



# **DISTRICT COUNCIL OF LOXTON WAIKERIE**



Economic Development Report and Project Plan

**2019-2023**

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# Introduction



The purpose of this report and action plan is to guide the District Council of Loxton Waikerie (DCLW) in economic development activities, encouraging strategically focussed actions-based investment. It provides context for the councils current economic environment, including demographics, industries, and other stakeholders. The report emphasises the obligation local government has in providing economic development initiatives, and the need to consider a targeted approach to deliver best value outcomes for the district. An action plan has been included to provide practical and achievable opportunities for council to assist in economic development in key industries of agriculture, tourism and main street precincts.

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# **DISTRICT COUNCIL OF LOXTON WAIKERIE OVERVIEW**

# District Council of Loxton Waikerie Overview



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Recent census data<sup>1</sup> (2016) shows that there has been a slight population increase in the DCLW region since 2011 to 11 730, at a time when many regional areas are facing population decline. The most growth has been seen in the empty nesters, retiree and seniors demographic (ages 60-84). With an aging population, retaining and growing the appeal for this demographic will be valuable for council over the next five years, as the youngest of the baby boomers reach this age group and their downsizing/relocation phase continues.

The largest declining demographic has been parents and home-builders (ages 35-49), with around 50 people in this age range leaving each year - many with children. Children of secondary school age made up the largest youth population decline in the region. The decrease in families is an indication that some families are seeking opportunities and lifestyles not available to them within the DCLW area. The family demographic can have a more significant impact than other demographics, given the domino effect on future generations. In addition, growing families are significant local economic contributors (e.g. changing vehicle and housing needs, schooling, sport, hobbies and entertainment).

As this trend continues, it will be critical for DCLW to support initiatives and industries which attract new, young families to the district. Understanding the motivations for families considering leaving DCLW will also be important.

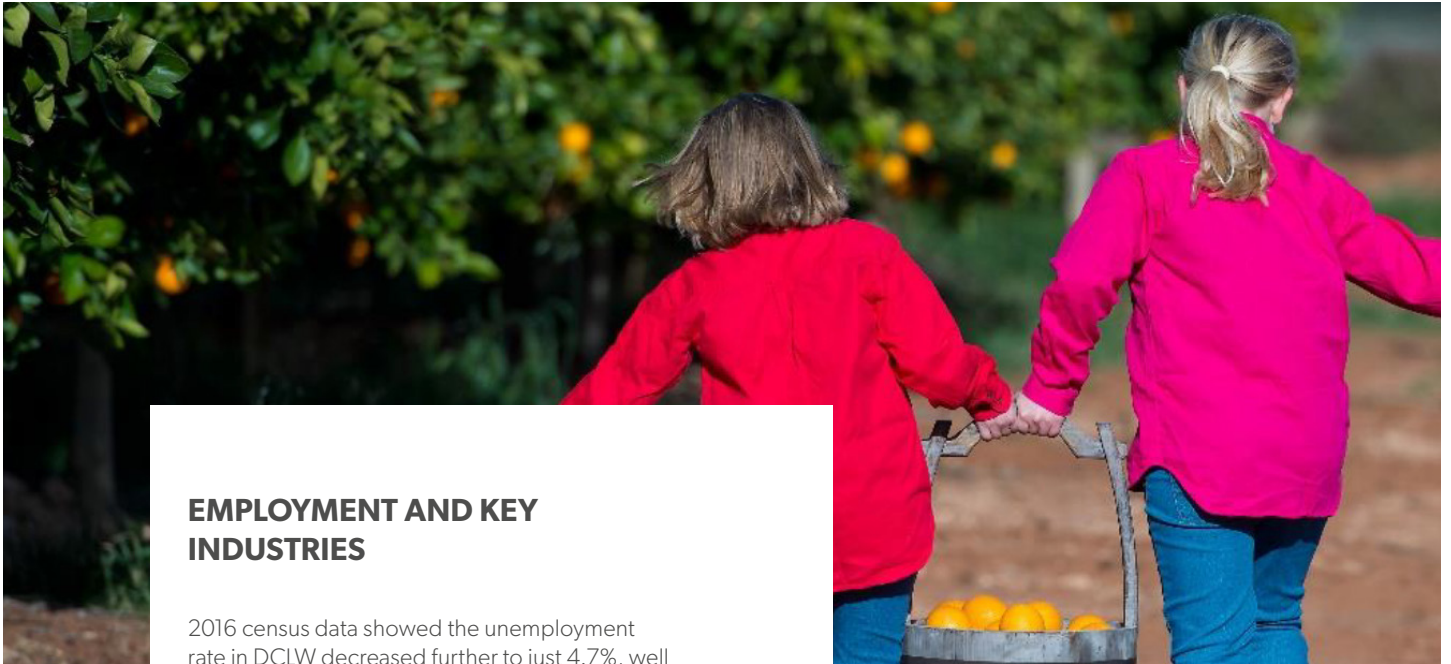
In order to create sustainable population growth, Council must position itself as having a desirable lifestyle to a broad cross-section of the population, paying attention to a broad range of factors that influence resident decision-making:

- economic factors (employment, cost of housing)
- social factors (recreation, entertainment)
- essential services (education, healthcare, transport)
- atmosphere and character (town aesthetics, cleanliness, safety)

These factors should be considered in relation to the specific needs of each demographic. For example, seniors may consider stable housing costs, healthcare, transport and safety to be most important, while young families may focus more on employment, education and recreation.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016



## EMPLOYMENT AND KEY INDUSTRIES

2016 census data showed the unemployment rate in DCLW decreased further to just 4.7%, well below regional (6.7%), state (7.5%) and national (6.9%) averages<sup>2</sup>. While employment is strong and increasing, there has been a slight shift away from full-time work to part-time work, however this is reflective of shifting employment trends nationally.

### Which industries are creating most employment in DCLW?

With nearly a quarter of all employment in DCLW relying on **agriculture**, it is critical for Council to ensure it is aware of relevant industry trends, removing impediments to growth, and advocating to protect against any mid to long-term risk factors. The scale of the manufacturing industry in DCLW is also directly connected to agriculture, with many manufacturers being agriculture-related (including food and beverage manufacturing).

**Healthcare and social assistance** employment is expected to see a further increase, with an aging population, an increase in lifestyle retirement living within the district, and changes to the delivery of aged-care and disability service models. While this industry is a significant employer in the district, Council's most effective impact on this industry is through continuing to attract and retain residents.

**Retail** plays a significant role in DCLW, being the region's third highest employer. It is important to note that the retail sector in DCLW is predominantly small, often locally owned and run businesses with few larger chain stores, in comparison to

Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	<b>23.4%</b>
Healthcare & Social Assistance	<b>12.8%</b>
Retail	<b>9.6%</b>
Education & Training	<b>7.7%</b>
Manufacturing	<b>7.2%</b>
Construction	<b>6.3%</b>

<https://profile.id.com.au/rda-murraylands-riverland>

other districts. This helps to create an appealing shopping precinct in both major towns, with small boutique stores offering products not available elsewhere in the Riverland. While this is positive, it can create challenges for business development and adaptation, succession planning and flexibility in opening hours.

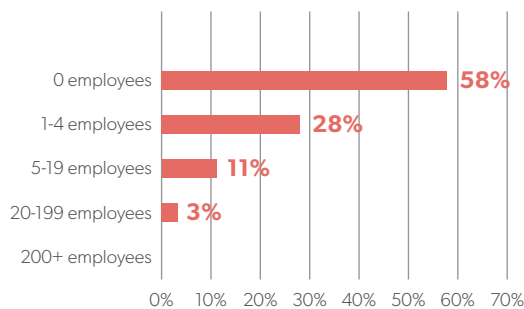
Similarly to healthcare and retail, continuing to retain and attract population is also one of the most effective ways Council can support the education and construction industries into the future.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016

### How small are our businesses?

DCLW businesses comprise mostly small-medium enterprises (SMEs)<sup>3</sup>, with 86% of all businesses having less than four employees<sup>4</sup>.

### Size of businesses in DCLW 2017 (employees)



### What is the value of the DCLW economy?

Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a measure of size or net wealth generated by the local economy.<sup>5</sup>

### Which industries generate the most value?

As an indicator of business productivity, 'value added' measures how successful each sector is at increasing the value of its inputs. Some industries have high-levels of output, but require large amounts of expenditure to achieve that, therefore value added is a useful indication of the profitability of different industry sectors. In 2017-18, DCLW total value added was \$489.6 million<sup>6</sup>, with the six top performers being:

Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	<b>41.0%</b>
Healthcare & Social Assistance	<b>9.3%</b>
Construction	<b>7.8%</b>
Manufacturing	<b>7.7%</b>
Education & Training	<b>4.8%</b>
Retail	<b>4.7%</b>

Agriculture generated more than \$200 million of value added in 2017-18, reinforcing the strong reliance on the sector for prosperity.

The construction industry is also performing well in the district, with more than \$38 million generated in value added. Healthcare and social assistance represents \$45.4 million, including residential care, social assistance, medical services and hospitals. Population retention and attraction will be critical to support these industries.

Manufacturing generates \$37.7 million of value added, with the vast majority of this intrinsically connected to the local agriculture industry.

Beverage manufacturing represents \$20.4 million, \$7.4 million being food manufacturing, and a further \$4.9 million being fabricated metal manufacturing, including specialist agricultural suppliers.

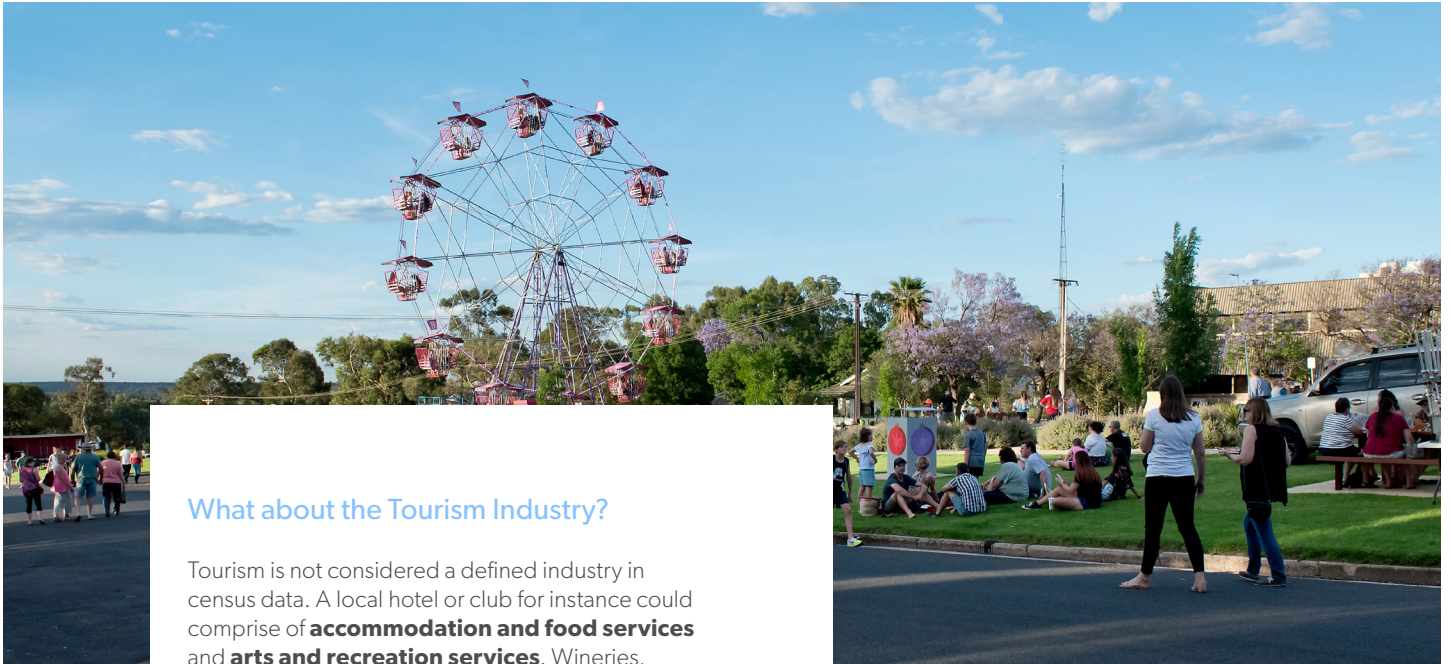
The dependence on agriculture in the district is evident. As agriculture is largely influenced by external factors (exchange rates, global markets, climate), local government has a limited role in protecting the industry. For this reason it is important for Council to encourage growth unrelated to agriculture, so that the economy is more resilient during long or severe periods of external impact.

Year ending  
 June 2017  
**\$628**  
 million

5 Year  
 average  
**\$627**  
 million

10 Year  
 average  
**\$666**  
 million

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, 2015 to 2017 Cat. No. 8165.0  
 4 <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-murraylands-riverland/number-of-businesses-by-industry>  
 5 <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-murraylands-riverland/gross-regional-product?WebID=130>  
 6 <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-murraylands-riverland/value-add-by-industry?WebID=130>



### What about the Tourism Industry?

Tourism is not considered a defined industry in census data. A local hotel or club for instance could comprise of **accommodation and food services** and **arts and recreation services**. Wineries, cellar doors and providores would make up part of **agriculture, manufacturing** or **retail**. Each industry has a degree of tourism involvement which alters in different contexts. When considering the transport industry for example, air transport such as Qantas is nearly wholly tourism reliant while regional taxi services meet more local needs.

It is also important to note that many seemingly obvious tourism businesses are supported by tourists and local customers, posing the question to what degree should they be considered tourism industry? Conversely, many businesses are not typically considered to be mainstream tourism enterprises (service stations, hairdressers, butchers), but still depend on visitors for a significant portion of their trade.

For these reasons, tourism industry data is captured and measured differently, through various organisations modelling and aggregating other industry data to produce indications of scale. The most recent DCLW local government profile produced by Tourism Research Australia (2017) indicates tourism spend in the district is \$31 million, over 239 000 visitor nights each year (or a 6% increase in resident population).

In addition to being a key economic driver, tourism plays a critical role in civic pride and population attraction. As an industry, tourism is also favourably labour intensivewith little automation predicted, making it a valuable industry for future employment.



## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The environment and climate have a critical influence on the DCLW economy, particularly in relation to the agriculture and tourism industries.

With the majority of land in the district zoned as primary production, agriculture plays a significant part in land management. Poor agricultural practises can result in issues such as soil degradation, erosion and salinity, but landholders are increasingly playing an active role in environmental stewardship. Practises such as no-till farming, stubble retention and precision agriculture technologies are improving **land management**, but the impacts of historic farming practises will require significant time and effort to repair.

With irrigated agriculture making up the vast majority of agriculture value in DCLW, the district is also heavily reliant on **water resources**.



### Value of agricultural production

District Council of Loxton Waikerie		2015/16		
Commodity	\$	%	Regional SA%	District Council of Loxton Waikerie as a % of Regional SA
Cereal crops	53,003,948	10.2	22.9	4.0
Other broadacre crops	3,600,260	0.7	6.5	1.0
Nurseries & cut flowers	835,781	0.2	0.4	3.5
Crops for Hay	1,959,880	0.4	4.5	0.7
Vegetables	16,930,128	3.3	5.7	5.1
Citrus fruit	156,229,316	30.0	3.8	70.2
Grapes (wine and table)	152,061,153	29.2	8.4	31.1
Other fruit	15,223,511	2.9	0.9	28.9
Nuts	71,081,641	13.6	2.6	46.5
Wool	9,665,769	1.9	7.6	2.2
Milk	180,045	0.0	3.6	0.1
Eggs	4,182	0.0	0.3	0.0
Livestock slaughterings	40,094,034	7.7	32.5	2.1
Agriculture - Total Value	520,869,647	100.0	100.0	9.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2015-16. Cat. No. 7503.0

An average of over **50,000** ML of water is pumped for irrigation each year in DCLW through Central Irrigation Trust licenses alone.

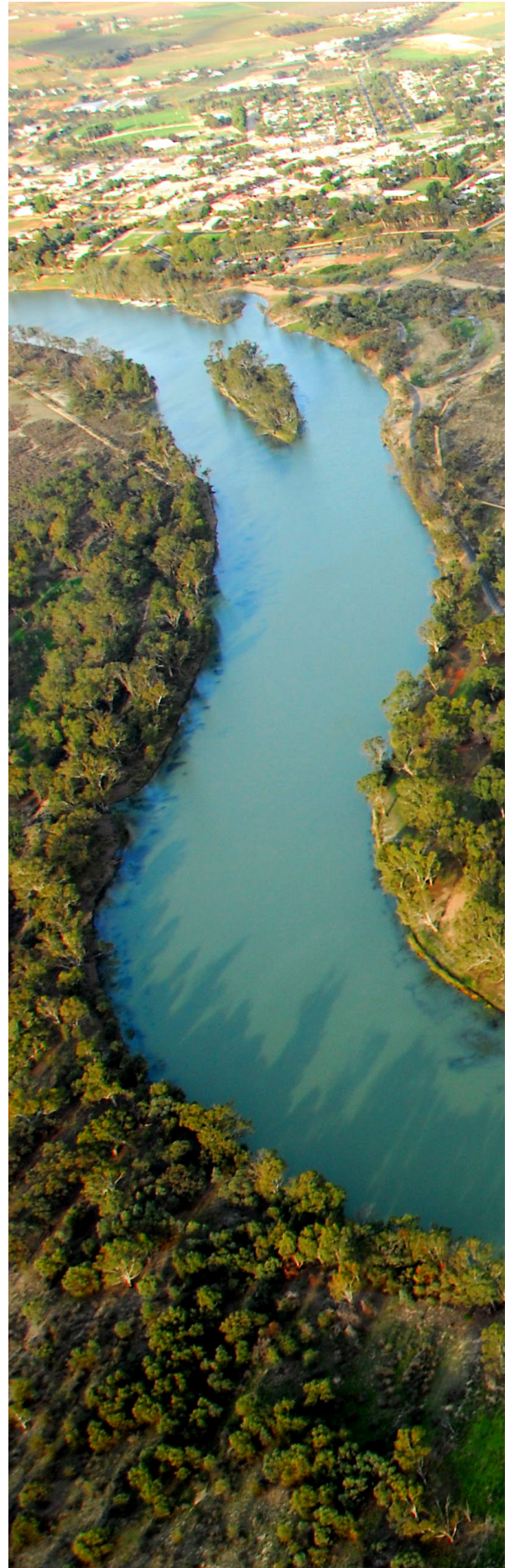
In an area so heavily reliant on agriculture as an economic driver, restrictions in allocated water become critical issues for communities and food production. Understanding how communities and industries can be supported during times of water scarcity is of national concern. Developing irrigation efficiency gains has significantly helped horticulture and viticulture industries to become more sustainable, and within the DCLW region these methods have been widely adopted. Among all Murray-Darling Basin communities, economic diversification has been a key strategy in protecting communities from the effects of water restrictions, and continues to be a critical focus for federal, state and local governments.

The Murray River also plays a critical role for the local tourism industry. The river itself is one of the most iconic tourist attractions in the district, with many tourism services and facilities operating on or around the water. While poor river conditions (e.g. algae outbreaks, blackwater and dry phases) can act as a deterrent for visitation, high flow conditions can also impact low lying infrastructure and water based activities. Importantly, consumer perceptions can impact the local industry even when these events are occurring elsewhere along the river system. The ability to effectively communicate, educate and manage perception when these events occur is the only way to manage this risk.

Changes to climate are also impacting on key industries, with the agriculture industry in particular needing to adapt and prepare for changing conditions. The stability and yields of the agriculture industry are impacted by increased frequency of extreme weather events, such as frost, drought, extreme heat and bushfire<sup>7</sup>. Changes in growing season can also create new logistical challenges at harvest time for some crops. Extended dry periods also impact the management and costs of key council infrastructure (e.g. roads) that support the agriculture industry.



<sup>7</sup> <http://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/climate-science-data/climate-science/impacts>





**ROLE OF LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT IN  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

# Role of Local Government in Economic Development



## **NOT JUST ROADS, RATES AND RUBBISH**

Recognised as a function of local government, economic development forms part of DCLW strategic planning and policy development.

However, without unlimited resources it is important for local governments to consider the most effective use of their investment into economic growth. Council's proactive investment efforts should focus on industries and initiatives which will create the most impact for the economy and community. Councils have limited ability to directly influence several industries operating in our community, and in these circumstances, Council's role largely becomes monitoring, advocacy and population attraction.

Council must also consider ways in which to grow the local economy sustainably, protecting our environmental assets, as well as the lifestyle factors that appeal to residents.

### **Section 7(g) of Local Government Act**

**1999**

7. Functions of a council:

(g) to promote its area and to provide an attractive climate and locations for the development of business, commerce, industry and tourism;

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

It is common for projects or initiatives to overlap, or for there to be confusion between economic development and community development. Economic development aims to increase quantity (spending, jobs, population) and is therefore relatively easy to measure outcomes. Community development focuses on improving quality (wellbeing, health, happiness, security) and outcomes tend to be harder to quantify, or more long term.

Often, projects or initiatives can crossover between the two. However, most have one primary function and a secondary benefit. For example, investment in tourism is primarily justified by jobs and spending growth while recognising it achieves some social benefit outcomes. Similarly, investment into youth activities is primarily provided for improving wellbeing, while recognising it encourages retention of families and youth population.

Collaboration between Council departments is key in projects which have the potential to bring secondary benefits. In these circumstances a lead department (primary function) should encourage input and support from the department with an interest in secondary outcomes (secondary function). To ensure outcome reporting meets expectations, it is important for DCLW initiatives which impact both community development and economic development to have a clear primary goal identified so the appropriate department leads the initiative.

## INTERACTION BETWEEN COUNCIL AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

While economic development is a function of council, it is also a key role for other stakeholders. One of the challenges facing regional economic development is to ensure that stakeholders work collaboratively, but without duplicating efforts. Understanding each agencies' needs, strengths and limitations can assist in clarifying the most effective use of DCLW resources for targeted council initiatives.

Similarly, clarifying these roles can assist with understanding when a business enquiry is best directed elsewhere. Currently, many businesses

in the district aren't sure which organisation (e.g. Council, RDAMR, Industry bodies) is the best to contact in the first instance. This can result in multiple agencies handling similar enquiries, reducing the efficacy of each. It is important for DCLW to find a balance between referring to other collaborative agencies (which represent state or Riverland-wide jurisdictions) to create efficiencies, while not diluting the benefits and best interests for the Loxton Waikerie district.

In addition, while Council develops economic strategy in years or decades long timeframes, it is critical for Council that it remain flexible to respond to changing conditions for its own community.

## Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDAMR)

RDAMR provides strategic leadership between community, industry, councils, state and federal governments. One of the strengths of RDAMR is knowledge sharing across council borders in both directions. RDAMR can provide valuable research and knowledge to council about industry trends, changing needs and upcoming state and federal government opportunities. Similarly, information gathered by DCLW that impacts the broader region can be shared with RDAMR, so the organisation can advocate with greater impact, or identify collaborative partners.

RDAMR approaches projects regionally, and receives funding from eight councils within the region (including DCLW), plus state and federal sources. This has the advantage of creating efficiency of service and opportunities for leveraging funding, however it does not generally allow for targeted efforts related to any needs unique to DCLW without supplementary funding. RDAMR delivers core services including:

- business advice and assistance, particularly at times of change
- career advice through career development centres
- export market advice
- grant identification and assistance
- information gathering and sharing.

The availability of state and federal grant funding can quickly redirect RDAMR focus and it is therefore important for DCLW economic development activities to be responsive and agile enough to both support new initiatives and move to fill new gaps.

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DCLW represents **22%** of the area and **16%** of the population within the RDAMR region

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The current RDAMR strategic plan expires in **2020**

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RDAMR recently opened a satellite office in Loxton

## Federal and State Government

The Federal Government supports economic development in DCLW through provision of grants such as the Financial Assistance Grants, Building Better Regions Fund, Community Development Grants Program, Regional Growth Fund, and Stronger Communities Program.

The Federal Government initiated and lead Regional Development Australia, with support of state and local governments. The Federal Government also provides the primary source of community, economic and industry statistics and insights which can be easily benchmarked between regional, state and national data.

The State Government also makes available a range of grants through its various departments, often targeting economic development projects or initiatives. These have broad themes including but not limited to:

- arts, tourism, events and entertainment
- public space and facilities (e.g. recreation facilities, boat ramps)
- business development (including export, agriculture, SMEs).

Several areas of State Government also provide direct support to protecting and growing core industries to the Riverland economy (e.g. through the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) and South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC)).

The State Government also provides much of the regulatory environment in which local government operates, which interfaces with many economic development activities (e.g. planning).

It is also important to recognise the significance of federal and state investment into the healthcare and social assistance industry, the second largest industry in DCLW. Though council has limited capacity to directly impact this industry, understanding and advocating for the industry remains an important role for council.

With so much of federal and state assistance being grant based, it is important for DCLW to consider their ability to strategically respond to grant opportunities which can present with short response timeframes. DCLW should consider having a number of identified projects of various scale shovel-ready to be able to be responsive to these opportunities and maximise available support from other levels of government.

“

To enable us to assist primary industries and regions to grow, innovate and maximise their economic growth potential, we must collaborate with industry, government, academic institutions, and research and development corporations, as well as with other stakeholders.

From PIRSA Corporate Plan  
2018-2022

”



## Industry Bodies

Peak bodies, member based organisations and community groups can also have a direct role in economic development. Each is unique in its structure, funds, role and degree of interest in DCLW.

In agriculture, this includes organisations like Riverland Wine, Wine Grape Council of SA, Almond Board of Australia, Citrus Board of Australia, Mallee Sustainable Farming, etc. These organisations are primarily funded and managed by their respective industries, and while some have more stake in DCLW than others, each presents an opportunity for communication and collaboration with industry sectors.

In tourism, membership based organisations such as Australian Regional Tourism (ART) and Tourism Industry Council of South Australia (TiCSA) act as hubs for collaboration, sharing of knowledge, training and networking. More locally, Destination Riverland is funded primarily by local government, with industry and further government support (state and federal) for specific roles and projects. Local government's contribution to Destination Riverland is provided for strategic tourism marketing for the whole region, and to be the conduit to the South Australian Tourism Commission. It is intended that Destination Riverland attract other funding sources to deliver projects outside this scope.

**Chambers of Commerce** in DCLW are key membership based organisations, engaging across multiple industries and sectors. Member led, these organisations rely on local government and grant support to deliver many of their projects. Chambers of Commerce in DCLW include the Loxton Chamber of Commerce and Riverland West Chamber of commerce, which extends beyond DCLW Council boundaries into Morgan and Blanchetown areas. Other community groups (such as progress associations) also operate in smaller towns and can perform similar functions. In DCLW, chambers of commerce are highly connected to issues facing several industries, and implement several responsive community-led initiatives which support economic activity.

Both chambers of commerce in DCLW also have a strong relationship with Business SA, the state's peak Chamber of Commerce and industry body. Business SA offer their members a range of services, products, advice, training and advocacy.

## SERVICE CLUBS

Sometimes overlooked as important economic development stakeholders, many service clubs have specific business and economic goals.

### Did you know?

The following phrases are present in Rotary and Lions Club objectives;



### ROTARY CLUB:

- high ethical standards in business and professions
- recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations
- the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society
- the application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life.



### LIONS CLUB:

- encourage efficiency and promote high ethical standards in commerce, industry, professions, public works and private endeavours
- to remember that in building up my business it is not necessary to tear down another's.



## TOURISM INVESTMENT AND STAKEHOLDERS

DCLW currently invests significantly into tourism services, infrastructure and events that directly or indirectly support the tourism industry. In 2018-2019, direct investment included:

- Visitor information services (468k+)
- The Village Loxton (\$146k+)
- Caravan parks (\$140k+)
- Financial and in-kind support of events (\$180k+)
- Destination Riverland base funding (\$50k)

As well as additional further significant tourism investment through

- projects delivered by RDA, chambers of commerce and Destination Riverland through local government funding support
- infrastructure and public space (e.g. signage, playgrounds, event venues, riverfronts)

While this further investment is more difficult to quantify the degree of tourism specific spend, it is clear that the council will invest over \$1million in tourism each year.

Because of the councils significant involvement in tourism, it is important to further understand key stakeholders, and consider the most effective use of this investment.

At a national level, the Murray River as a whole is largely undeveloped as a tourism asset. Despite this, individual river communities continue to use the River to encourage tourism in their areas. These groups are working with varying levels of resources and success. There is limited collaboration between river communities, and less again between states, despite the whole river touring route being a popular pilgrimage trip for caravan and RV market. This has resulted in inconsistent branding and development along the River. The only notable exception is private enterprise Discover Murray, promoting and advocating for the River as a national tourism icon.



### Announced March

## 2019:

Destination Riverland has received **\$20,000** to develop a strategic plan towards **2030** that will build on the success of the Riverland Tourism Plan **2020** and identify further opportunities to maximise visitation and economic yield.

### From Destination Riverland 2020 Strategic Plan:

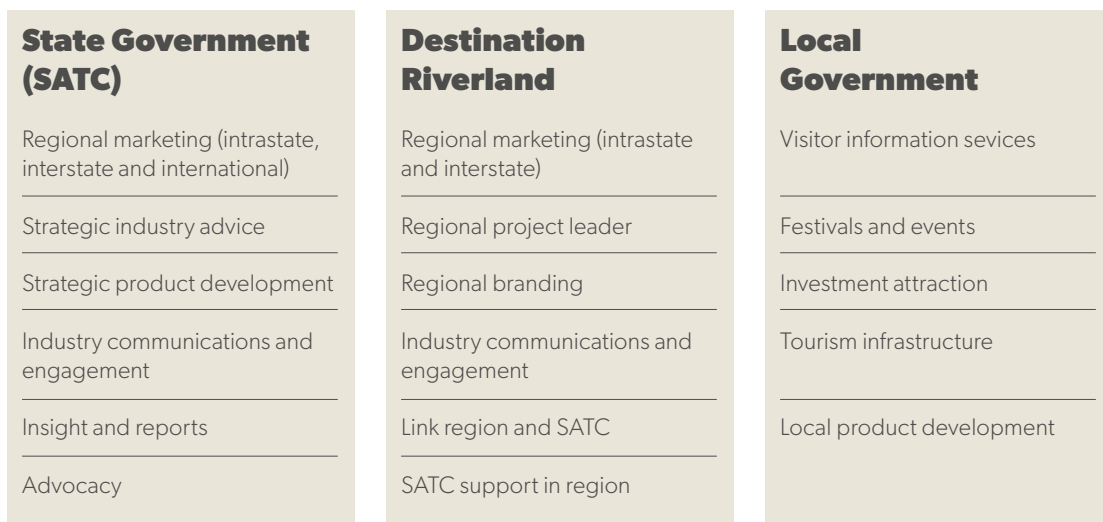
Some of the key external factors affecting the South Australian tourism industry through to 2020 include:

- Increased usage of digital and social media
- Continued ageing population;
- Rise in inbound visitation, particularly from Asia
- Movements in the Australian dollar
- Slowing outbound passenger growth
- Continued focus and importance of experiences.

South Australian tourism industry has undergone significant changes to investment into regions in past years. Following the move away from direct regional presence, each region has developed (and funded) individual strategies to continue to develop the tourism industry at a local level. This has generally resulted in a significant increase in local government investment to tourism marketing across the state, and a mix of delivery models. The South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) continues to aim to achieve the target of \$8bn visitor expenditure by 2020. Its priority action areas are identified as driving demand, working better together, supporting what we have, increasing recognition of the value of tourism and using events

to drive visitation. SATC produced a Regional Visitor Strategy in 2018 which is aimed to guide strategic direction for each region based on visitor research, consumer insights and the collective experience of regional tourism organisations.

Locally, Riverland councils have contributed to the establishment and continuation of Destination Riverland, to lead regional collaboration and deliver strategic tourism marketing. Regional marketing strategies have created a unified approach, ensuring a better presence, wider reach, and stronger brand appeal than could be achieved at a council level. Destination Riverland also provides an important conduit between the local tourism industry and SATC.





**FOCUS  
INDUSTRIES**

# Focus Industries

While Council's economic development efforts should include opportunities that present in any industry, proactive efforts should focus on three main areas. Tourism, agriculture and main street precincts have been identified as being high impact or of high value within the community for the following reasons:

## TOURISM

### 1. Labour intensive, now and into the future.

While other industries are expected to see job losses as mechanisation and technology continues to disrupt the job market, tourism relies heavily on human interaction. Tourism businesses are more likely to employ staff (57%) than non tourism businesses (37%)<sup>8</sup>. In addition to the existing labour-intensive requirements of tourism businesses (i.e. accommodation and dining), consumers are increasingly seeking an authentic, personalised experience, furthering the demand for labour.

### 2. Local government's ability to influence.

Tourism has and will continue to be, an industry for which local government has significant direct influence on. Investment can easily be made into destination marketing, information services, and the development of recreation and tourist attractions. The types of tourism initiatives Council has the ability to invest in see relatively rapid and measurable outcomes, in comparison to other industries.

### 3. Injection into the economy.

Tourism provides the local region with an external investment source, reducing the economy's reliance on recirculation by residents. With local residents' prosperity so heavily reliant on

agriculture, investing in tourism can be seen as risk mitigation for times when climate or market conditions are unfavourable. As tourism spend is spread across multiple industries it further reduces risk by spreading revenue amongst many industries.

### 4. Population Attraction.

Tourism plays a critical role in population attraction, as it showcases the region as a place to live for visitors. The "grey nomad" market may spend time travelling around Australia before choosing one of their travel destinations as a retirement destination. Similarly, when professionals relocate to the Riverland they determine where to live by visiting the region. A region's tourism reputation is often connected to its desirability to live in.

### 5. Enhancing civic pride and public amenity.

Tourism investment provides improved social opportunities and provides further justification for community facility upgrades that would be otherwise not possible (boat ramps, sporting facilities etc). A thriving tourism industry is a source of civic pride for locals, especially when tourism offerings are in line with the values and needs of local residents (e.g. ecotourism when environmental sustainability is of high value, destination playgrounds for resident families).

## AGRICULTURE

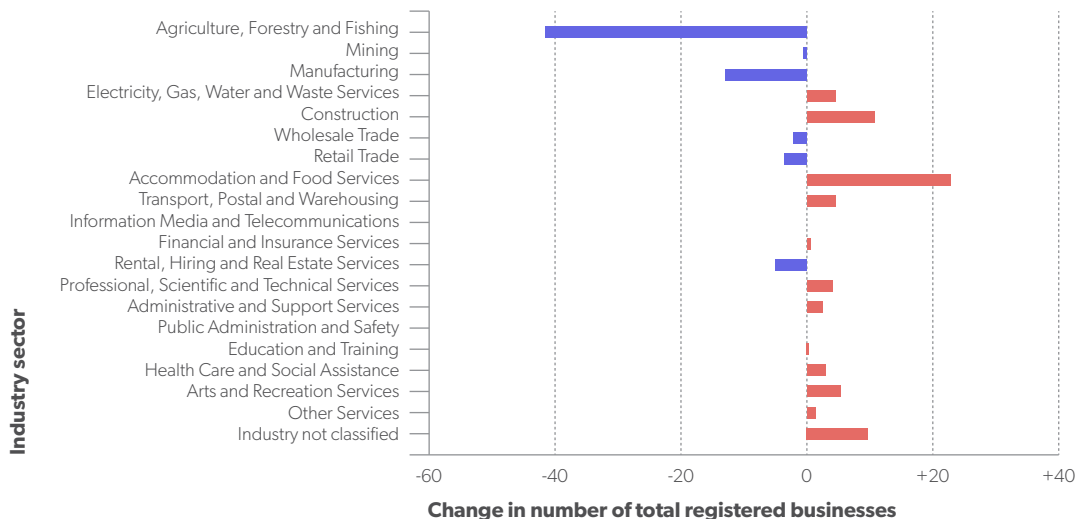
- 1. Reliance on agriculture.** With nearly a quarter of all employment in DCLW coming from agriculture, the district is heavily reliant on the industry for economic sustainability. Not just a significant employer, the scale of agriculture in DCLW in terms of land use and investment cannot be understated. Growth of the industry which supports new jobs (not just efficiencies and profit growth) will be important for population retention and attraction.
- 2. Highly valued global export.** South Australia's agriculture industry has developed a global reputation for producing high quality food and wine in a clean environment, with high food safety standards<sup>9</sup>. Both the state and federal Governments have committed significant investments to maintain and develop this reputation. International exports of agricultural commodities and products from the DCLW region totalled \$174.7 million in 2017-18, with a further \$77 million in manufactured food and beverage products<sup>10</sup>.
- 3. Industry leadership.** The combination of harsh climates, innovative culture and the availability of grants targeting water efficiencies (e.g. 3IP) has led to the early adoption of new technologies, progressive business structures, and best practices within the DCLW area. The diversity of agriculture production in the region has fostered high level leadership and expertise across many commodities. While these businesses have become competitive in a global market, the perception of the area as a high return

investment hasn't yet shifted in all sectors. Industry leaders continuing to share knowledge between sectors, and being advocates for agriculture opportunities in DCLW, will support broader economic benefit.

- 4. Connection to community, history and legacy.** The region's long history in agriculture creates a connection to the industry which becomes intrinsic to community wellbeing and civic pride. DCLW has several third and fourth generation farming families whose connection to the community is enduring. Historically and at present, many prominent community leaders, investors and sponsors have a background in agriculture, further cementing the community connection to the industry. This creates a unique relationship between the success of the industry and the wellbeing of the broader community<sup>11</sup>.
- 5. Industry in transition.** Agriculture is facing significant changes across the industry. New technology and farming methods are changing the structure of the industry, with those who adopt early often becoming more profitable while those who lag behind, creating a broader spread of farm sizes and profitability. The use of precision agriculture technologies to optimise production is also driving profit, but not necessarily creating jobs. Societal changes affecting succession planning as well as economies of scale have led to a global trend towards larger, corporate-style farms where land sales result in consolidation. These factors further change the way industry profits are spread across the community and intensify the barriers of entry for new farmers.

### Change in registered businesses by industry, 2014 to 2017

District Council of Loxton Waikerie - Total registered businesses



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts on Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, 2015 to 2017 Cat. No. 816.



9 [http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/food\\_and\\_wine/sas\\_advantages](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/food_and_wine/sas_advantages)  
10 <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-murraylands-riverland/exports-byindustry?exptype=3&BMID=40&WebID=130>

11 <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/drought/submissions/sub092.pdf>

## MAIN STREET PRECINCT

1. **Symbolic business centre.** Main street precincts are the symbolic centre of a business community. As a result, main streets become an indicator of the general prosperity of a town - whether a true reflection or not. When thriving, they provide business optimism and vitality to the community beyond the main street precinct. When struggling, the impact of run down precinct or vacant shop fronts can negatively affect business confidence, community wellbeing and civic pride.
2. **Clustered cross-section of businesses.** Main streets typically represent a cross-section of industries such as retail, dining, finance, health and community services. This brings industries together in a geographic business cluster, each benefitting from the strength of an inclusive marketplace. The cluster of businesses provides council with an opportunity to impact and monitor a broad range of industries represented in the main street precinct.
3. **Intersection between public and private realm.** Main streets are a unique community space built by both the private and public sectors. A main street provides more to a community than the sum of its parts - a row of small businesses, along a road. They are a meeting place, an event venue and a place for community to connect. The effectiveness and vibrancy of a main street cannot truly reach its full potential without council, businesses and landlords all ensuring their own offering within the precinct adapts to current market expectations.
4. **Transition phase.** Main streets are facing change globally due to a range of factors. Whereas once a prominent and well presented shop front served as one of the most effective ways to communicate your business offering and brand to a regional town, now online marketing can be more effective. Retail also has seen significant disruption through the evolution of online marketplaces - creating both global competition and global markets for regional retailers. More recently, consumer expectations have shifted towards unique, personalised purchasing experiences from businesses connected to community, whose values align with theirs<sup>12</sup>. This presents an opportunity for small local businesses to regain market share. Many goods and services businesses have needed to become more mobile to meet customer expectations (e.g. in-home services, food trucks and mobile professional services) reducing the demand for bricks and mortar premises to conduct business. At the same time, efficiencies and centralised business operations have reduced the staff requirements in some industries. These factors combined have lessened the need for start-ups to require the same bricks-and-mortar premises to begin to trade that their industry predecessors did.
5. **Strong community leadership and support.** There is incredibly strong leadership and advocacy for enhancing and protecting the main street precincts in DCLW. Several groups such as chambers of commerce and progress associations are actively pursuing projects and initiatives which focus on main street precincts. Many individuals in the community also feel strongly that council has a role to play in encouraging vacancies to be filled in main street precincts. There is a strong community sense across the district to 'shop local' and 'shop small', preferring small locally owned and operated businesses where possible. The existing support of main street traders from consumers, community, businesses and landlords has resulted in a lower vacancy rate in DCLW main streets compared to neighbouring towns.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2019/01/13/global-consumer-trends-and-brands-that-are-out-in-front-of-them-in-019/#657198524fe4>

**SUMMARY**  
**CONCLUSIONS**



# Summary Conclusions

It is recommended the District Council of Loxton Waikerie:

## 1. Consider population retention and attraction as an important economic goal

In order to create a sustainable economy in DCLW that supports all industries, attracting and retaining population across ranging age demographics must be a priority. As DCLW relies heavily on industries facing significant automation in coming years (agriculture, manufacturing), it will be critical to offset with population and jobs growth.

## 2. Understand and clarify roles of major stakeholders, ensuring effective collaboration rather than duplication

To deliver best outcomes for the community, council must ensure its efforts complement and don't compete with key stakeholders operating in economic development (e.g. RDA, Destination Riverland, Chambers of Commerce). It is important for council to clearly understand any strengths and limitations of other key stakeholders. Where a new initiative clearly falls within the scope of another stakeholder, council should support that stakeholder to lead, if possible. This will assist in reducing confusion amongst the business community, as well as increase effectiveness of each stakeholder. Council should also continue to support key stakeholders to deliver outcomes which align with its objectives (e.g. through funding, partnerships and advocacy).

## 3. Remain agile and responsive to new opportunities

Many key external stakeholders are guided by funding availability outside of the control of DCLW, which can change with little notice. In addition, unexpected opportunities can present through private and public sector. While long term planning guides overall direction, it is important to remember that the planning occurs within the current context, which can change often over the years of delivery. Being able to seize opportunity and momentum that presents, and respond to new gaps quickly will create a competitive advantage for the district (e.g. having and facilitating shovel ready projects ready for grants).

## 4. Reduce red tape and improve processes which impact economic growth opportunities

It is important for DCLW to identify internal processes which delay or impede economic activity and work to both ease and quicken those processes for business. DCLW should also advocate to other levels of government where policies or processes become known to DCLW which are delaying or impeding growth.

## 5. Focus economic development efforts into tourism, agriculture and main street precincts

DCLW should maintain a responsive, supportive position for all industry growth but have a more proactive targeted approach for key industries and areas. Focussing its limited resources into industries which council has clear and immediate influence on (tourism, main street precincts), or have huge scale of impact on local economy (agriculture) will be beneficial. It is important too, that while the focus may be to improve the economic environment for these focus areas, several outcomes and initiatives will benefit other sectors (e.g. red tape reduction, population retention).

## 6. Have effective collaboration of internal resources which interface with economic development outcomes

With economic development initiatives often intersecting with other functions of council e.g. community development, planning, infrastructure and major projects, understanding intended economic outcomes and clarifying lead roles is important. Opportunities to incorporate economic development outcomes into existing projects and work plans across the Council will be a better use of resources. Where economic activity is the primary outcome of an initiative, it is important to have this recognised and reporting with an economic development perspective.

# **TOURISM PROJECT PLAN**

# Tourism Project Plan



## 1. Industry Capability and Knowledge

### 1.1. Effectiveness of council tourism resources

- 1.1.1. Clarify the roles and expectations of each stakeholder in any new initiatives to minimise duplication
- 1.1.2. Integrate Loxton and Waikerie tourism staff to be one cohesive whole district team
- 1.1.3. Conduct online content review
- 1.1.4. Invest in processes and system improvement to create efficiencies
- 1.1.5. Manage all tourism advertising budget allocations centrally
- 1.1.6. Professionally promote existing council tourism assets to maximise usage
- 1.1.7. Have and facilitate shovel-ready projects in advance for future grant opportunities

### 1.2. Research and knowledge sharing

- 1.2.1. Encourage use of RDA and Destination Riverland newsletters
- 1.2.2. Share relevant industry wide tourism research with elected members, and other stakeholders
- 1.2.3. Provide local insights regularly to Destination Riverland
- 1.2.4. Advocate for regional backpacker study to understand and leverage the market
- 1.2.5. Educate industry about roles of each stakeholder
- 1.2.6. Collect simplified and accurate usage data for councils existing tourism assets (VICs, VIOs, CPs etc)

### 1.3. Upskilling of community members who regularly interact with visitors

- 1.3.1. Offer local tourism information training for employees at local businesses
- 1.3.2. Establish a familiarisation program across the district
- 1.3.3. Facilitate not-for-profit community groups to engage with Destination Riverland industry partnerships program



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## 2. Destination Development

### 2.1. Council owned tourism assets

- 2.1.1. Create a register of council assets which have visitor focus (including event venues, public toilets, playgrounds, boat ramps etc.)
- 2.1.2. Ensure relevant departments consider visitor expectations when maintaining and upgrading visitor focussed assets
- 2.1.3. Create a visitor feedback mechanism which proactively gathers information about usage and expectations at council owned assets
- 2.1.4. Seek and support grant opportunities to enhance major community tourism assets (e.g. Riverfronts, Loxton Riverfront Holiday Park, The Village, Waikerie Water & Nature Play) to meet or exceed visitor expectations

### 2.2. Development of new public tourism experiences which have strategic alignment

- 2.2.1. Conduct gap analysis on key markets and demographics
- 2.2.2. Seek grant opportunities to develop 'hero product' to align with gap analysis, councils strategic plan, and unique selling proposition (refer Tourism 3.2 USP identification)
- 2.2.3. Provide priority support to events which align with USP and gaps analysis
- 2.2.4. Facilitate shovel-ready projects for private tourism development

### 2.3. Public amenity in spaces used by visitors which exceeds expectation

- 2.3.1. Consider level of tourist usage when replacing, maintaining or upgrading infrastructure - and consult tourism staff when tourist usage is high (including signage, parking, public toilets, playgrounds etc.)
- 2.3.2. Consider a higher investment in cleaning and maintenance in spaces used frequently by visitors
- 2.3.3. Consistently develop knowledge of changing expectations in comparative towns and regions
- 2.3.4. Provide "surprise and delight" features which are not widely publicised in spaces frequented by visitors

### 2.4. Proactive and success-driven culture amongst tourism businesses

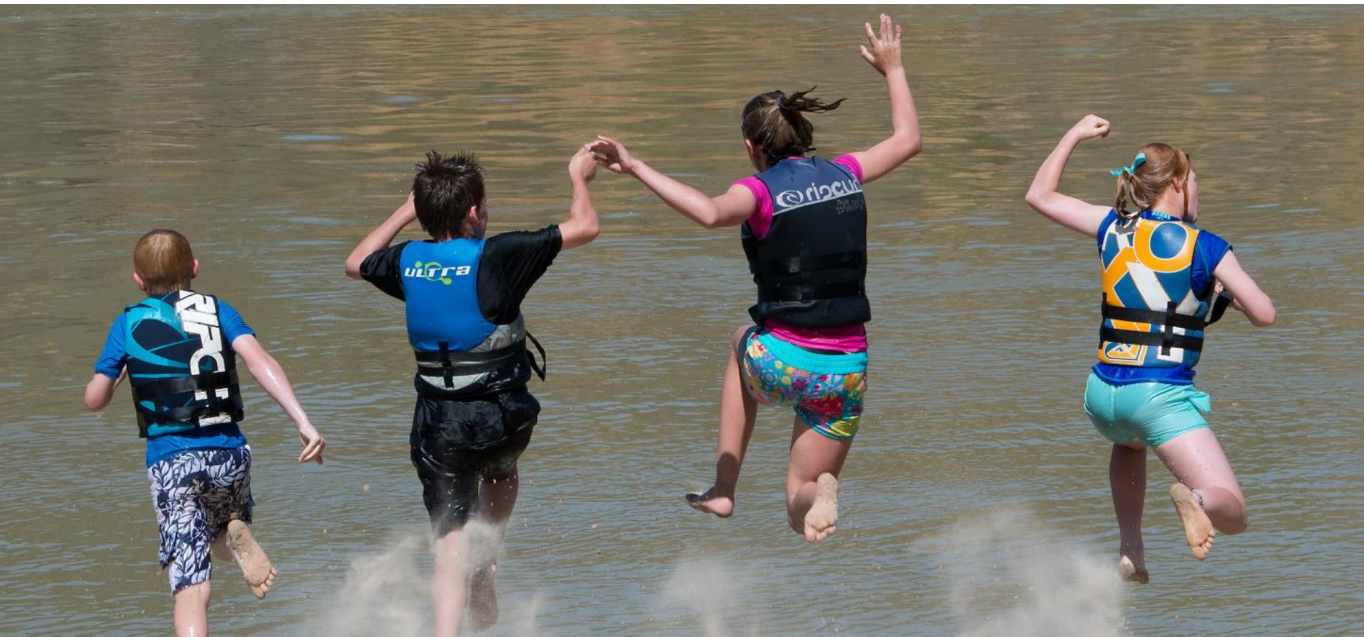
- 2.4.1. Share stories of businesses which expand, grow and develop their businesses
- 2.4.2. Assist tourism businesses with grant applications and award submissions
- 2.4.3. Develop a business checklist for self-audit best practice (online presence, signage, customer service)
- 2.4.4. Develop business audit program and submit feedback to the business (including avenues to address any gaps e.g. grant opportunities, training opportunities)

### 2.5. Maximise the opportunity for visitors to spend whilst in region through a vibrant and varied business sector

- 2.5.1. Regularly share visitor expectations and feedback with chambers of commerce
- 2.5.2. Educate businesses about their role in the visitor economy
- 2.5.3. Publish and publicise tourism gaps analysis to allow businesses to identify new opportunities or markets

### 2.6. Strategic approach to events, promoting sustainability of existing events and fostering of new events

- 2.6.1. Include events (timing, themes) in gaps analysis
- 2.6.2. Replace long-term ongoing event funding program with strategic support program which includes financial support with agreed financial sustainability goals
- 2.6.3. Require council supported events to conduct event attendee feedback
- 2.6.4. Create an event development fund, and make available for new or significant growth tourism events with ongoing visitor markets



## 3. Marketing and Visitor Information

### 3.1. A unified whole of Riverland approach to destination marketing

- 3.1.1. Provide funding to Destination Riverland for strategic regional marketing
- 3.1.2. Ensure economic development and tourism activities don't compete with functions of Destination Riverland
- 3.1.3. Collaborate on regional marketing initiatives
- 3.1.4. Review and implement new DCLW online marketing approach to provide maximum reach while minimising duplication

### 3.2. An authentic and unique tourism identity

- 3.2.1. Identify unique selling proposition (USP) for both major townships through community and visitor consultation to differentiate from other river towns
- 3.2.2. Ensure editorial and marketing material is updated to reflect USP

### 3.3. Showcase tourism industry to local residents, in particular new or potential residents to improve VFR experience

- 3.3.1. Produce welcoming content to be provided to new residents and real estate agents which highlights tourism features

- 3.3.2. Provide regular media releases about good news tourism stories to local media
- 3.3.3. Establish a "tourist in your own town" or "hosting friends/relatives" initiative
- 3.3.4. Support the promotion of DCLW at events targeted at potential residents (e.g. university careers expo, retirement expos)
- 3.3.5. Review and update highway signage to reflect current tourism offerings

### 3.4. Effective visitor information to visitors in region

- 3.4.1. Provide high quality face-to-face visitor information at spaces and events with high visitor foot traffic across the region
- 3.4.2. Install tourism information zones at key local businesses
- 3.4.3. Upskill frontline staff in key local businesses in current tourism offerings
- 3.4.4. Conduct a review of tourism signage (both promotional and wayfinding) and prioritise needs for repair, replace and upgrade so it effective and engaging
- 3.4.5. Ensure online content is accurate and complete across all key platforms
- 3.4.6. Attend unstaffed council campgrounds in peak periods to provide face-to-face visitor information

# **AGRICULTURE PROJECT PLAN**

# Agriculture Project Plan



## 1. Knowledge and recognition

### 1.1. Recognise and celebrate success to increase positive perception of the industry and district

- 1.1.1. Encourage and assist local businesses to enter state and national awards relevant to their fields
- 1.1.2. Monitor local industry news and share nationally (e.g. Stock Journal, landline, industry peak bodies)
- 1.1.3. Monitor grant recipients after completion of projects, and showcase outcomes
- 1.1.4. Support Loxton Horticultural and Show Society

### 1.2. Encourage and support careers in agriculture

- 1.2.1. Ensure development support policies reflect preference for development opportunities which create ongoing jobs for local residents
- 1.2.2. Work with local schools to showcase agriculture career opportunities to local students
- 1.2.3. Promote DCLW lifestyle and agriculture career opportunities to job seekers (attend university careers expos, share systemic shortages through case studies for media)

### 1.3. Connection between agriculture industry and broader community

- 1.3.1. Encourage agriculture businesses to participate in chambers of commerce
- 1.3.2. Advocate for representation of agriculture leaders at business events
- 1.3.3. Encourage education programs which connect students to agriculture businesses and mentors
- 1.3.4. Attract and retain community events which promote a connection to local agriculture (especially seasonality)

### 1.4. Understanding and advocacy of major impacts to agriculture industry

- 1.4.1. Participate in industry events to increase knowledge of upcoming opportunities and threats (e.g. climate change, drought, exchange rates etc)
- 1.4.2. Support and engage with local agricultural bureaus
- 1.4.3. Advocate state and federal governments for policies which recognise and support needs for agriculture (e.g. water, energy)
- 1.4.4. Promote agriculture data collection for public analysis or research
- 1.4.5. Have an ongoing plan for preventative fruit fly measures (e.g. residential advice)



## 2. Business development focussed on local employment

### 2.1. On-farm diversification and value-added product development

- 2.1.1. Promote awareness and access to grant opportunities, and support grant applications which align with council objectives
- 2.1.2. Have development policies which support businesses which show commitment to ongoing, local employment and suppliers
- 2.1.3. Promote opportunities in agri-tourism (farm-stay, event venues, cellar doors etc)

### 2.2. Prioritise road upgrades where required for agricultural growth

- 2.2.1. Conduct a rural road users survey to reassess upgrade priorities
- 2.2.2. Support increased priority for road upgrades which are limiting known business development opportunities
- 2.2.3. Support proactive road signage upgrades (council and DPTI signage)

### 2.3. Technology infrastructure which enables growth in the agriculture industry

- 2.3.1. Implement LoRaWAN technology across the district and provide access to agriculture industry
- 2.3.2. Support improvement to communications networks in DCLW (NBN and mobile black spots)

### 2.4. Removal of red tape at local, state and federal level

- 2.4.1. Have strong internal communication with staff who regularly engage with agriculture businesses
- 2.4.2. Survey agricultural businesses to gather information about willingness to expand or develop, and reasons for not doing so
- 2.4.3. Advocate for removal of red tape at state and federal level which is impacting specific business needs in DCLW
- 2.4.4. Improve internal processes to ease and speed interactions between industry and council
- 2.4.5. Regularly exchange knowledge with RDA about barriers to growth





**MAIN STREET  
PRECINCT  
PROJECT PLAN**

# Main Street Precinct Project Plan



## 1. Placemaking and vibrancy

### 1.1. Beautify main streets with both permanent and changing temporary approaches

- 1.1.1. Define main street precincts, and identify most used approaches (both vehicle and on foot e.g from parking)
- 1.1.2. Review street tree and landscaping of main street precincts and implement in priority order
- 1.1.3. Review lighting considerations for after dark usage, and install ambience or art lighting in key areas
- 1.1.4. Provide opportunity and encourage more seasonal and temporary outdoor public art in main street precincts (e.g. christmas decorations, harvest themed art, school student work)
- 1.1.5. Conduct an EOI for spaces community would like to see permanent public art in and around main streets, prioritise results
- 1.1.6. Prepare project briefs for highest priority spaces ready for permanent public art funding opportunities (include landlords and business owners where privately owned walls/spaces)
- 1.1.7. Identify landlords willing to provide ongoing access for vacant shop front displays or other uses
- 1.1.8. Ensure public amenity (buildings, paths, signs, bins etc) in main streets is maintained to a high standard

### 1.2. Increase people presence and passing foot traffic in main street precinct

- 1.2.1. Sustainably support major community events being held in main street, encouraging development of existing events and creation of new events

- 1.2.2. Support regular small events or activities being held in outdoor spaces in or around main street precincts
- 1.2.3. Consider foot traffic benefits when reviewing parking locations to balance ease of access with increasing foot traffic
- 1.2.4. Maximise attendance and use of any underutilised council buildings in main street precincts
- 1.2.5. Inform traders of events occurring in main street to encourage extended opening hours
- 1.2.6. Encourage businesses to build knowledge of other main street business offerings to facilitate referrals
- 1.2.7. Encourage businesses to develop partnerships and promotions which encourage longer main street stays (e.g. health service offering coffee discount at local cafe on day of appointment)
- 1.2.8. Provide and promote access to main streets which is aged and disability friendly

### 1.3. Address vacancies and underutilised space

- 1.3.1. Create a database of vacancies and underutilised properties in main street precincts
- 1.3.2. Conduct a survey with landlords, real estate agents and prospective business operators about underlying reasons for vacancies or underutilised space (including barriers to short-term, temporary or shared use)
- 1.3.3. Establish relationships with businesses, landlords and agents to remain in front of expected opportunities or vacancies
- 1.3.4. Review rate reduction and rebate policies to provide effective support for new tenants in long term vacants in the main street precinct, and ensure respective landlords and real estate agents are aware of policy



## 2. Business support

### 2.1. Reduce red tape

- 2.1.1. Streamline council processes which regularly involve main street areas (e.g. outdoor dining, event permits)
- 2.1.2. Conduct a red-tape review to identify policies which restrict or slow growth in main streets
- 2.1.3. Ensure council has impact information when reviewing council policies identified in review
- 2.1.4. Provide feedback to state and federal government about their policies identified in review

### 2.2. Support chambers of commerce

- 2.2.1. Be a member of chambers of commerce
- 2.2.2. Attend and participate in chambers of commerce meetings
- 2.2.3. Support chamber led projects which align with objectives of council
- 2.2.4. Encourage businesses to become members of chambers of commerce
- 2.2.5. Ensure economic development activities don't compete with functions of chambers of commerce
- 2.2.6. Utilise chambers of commerce as a primary communication source between council and business

### 2.3. Proactive and success-driven culture amongst main street businesses

- 2.3.1. Share stories of businesses which expand, grow and develop their businesses
- 2.3.2. Assist main street businesses with their grant applications and award submissions
- 2.3.3. Develop a business checklist for self-audit best practice (facade, visual merchandise, online presence, customer service)
- 2.3.4. Conduct business audit program and submit feedback to the business (including avenues to address any gaps e.g. grant opportunities, training opportunities)



