy Centre at Morwell - \$3 million

The first stage of a Centre for New Energy has been committed by the Victorian Government (\$5 million) which was a key recommendation from the New Energy Skills Mapping Report commissioned by the Latrobe Valley Authority and undertaken by Federation University and TAFE Gippsland.

With the establishment of the SEC and Gippsland at the epicenter of the energy transition it is critical that enabling facilities and infrastructure are available to provide the skills and training critical to meet workforce requirements.

A proposed new Centre would build on the Innovation Centre capabilities and sector areas of focus including food and fibre.

A new Energy Education Centre would support lifelong learning and transition through world leading laboratories and teaching spaces, pathways between secondary school, VET and higher education all co-located in the same precinct and industry partnerships to allow for student placement and on-the-job skills based learning.



With surging demand for VET education and training in our region, world class, purpose built facilities are needed locally to meet this demand.

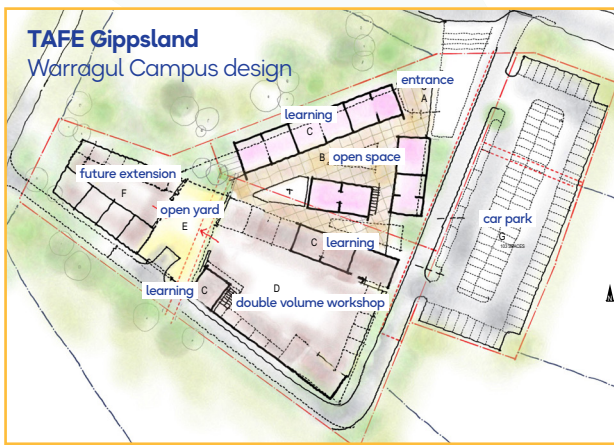


Baw Baw Skills Demand Response - \$41.5 million

Melbourne's outer metropolitan growth corridor, served by TAFE Gippsland's Warragul campus, is experiencing population growth amongst the highest in the country.

TAFE Gippsland is the only TAFE facility in this region. Five of the top ten fields of education sought locally, including booming construction trades, are not offered by TAFE Gippsland in the catchment.

This investment will see the purchase of land and building of world class purpose built facilities to meet the surging demand for VET education and training in the region.

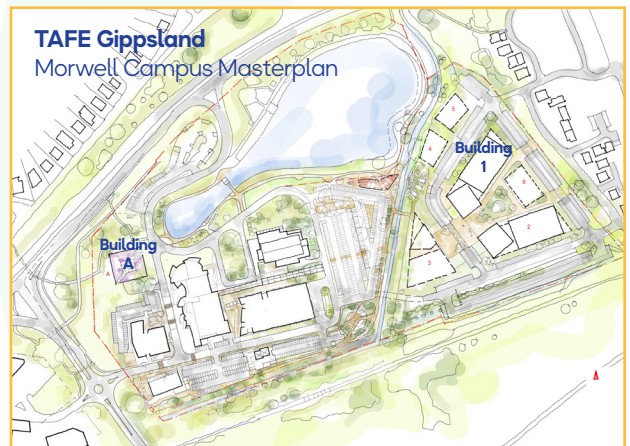


Morwell Trade Skills Uplift - Stage 2 - \$61.4 million

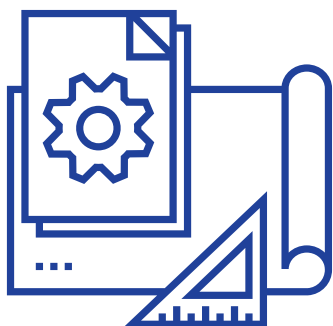
Communities in the Latrobe Valley need VET training, but the remote location of TAFE Gippsland's Yallourn campus and its need for car access due to lack of public transport stops disadvantaged young people enrolling.

This investment will see further building expansion at TAFE Gippsland's Morwell campus enabling the relocation and expansion of construction industry training offerings and key corporate functions from the Yallourn, and provide students with a contemporary training environment which keeps up with the construction industry's evolving technologies.

It will also incorporate a hospitality training facility upgrade and new higher education teaching spaces. It represents a further stage of TAFE Gippsland's progressively exit from the aging, not fit-for-purpose and access challenged Yallourn campus.



Food and Fibre: Capitalising on the Region's strengths



Regional Priority Projects



C-Loop Cornerstone Advanced Circular Economy Farm & Refinery - \$35 million

The C-Loop Toongabbie Cornerstone Farm is a commercial project currently seeking investment for the constructions of an advanced biogas refinery and power generation infrastructure on an established, large-scale broiler chicken farm.

The project comprises of a biogas digester that will utilise up to 35,000 tons of chicken manure and food waste to generate a 30k MWh of renewable energy alongside 95k GJ of renewable heat.

These heat and energy resources will provide a local, behind-the-meter energy source; large-scale carbon abatement and credit generation; and the utilisation of generated energy and heat in an onsite microalgae production facility that will grow up to 700 tons p/a of high-value, food and pharmaceutical-grade microalgae (ie, spirulina).

Currently in permitting stage with the EPA, Council and other regulators, this project would be an exemplar for sustainable, advanced, closed-loop farming.



Regional Food Production Export Readiness Program - \$0.69 million

Gippsland's high quality primary and value-added produce continues to be in high demand both locally and abroad, however, supports to assist local producers and SMEs in becoming export-ready are scarce.

For many years, FFG has successfully delivered both state and federally-supported programs that have upskilled producers; generated local branding; and created the required connections to allow businesses to commence exporting. Currently, FFG holds a vast array of resources for food and fibre businesses to engage with export, however all funding programs have ceased. \$690,000 is sought to deliver a 2-year program which will provide a dedicated export development officer; run buyer engagement sessions with local and international buyer groups; run capacity building workshops; and assist with strategic communications.



Gippsland Trusted Provenance Traceability and Regional Marketing Platform - \$0.75 million

Gippsland's \$7 billion food and fibre industry provides world-class produce to local, national and international markets. Currently, the industry faces considerable threats to market access stemming from changes to the regulatory environment; market-mandated ESG credentialling; and shifting consumer profiles. In order to remain competitive, compliant, and to continue to showcase our region's offerings, producers and businesses require tools to assist them in demonstrating their products' carbon, ESG and social credentials.

FFG is requesting \$750,000 in state funding to build a Gippsland Trusted Provenance Traceability and Regional Marketing Platform that will allow compliance goals to be exceeded, whilst adding a potential \$1 billion in extra GRP to the industry through improved market access.

The platform will integrate with existing systems; draw from best-practice regulatory frames locally and overseas; provide real-time product traceability capability; and offer a marketplace that will facilitate wholesale marketing opportunities.



Food and Fibre



Further building and strengthening Gippsland's brand will make it a destination on the map of Australia.

Freight – Summary of Regional Priority Projects



SHOVEL READY

Project	LGA	Cost
San Remo Road Infrastructure Improvements	Bass Coast Shire Council	\$23 million
Sale Alternate Truck Route	Wellington Shire Council	\$100 million
South Gippsland Highway Realignment – Coal Creek Bends	South Gippsland Shire Council	\$100 million
Gippsland Logistics Precinct	Latrobe City Council	\$10 million



PLANNING READY

Project	LGA	Cost
Drouin and Warragul Arterial Road Network Planning	Baw Baw Shire Council	\$3 million
Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternate Route Stage 2	South Gippsland Shire Council	\$2 million
Strzelecki Highway – Crightons Hill Realignment	South Gippsland Shire Council	\$0.5 million
South Gippsland Highway – Grassy Spur Alignment	South Gippsland Shire Council	\$2 million
Duplication of the Mitchell River Bridge	East Gippsland Shire Council	\$1 million
Development of ports at Barry Beach	South Gippsland Shire Council	

Rail – Summary of Recommendations

TRANCHE	RECOMMENDATION
One: 1 to 5 years	Complete current works under the Regional Rail Revival Program, provide a full VLocity service to Gippsland, enhance the frequency of daily commuter services on the Gippsland Line.
Two: 5 to 10 years	Provide additional peak and off-peak services including new rolling stock and stabling, duplicate tracks and bridges between Bunyip and Longwarry, progressively upgrade the track between Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale, develop a freight passing loop at Sale or Warruk, upgrade the northern tracks to improve travel times and extend track duplication to Morwell.

Tourism – Summary of Regional Priority Projects



SHOVEL READY

Project	LGA	Cost
Gippsland Events Strategy	All One Gippsland LGAs	\$7 million
Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail	East Gippsland Shire Council	\$12 million
Bass Coast Dinosaur Trail Stage 1	Bass Coast Shire Council	\$20 million
Gippsland Odyssey Trail	All One Gippsland LGAs excluding Latrobe City	\$7.9 million
Phillip Island Nature Parks Masterplan Penguin Parade Viewing and Summerlands Peninsula Trails	Bass Coast	\$33.7 million
Nanjet Gunaikurnai Cultural Tourism Project Yanakie SGSC/Wilsons Promontory Stage 1	South Gippsland Shire Council	\$55 million

Digital Connectivity – Summary of Recommendations

ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
Mobile Black Spots	Prioritise Gippsland in the rollout of the Regional Connectivity Program and the On Farm Connectivity Program
Business-Grade NBN	Expand the <i>Business Fibre Zone Program</i> to include Gippsland's major regional centres.
Mobile Connectivity: Rail	Enhancements for mobile services on V/Line trains east of Traralgon to Bairnsdale.

Health – Summary of Regional Priorities Projects



SHOVEL READY

Project

West Gippsland Hospital: investment for a complete rebuild on a new greenfield site.

Wonthaggi Hospital Extension: investment for stages 2 and 3 of the current development.

Ageing in Place: investment to upgrade to Maffra, Heyfield and Yarram hospitals.

Additional Bushfire Recovery programs through the extension of wellbeing and mental health support.

Education – Summary of Regional Priorities Projects



PROJECT READY

Project	Project Lead	Cost
New Energy Centre at Morwell	Federation university and TAFE Gippsland	\$3 million
Baw Baw Skills Demand Response	TAFE Gippsland	\$41.5 million
Morwell Trade Skills Uplift – Stage 2	TAFE Gippsland	\$61.4 million

Food and Fibre – Summary of Regional Priorities Projects



PROJECT READY

Project	Cost
C-Loop Cornerstone Advanced Circular Economy Farm & Refinery	\$35 million
Regional Food Production Export Readiness Program	\$0.69 million
Gippsland Trusted Provenance Traceability and Regional Marketing Platform	\$0.75 million

One Gippsland Board

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Cr Mark Reeves
Mayor, East Gippsland
Shire Council



Deputy Chair
Cr Nathan Hersey
Mayor, South Gippsland
Shire Council



Cr Michael Whelan
Mayor, Bass Coast Shire Council



Cr Ian Bye
Mayor, Wellington Shire Council



Cr Annemarie McCabe
Mayor, Baw Baw Shire Council



Cr Kellie O'Callaghan
Mayor, Latrobe City Council



Anthony Basford
CEO, East Gippsland Shire Council



Kerry Ellis
CEO, South Gippsland
Shire Council



Greg Box
Acting CEO Bass Coast Shire Council



David Morcom
CEO, Wellington Shire Council



Mr Mark Dupe
CEO, Baw Baw Shire Council



Steven Piasente
CEO, Latrobe City Council

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Industry Sector Members



Mr Daniel Miller

CEO, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters
Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)



Ms Jan Fitzgerald

Chair Destination Gippsland



Mr Terry Robinson

CEO, Destination Gippsland



**Professor Andrew
O'Loughlin**

Head of Gippsland Campus,
Federation University



Mr Barry Rogers

Chair, Foods & Fibre Gippsland



Mr Paul Buckley PSM

Chair TAFE Gippsland



Ms Laura Macpherson

CEO, TAFE Gippsland

2023 Policy Priorities



Further Information

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