



Economic Development Strategy 2024-2029

Shire of Victoria Plains

PREPARED FOR:

Shire of Victoria Plains

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SUMMARY

Introduction

This document is the Economic Development Strategy for the Shire of Victoria Plains for 2024 to 2029. This Strategy establishes the framework for the identification and progression of key economic development actions, initiatives and priorities across the Shire.

Key Economic Indicators

Key indicators of the Victorian Plains economy include:

VICTORIA PLAINS POPULATION	SHARE OF POPULATION 0-14	SHARE OF POPULATION 65+
824 (2022)	16.8% (2023)	20.7% (2023)
SHARE OF ABORIGINAL POPULATION	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	REGISTERED BUSINESSES
3.9% (2021)	2.3% (2023)	171 (2023)
AGRICULTURE SHARE OF JOBS	GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT	ECONOMIC OUTPUT
64% (2021)	\$115m (2023)	\$224.8m (2023)

Economic Challenges and Opportunities

The following economic challenges and opportunities have been identified from an assessment of the region's economic competitiveness.



Figure 1 Key Challenges and Issues



Figure 2 Key Strengths and Opportunities

Vision for the Shire of Victoria Plains

The following vision statement was established in the Shire’s Integrated Strategic Plan and applies to the economic development of the Victoria Plains economy:

Victoria Plains - a Place to Grow

Desired Outcomes

This vision is supported by a series of elements and desired outcomes. These include:

- **Sustainable Demographics** - Improving the demographic balance by attracting and retaining more young and working age people across the Shire to reverse the decline in population.
- **Economic Diversity** - Increase the diversity of economic industries and drivers of the region to generate more employment opportunities.
- **Visitors and Investment** - increase the flow of money, expenditure and investment into the Victoria Plains economy, through greater levels of visitation and inward investment in businesses and industries.
- **Greater Housing Choice** - improve the choice and quality of housing options in the Victoria Plains communities to allow key workers, families and young people to stay and build lives in the region.
- **Revitalised Towns and Communities** - improve the quality and capacity of key community facilities, services, assets and infrastructure in critical town and community precincts to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Economic Development Programs

To deliver on the vision of this Strategy, the following Economic Development Programs are identified. These Programs represent areas of focus or priorities for Victoria Plains.



Figure 3 Economic Development Programs

Priority Actions

A series of actions have been identified for the Economic Development Strategy as part of the Strategy Action Plan. This Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually. Priority actions for each of the Programs for short-term implementation have been identified and summarised below.

Table 1 Summary of Priority Actions

Programs	Priority Action
Encourage Investment in New Infrastructure and Facilities	Advocate for Continued Investment and Upgrades to the Upgrades to the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network – continue to support and participate in the WSFN following the Mogumber Yarawindah Road Upgrade and advocate for continued investment and improvement in the Network to enhance economic connectivity and community safety.
Promote Tourism Opportunities	Develop a Local Tourism Plan for the Shire of Victoria Plains – the Plan will identify key accommodation, amenities, accessibility and assets features and attributes of the Victoria Plains tourism offering. The Plan will also identify key opportunities and investments required to enhance future tourism sector growth and development.
Support New Businesses and Industries	Develop and Implement a Marketing Plan that Promotes Lifestyle and Business Opportunities – the Marketing Plan or Attraction Prospectus will seek to increase awareness of Victoria Plains as a residential, skilled worker, business and investment destination. It will highlight key strengths and drivers of the region as well as outline specific investment and business opportunities.
Revitalise Local Communities	Prepare Local Community Precinct Plans for Victoria Plains Communities – development of local precinct master plans and business cases for 6 communities and settlements across the Shire. These plans will establish opportunities for transformative development from the Australian Government in the communities to increase connections, grow regional economies and service local communities.
Facilitate New Housing Choices	AROC + Dandaragan Key Worker Housing Business Case – as part of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils (and the Shire of Dandaragan) investigate and establish a business case for regional investment in key worker housing. This will focus on quantifying economic and social need for housing and develop a business case as part of local and regional housing investment solutions.

Monitoring Progress and Measuring Outcomes

This Strategy should be reviewed and renewed after 5 years, accounting for new evidence and information and the progress of the region against economic development indicators and measures of success.

Measures for monitoring include:

- Annual population growth rate (Annual - ABS)
- Growth in population aged 15-24 (Annual – ABS)
- Day trip and overnight visitation (Annual - Tourism Research Australia)
- Socio-Economic Status of Shires (5 yearly – SEIFA, Annual – ABS Incomes)
- Value of residential and non-residential building approvals (Annual – ABS)
- Locally registered employing businesses (Annual – ABS)

AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR VICTORIA PLAINS

What is an Economic Development?

“Economic Development” refers to:

any endeavour, project, investment, or strategy aimed at enhancing the financial and communal welfare of individuals. This acknowledges the idea that we exist within a community, not solely an economy, and that economic undertakings should contribute to the betterment of people’s lives.

Effective economic advancement initiatives aim to expand and improve the capabilities of a local economy to generate long-term wealth and prosperity, thereby supporting enhancements in the well-being of residents.

The concept of economic development has evolved over time, transitioning from a focus on mere economic growth and employment metrics to more intricate and comprehensive wellbeing-related goals such as sustainability, quality of life, resilience, social harmony, and integration.

About the Shire of Victoria Plains

The Shire of Victoria Plains is a local government area in the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia, about 160 kilometres north of the state capital, Perth (capital city of Western Australia). It covers an area of 2,569 square kilometres, and its seat of government is the town of Calingiri. The Shire is located in the same timezone as Perth.

The Shire is located in the traditional lands of the Yued region, a Noongar language group north of Perth. The Yued region includes the owns of Leeman, Jurien Bay, Cervantes, Two Rocks, Toodyay, Gingin, Calingiri, Dalwallinu, Coorow, New Norcia and Moora and covers an area of almost 29,254sqkm There are a number of significant sites in the Yued region including caves, some of which are the homes of mythological beings, ceremonial sites, rock art, paintings and artefacts. This region is well known for the Moore River Native Settlement which was opened in the 1920’s. Other sites of significance in the region include the Moora Reserve, Mogumber Mission and Walebing Reserve¹.

In 1871, the Victoria Plains Road District was created over an area extending as far north as Carnamah, to the Indian Ocean on the west and east to the South Australian border. These areas gradually obtained their own local government over the next 40 years. In 1961, the area that remained became the Shire of Victoria Plains.

Three main roads pass through the Shire, Bindoon-Moora Rd, Great Northern Highway and Bindi Bindi-Toodyay Rd, all of which are vital routes for regional development of the Wheatbelt.

The shire is comprised of 7 townships and settlements including New Norcia, Mogumber, Piawaning, Yerecoin, Calingiri, Bolgart and Gillingarra.

The area has a Mediterranean climate, defined by a hot dry summers and cool, wet winters. Its climate means the area has a polarising difference between very hot and dry summer temperatures of high 30C, often surpassing 40C to cold temperatures dropping well below 10C in the winter.²

The agricultural sector in the Shire of Victoria Plains holds a significant position within the broader Wheatbelt economy. With a contribution of 3% to both the Wheatbelt’s total agricultural output and overall value added by agriculture, it serves as a critical pillar of the region’s economic framework. Moreover, the sector has maintained its position as the highest employing industry across the Shire, generating the most employment opportunities in the area as of 2021/22.³

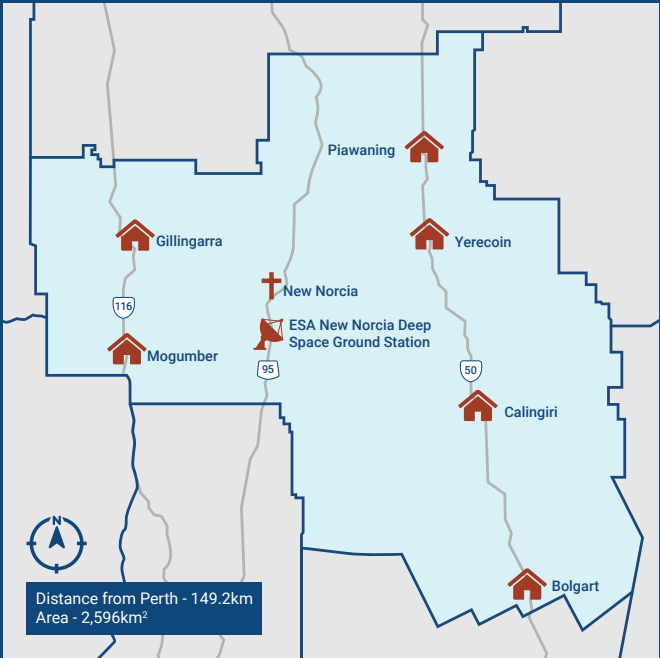


Figure 4 Shire of Victoria Plains Context Map

¹ Noongar Culture (2024), About the Yued Region, accessed at <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/yued/>

² Regional Weather and Climate Guide – Wheatbelt (2019), BOM, accessed at <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/climate-guides/guides/034-Wheatbelt-WA-Climate-Guide.pdf>

³ Census Community Profiles (2021), ABS, accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA58540>

Case Study - European Space Agency's (ESA) first deep space ground station

The space industry in New Norcia, Western Australia, is in its nascent stages, with the recent inauguration of the European Space Agency's (ESA) first deep space ground station. In September 2024 a critical milestone for the construction of the second antenna was reached with the lifting of the 122-tonne reflector dish.

The ESA inaugurated its first deep space ground station in New Norcia. This facility is crucial for ESA's deep space missions, including the Rosetta and Mars Express missions. The region was selected due to its excellent weather conditions, ideal latitude for deep space operations, and its remote location, which minimises interference from urban transmission devices. Western Australia's high-quality telecommunications infrastructure also played a significant role in the decision.

The site is also home to the ESA Biomass Calibration Transponder project, an essential component of ESA's orbital Earth Explorer missions and the Living Planet Programme.

The establishment of the station in Victoria Plains is a major boost to the local economy. It involved local contractors and Australian specialists, fostering job creation and skill development in the region. The collaboration with international satellite construction experts also provided valuable experience and exposure for the local workforce. The facility is the first of several ground stations that ESA plans to build globally, forming an extensive network. This pioneering project in New Norcia positions the region as a key player in global space exploration efforts.

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The presence of this cutting-edge facility can stimulate further economic development by attracting related industries, such as advanced telecommunications, data analysis, and engineering services. Additionally, it opens opportunities for educational institutions to partner on research projects, further enhancing the region's intellectual capital.⁴

Alignment with Policies and Strategies

WALGA underscores the ongoing importance of economic development for Local Governments, including Victoria Plains LGA. Despite improvements post-economic downturn, the focus remains on sustainable and inclusive growth. Local Governments play a significant role, extending beyond traditional responsibilities, with a broad economic footprint and various functions influencing the business environment. WALGA's surveys show economic development as a growing focus, with many Local Governments actively engaged. However, barriers like funding constraints and lack of support hinder a more active role. While half have formal strategies, a consistent approach is lacking.⁵

Key indicators of the Victorian Plains economy include:

- Integrated Strategic Plan and Corporate Business Plan (2022-2032)
- Long-Term Financial Plan
- Asset Management Plan
- Workforce Plan
- Disability Access Inclusion Plan
- Age Friendly Community Plan

In particular, it is noted Integrated Strategic Plan identified through engagement and research a series of Strategic Priorities relating to the economy. These include:

- 2.1 We understand traditional and emerging industries across the Shire
- 2.2 Safe and efficient transport network enables economic growth
- 2.3 Visitors have a positive experience across our communities⁶

These priorities along with those relating to Community, Environment and Civic Leadership form a foundational input into this Strategy.

Strategy Structure

The Victoria Plains Economic Development Strategy seeks to build upon the success and legacy of the recent economic development activity and strategic planning Victoria Plains. Providing an evidence base for decision making, the Strategy establishes a vision and framework for economic development priorities and activities collaboratively by the Shire over the next 5 years. The Strategy is comprised of the following key sections:



Figure 5 Strategy Structure

⁴ European Space Agency (2022) ESA's first deep space ground station opens in Western Australia, accessed at https://www.esa.int/About_Us/Corporate_news/ESA_s_first_deep_space_ground_station_opens_in_Western_Australia

⁵ Local Economic Development (2019), WALGA, accessed at <https://walga.asn.au/getattachment/Policy-Advice-and-Advocacy/Economic-Development/Economic-Development-Framework/Research-Findings-and-Future-Directions.pdf?lang=en-AU>

⁶ Shire of Victoria Plains (2022), Integrated Strategic Plan and Corporate Business Plan 2022-2032 accessed at <https://www.victoriaplains.wa.gov.au/documents/606/1-integrated-strategic-plan-and-corporate-business-plan>

ECONOMIC TRENDS AND PROFILE

Global Mega Trends and Drivers

This section demonstrates the major economic megatrends poised to impact the Shire of Victoria Plains. From Food Security, Global Economy, Digital Technologies, Demographic Change, Cost of Living and Peri-Urban and Rural Living, each megatrend plays a pivotal role in influencing the economic contours of the Shire.

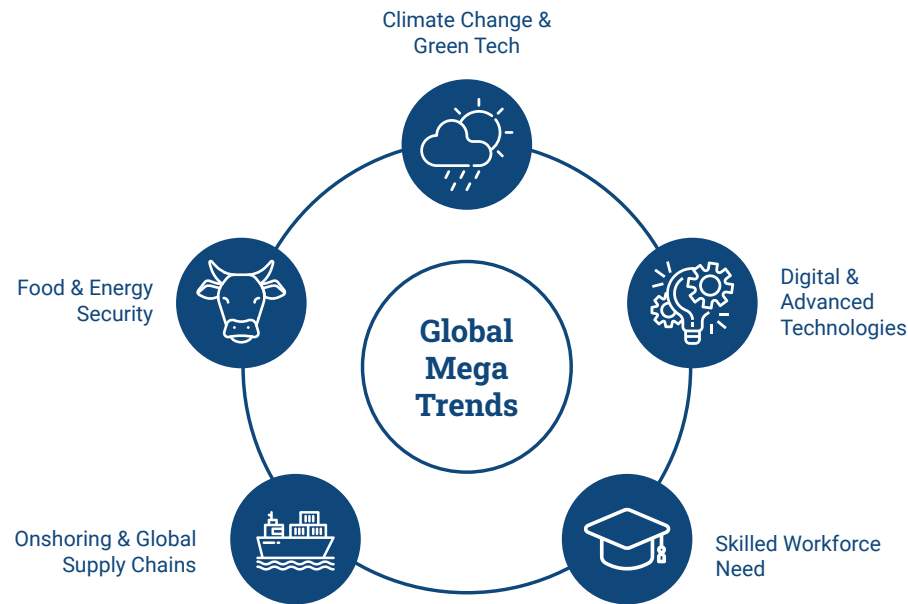


Figure 6 Global Mega-Trends

These trends are highly relevant and impactful for the future economic development and prosperity for Shire of Victoria Plains. Key impacts may include:

- **Climate Change and Green Tech** – climate change is expected to impact agricultural production in the region as well as subject local communities and industries to more frequent and more destructive extreme weather events. However, the growing prominence of “green tech” offers a potential mitigation against the worst effects of climate change. Green Tech will also foster economic opportunities for the region’s natural climate and weather advantages to support green industry opportunities.
- **Digital and Advanced Technologies** – consistent, reliable and high capacity telecommunication infrastructure has long been a challenge for the region. As digital and ecommerce becomes the standard for business and industry, particularly in the post COVID-19 era, such technologies provide an opportunity for local businesses to directly engage and interact with global customers.

- **Skilled Workforce Need** – the trend of ageing demographics across Australia is more acute in regional areas including Victoria Plains. Such ageing represents a particular challenge in terms of skilled workforce access, with a smaller proportion of the population expected to be of working age over the next two decades. At the same time, access to tertiary and applied education institutions will be critical to ensuring workers of the future have the skills needed to support emerging industries.
- **Onshoring and Global Supply Chains** – COVID-19 demonstrated the challenges of relying on traditional global supply chains. In response, countries such as the US and Australia are implementing active “onshoring” policies to attract and establish domestic industrial capacity in critical sectors. These investments include transport and port infrastructure as well as development of critical minerals and resources.
- **Food and Energy Security** – growing global populations coupled with improving socio-economics in developing countries is driving demand for sustainable food and energy supplies. Security of supply is also increasingly at risk by the impacts of climate change and global safety and security risk. This environment will place increased emphasis on the role of Shire of Victoria Plains as a nationally significant food producer and as well as support the development of latent sustainable energy resources.

Case Study - Grevillea Wind Farm

The Grevillea Wind Farm project, located within the Shires of Victoria Plains and Moora, is a \$1.9b renewable energy project set to bolster Western Australia’s clean energy capacity.

This project is designed to produce sustainable energy for up to 70 years, contributing to State and National renewable energy targets and providing substantial economic and environmental benefits to the local community.

The Grevillea Wind Farm is planned to feature at least 100 wind turbines with a combined generation capacity of approximately 680MW. This is sufficient to power thousands of homes, significantly reducing reliance on fossil fuels and lowering greenhouse gas emissions. The farm’s location in the Shires of Victoria Plains and Moora was selected due to its favourable wind conditions.

The project is expected to deliver considerable economic benefits to the local community. During the construction phase, the project will create 400 direct construction jobs, with workers to be accommodated in a dedicated workers camp in the region. Once operational, the wind farm will continue to support up to 40 jobs related to maintenance and operation.

In addition to direct employment, the project will generate economic activity through local services and suppliers. The construction phase will necessitate infrastructure improvements, such as upgrades to local roads and regional power transmission infrastructure, which will have long-term benefits for the community.

At the time of this Strategy, the Grevillea Wind Farm project is commencing engagement with the local community.⁷

⁷ Green Wind Renewables (2024) Grevillea Wind Farm Project Overview

Socio-Economic Profile Of Victoria Plains

This Strategy profiles key economic and social indicators and trends of the Victoria Plains economy. The profile is broken into four broad categories:

- **People** – population, demographic and socio- economic attributes of the people who call Victoria Plains home;
- **Labour Force and Employment** – local labour force, jobs and unemployment;
- **Business and Industry** – employment by industry and business registrations and tourism; and
- **Trade and Economy** – agricultural and mining production, regional exports, industry value added and gross regional product.

People

Data from the ABS indicates that the Victoria Plains’ residential population in 2022 was approximately 824 people⁸. This is down from 935 in 2007, representing a decrease of 111 people or 11.8% over the 15 years at a rate of 0.79% per annum.

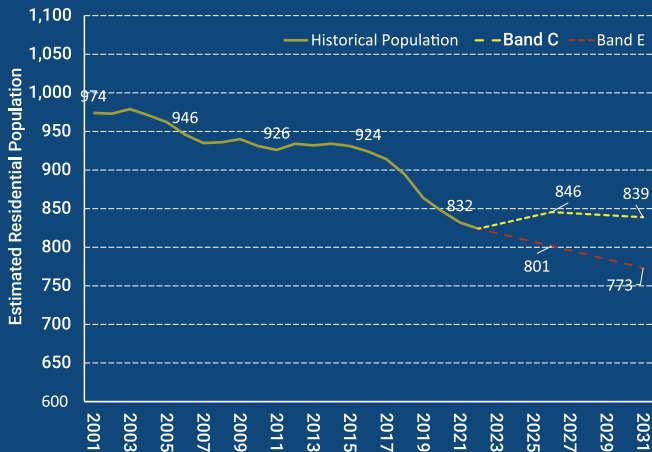


Figure 7 Historical and Projected Population, Shire of Victoria Plains, 2001-2041

This decline is projected to continue. Estimates using growth rates in Band C population projections from the WA Tomorrow (2016), indicate the population will continue to decline at current rates. This will result in the population of the catchment reaching, 773 people by 2031, and 720 by 2041.⁹

In contrast, Band E of the projection show a profile in which the population of the Shire recovers in the short-term before stabilising. This represents the short-term objective and goal for the population of the Shire.

The residential population of the region is older than the rest of Western Australia, with 65+ years accounting for almost one in four residents in 2022.¹⁰ The presence of an older demographic among farmers in the region may contribute to this trend, reflecting the continuity of generational farming practices and the challenges associated with succession planning in agriculture.

In contrast, Victoria Plains has a below average share of residents aged 0-14 and 15-24. This is linked to the trend among households of sending school aged students away to Perth and other locations for secondary and tertiary schooling.

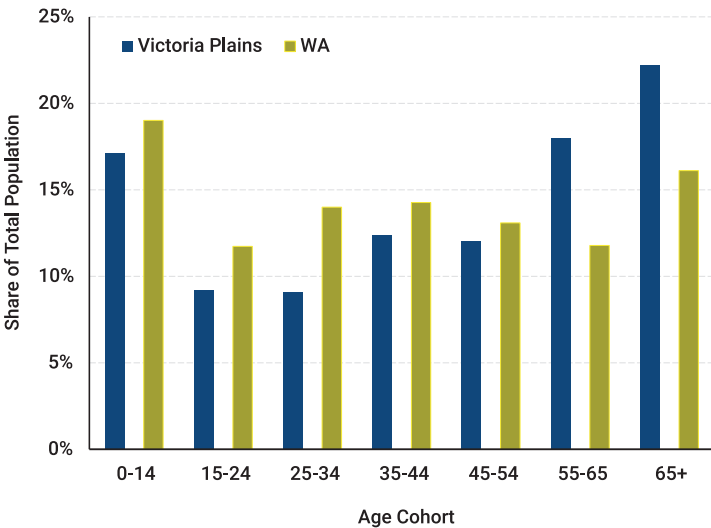


Figure 8 Population by Age, Shire of Victoria Plains, WA 2022

The 2021 Census of Population and Housing (Census) provides information on a range of social and economic characteristics of Australia’s population. SEIFA is one of the commonly used summary measures. SEIFA combines Census data such as income, education, employment, occupation, housing and family structure to summarise the socio-economic characteristics of an area.

⁸ Regional Population by Age and Sex (2023), ABS, accessed at abs.gov.au

⁹ WAPC (2017) WA Tomorrow No 10 Population Projections accessed at wapc.wa.gov.au

¹⁰ Regional Population by Age and Sex (2022), ABS, accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/latest-release#data-downloads>

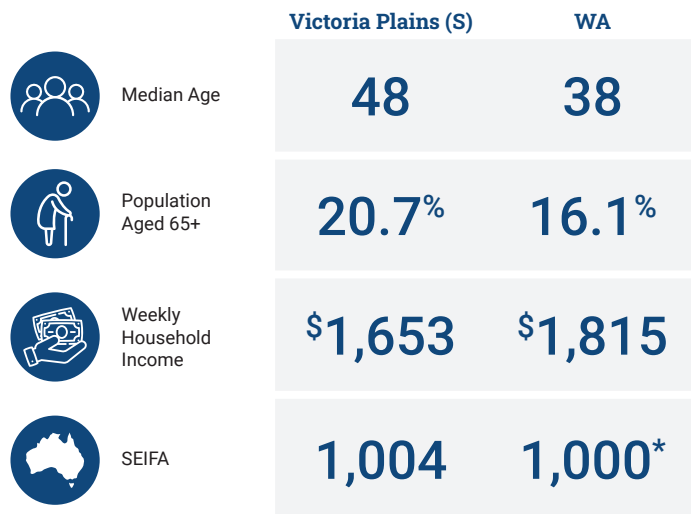


Figure 9 Socio-Economic Attributes, Shire of Victoria Plains, WA 2021/22 (*National Average)

A review of the headline SEIFA Index for Advantage and Disadvantage confirmed that the LGA has an overall socio-economic status level marginally above national averages¹¹. This partly reflects the impact of the older age of the population and the impact of this demographic on average education outcomes, offset by higher economic levels of economic resources, due to farming enterprises.

Labour Force and Employment

Unemployment rates in Victoria Plans have historically remained structurally lower than that of WA, only exceeding the state briefly in one quarter in 2021/22. This low unemployment rate reflects a number of factors including an ageing demographic and strong underlying demand for working aged people to support regional agricultural production as well as essential community services.

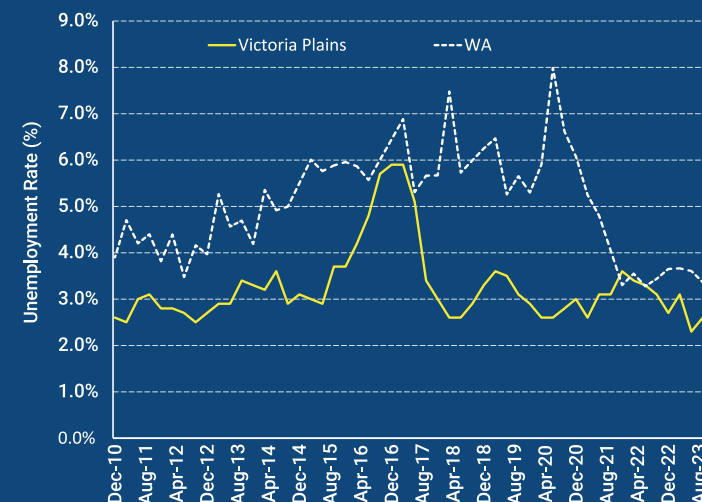


Figure 10 Unemployment Rate, Shire of Victoria Plains, WA Dec 2010-Aug 2023

In 2021, the Shire of Victoria Plains experienced a downturn in job opportunities, totalling 417 jobs, signifying a 13% decrease compared to the 2011 figure of 479.¹²

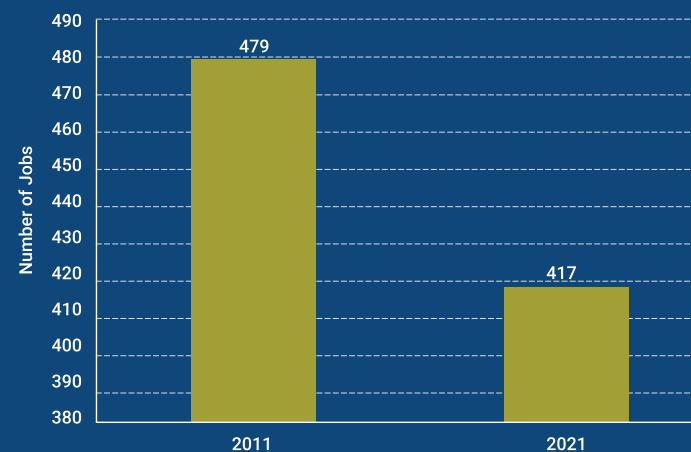


Figure 11 Number of Jobs, Shire of Victoria Plains, 2011-2021

Similar to unemployment rates, this decline is not representative of a lack of employment and economic opportunities but due to the impact of a declining working age population acting as constraint on employment take up.

¹¹ ABS (2023) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia accessed at <https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release>

¹² ABS (2021, 2011), General Community Profile, accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA58540>

Business and Industry

An examination of the employment landscape within Victoria Plains economy highlights several strong sectors, prominently featuring the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Industry. This underscores the region’s heavy reliance on agricultural activities. Subsequently, key sectors such as Wholesale Trade, and Education and Training, play pivotal roles in serving the population of the Shire.

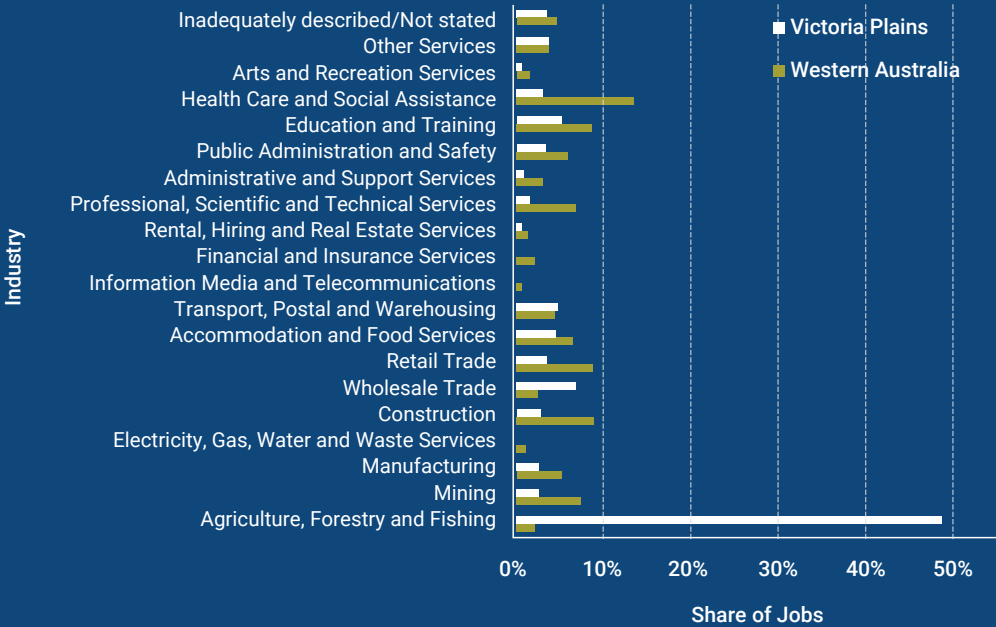


Figure 12 Share of Jobs by Industry, Shire of Victoria Plains, WA

Employment growth in recent years has been primarily driven by Mining which grew by 4 jobs between 2011 and 2021 or 57% over the decade.

Other strong growth sectors since 2011 include:

- Wholesale Trade – up 16% to 29 jobs.

At the same time, most sectors saw declines in total employment including:

- Accommodation and Food Services – down 39% to 19 jobs;
- Education and Training – down 33% to 22 jobs; and
- Retail Trade – down 29% to 15 jobs.

The business community of Victoria Plains has remained broadly stable over the last 4 years to 2023 at between 170 and 175 locally registered businesses. This stability is in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on economic activity in the country, reflecting the resilience of local business. Rates of business registrations in Victoria Plains are well above the State average, with 208 registered business in Victoria Plains for every 1,000 residents, compared to 91 for Western Australia as a whole. ¹³

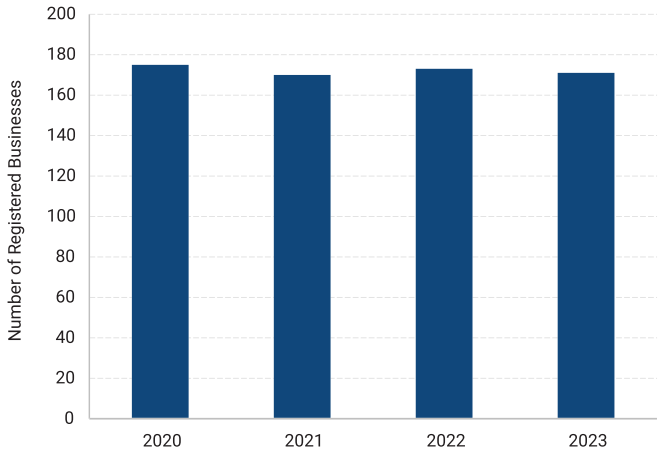


Figure 13 Count of Locally Registered Business, Shire of Victoria Plains LGAs, 2023¹⁴

Victoria Plains, however, has a higher share of employing businesses, with 56.1% of businesses classified as “non-employing” compared to 65% at State and national levels. A review of employing businesses confirms a higher share of businesses employing 1-4 workers (compared to the Wheatbelt and WA) but a below average share of businesses employing more than 4 workers.

The largest number of businesses in Shire of Victoria Plains are in the Agricultural sector (349 businesses), followed by Real Estate, Rental and Hiring1 (54), Construction (29) and Transport, Postal and Warehousing (25).

Victoria Plains is home to a number of highly desirable and attractive tourism assets and destinations that currently underpin visitation to the region. Major attractors include:

- **Carrah Wildflower Walks** – Guided wildflower walks through good quality wandoo and marri woodlands, followed by either high tea in our strawbale home or billy tea around a campfire.
- **Mogumber New Year’s Eve Rodeo** – this annual rodeo, run by the Mogumber Outback Club, has become a major event in the State’s rodeo calendar, attraction thousands to the volunteer-constructed Mogumber Arena for rodeo, New Years Eve celebrants, food, drink and dancing.

¹³ ABS (2023) Count of Businesses accessed at abs.gov.au
¹⁴ ABS (2023) Count of Registered Businesses, accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au>
¹⁵ New Norcia (2024), Visit, accessed at <https://www.newnorcia.com.au/visit/your-day/your-day-at-new-norcia>

- **New Norcia Benedictine Community** – visitors can experience the architecture, cultural and historic heritage, art galleries and museum and food and wine of this uniquely country-side spiritual retreat.
- **Piawaning Expo** – Piawaning Expo is a celebration of local history, family, agriculture, and community spirit. Gather your friends and family and enjoy everything from captivating performances to delightful market.
- **The Yerecoin Market** – Held annually, The Yerecoin Market is a celebration of the town's talented makers, creators and small businesses.

Emerging opportunities have been identified in Recreational Vehicle/”Grey Nomad” markets as well as in space-related tourism (with the investment by ESA) and farm stays and food-based agriculture. Such opportunities will require investments in accommodation options, transport infrastructure and branding.

Case Study - New Norcia Benedictine Community

New Norcia, founded in 1847 by Spanish Benedictine monks Dom José Benito Serra and Dom Rosendo Salvado, is a unique settlement in Victoria Plains. Initially established as a Christian mission for Indigenous peoples, it has evolved into a significant cultural and tourism hub, contributing to the region’s economic development.

Today, New Norcia continues operation as an Institute for Benedictine Studies providing courses, retreats, and resources to promote understanding of the monastic tradition, enhancing the town’s spiritual and intellectual appeal. As well as this, New Norcia holds a tourism appeal. It boasts 27 National Trust-classified buildings, olive groves, and a peaceful ambiance, all maintained by the resident Benedictine monks.

Key attractions include:

- **Museum and Art Gallery** – Showcasing historical artworks and artifacts, offering guided tours to immerse visitors in local heritage.
- **Roadhouse** – Providing essential services such as fuel, groceries, café offerings, and accommodation for campers and caravaners.
- **New Norcia Bakeries** – Famous for its bread baked in a historic wood-fired oven, along with other treats like nut cake and almond biscotti.
- **Monastery Guesthouse** – Accommodating up to 24 guests, offering a chance to experience the Benedictine lifestyle.
- **Camping Facilities** – Limited powered and non-powered sites with basic amenities for campers.

New Norcia remains a vital asset to the Victoria Plains region, blending its historical significance with modern tourism and educational activities. Its enduring legacy and diverse offerings continue to attract visitors, contributing to the economic development strategy of Victoria Plains. Despite its troubled past, New Norcia’s unique blend of history and culture ensures its place as a captivating destination.¹⁵

¹⁵ New Norcia (2024), Visit, accessed at <https://www.newnorcia.com.au/visit/your-day/your-day-at-new-norcia>

Trade and Economy

The Shire of Victoria Plains represents a major agricultural asset to the Wheatbelt in regard to both crop farming and livestock production. Its strategic regional location relative to Perth (including major key export infrastructure of Fremantle Port and Perth International Airport), means that Shire of Victoria Plains industries have ready access to global markets.

Agriculture, particularly livestock production and broadacre cropping, plays a central role in the value added of Victoria Plains. The value of agricultural commodities in the Wheatbelt accounts for 61% of Western Australia, with the Shire of Victoria Plains accounting to 8% of the Wheatbelt and 5% of Western Australia.¹⁶

Table 2 Agriculture Production Indicator, Victoria Plains, Wheatbelt and WA

Agriculture Indicators	Victoria Plains	Wheatbelt	WA
Total Agricultural Land Use (ha)	759,189	35,671,315	253,723,433
Total Production of Crops (t)	275,477	11,366,932	16,518,238
Total Value of Crops (\$)	\$111,057,855	\$4,535,497,649	\$7,342,052,634
Total Livestock Production (No.)	442,455	18,234,114	44,346,817
Total Value of Livestock (slaughtered) (\$)	\$7,427,234	\$977,450,974	\$2,027,478,940
Total Value of Livestock Products (\$)	\$4,564,269	\$538,403,304	\$831,809,746

The Shire of Victoria Plains also hosts several operational mines, all focused on extracting construction materials.

Table 3 Operating Mines, Shire of Victoria Plains, 2023

Mine	Mined Commodity
Mogumber-Yarrawindah Rd Mogumber Lot 127 / Menzies Quarries	Construction Material
Mogumber-Yarrawindah Rd Mogumber Lot 127 / Shire of Victoria Plains	Construction Material
Burnett Rd Yarawindah Lot 32 / Catalano	Construction Material
Burnett Rd Yarawindah Lot 32 / Main Roads WA	Construction Material
Bindi Bindi-Toodyay Rd Bolgart Lot 27248 / Ethan Park Contractors	Construction Material

¹⁶ Agricultural Commodities (2021), ABS, accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/agriculture/value-agricultural-commodities-producedaustralia/2020-21>

More mining and resource development opportunities are currently progressing including:

- **Caravel Copper Project** – Caravel Minerals is developing the Caravel Copper Project, located within a world-class, 30km mineralised copper porphyry system just 150km northeast of Perth in Western Australia. The Project has a Mineral Resource Estimate of 3.03 million tonnes of contained copper and an Ore Reserve of 1.4 million tonnes, making it Australia's largest undeveloped copper deposit and the fourth-largest copper discovery worldwide in the last decade.
- **Julimar Copper Project** – The Julimar Nickel-Copper-Platinum Exploration Project forms part of Chalice's large-scale exploration portfolio in the new West Yilgarn Province. The new province is entirely unexplored and is considered one of the most exciting new nickel sulphide provinces globally.
- **Mogumber Lithium** – Tambourah Metals and SQM recently commenced drilling for lithium at the Mogumber project in Western Australia.

Opportunities in gas exploration also exist in the region.

In 2021, thirteen (13) sectors/industries generated more than \$100m in GVA for the Victoria Plains economy, with the largest shares in the Agriculture, Mining and Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services.

Table 4 Gross Value Added by Industry, Victoria Plains, 2022¹⁷

Industry	Gross Value Added (\$M)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	\$48.9
Mining	\$13.1
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	\$10.4
Wholesale Trade	\$7.7
Public Administration and Safety	\$5.0
Education and Training	\$3.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$3.3
Manufacturing	\$2.6
Accommodation and Food Services	\$1.8
Other Services	\$1.8
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	\$1.4
Retail Trade	\$0.9
Arts and Recreation Services	\$0.4

¹⁷ REMPLAN (2022), Economy Insights – Wheatbelt Region, accessed at <https://app.remplan.com.au/wheatbeltregion/economy/industries/valueadded?state=Ln3lSolWMq2cdMaVfyzN6vtE72DoTyTpS0eX0ie9OCNAvA5cqBaQi8laaUZIESXXkNTNyX>

This results in a Gross Regional Product for the Shire of Victoria Plains economy in 2023 of over \$115m and Economic Output worth over \$224m. This is a sizeable economy for a population of under 900 people, reflected in a Gross Regional Product per capita for the area that is higher than Wheatbelt (\$119,400) but not quite as high as WA (\$167,422), both of which have a higher exposure to mining activity.



Figure 14 GRP per Resident, Victoria Plains, Wheatbelt, WA, 2022¹⁸



¹⁸ REMPLAN (2022), Economy Insights – Wheatbelt Region accessed at <https://app.remplan.com.au/wheatbeltregion/economy/industries/value-added?state=Ln3lSolWMq2cdMaVfyzN6vtE72DoTyTpS0eX0ie9OCNAvA5cqBaQi8laaUZIESXXkNTNyX>

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Community and Business Survey

As part of the development of the strategy, two online surveys were published online by the Shire of Victoria Plains. The surveys provided an opportunity for business, community organisations and residents to contribute to the process of identifying key strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities for the future of the Shire of Victoria Plains economy.

Both community and organisation responses identified the Natural Environment, Productive Industry, Market Access and Export and Visitor Attraction as key strengths. In contrast, Demographics, Residential Place of Choice, Skills and Qualifications and Business and Entrepreneurship were identified as weaknesses. Interestingly, Visitor Attraction was also identified as a weakness.

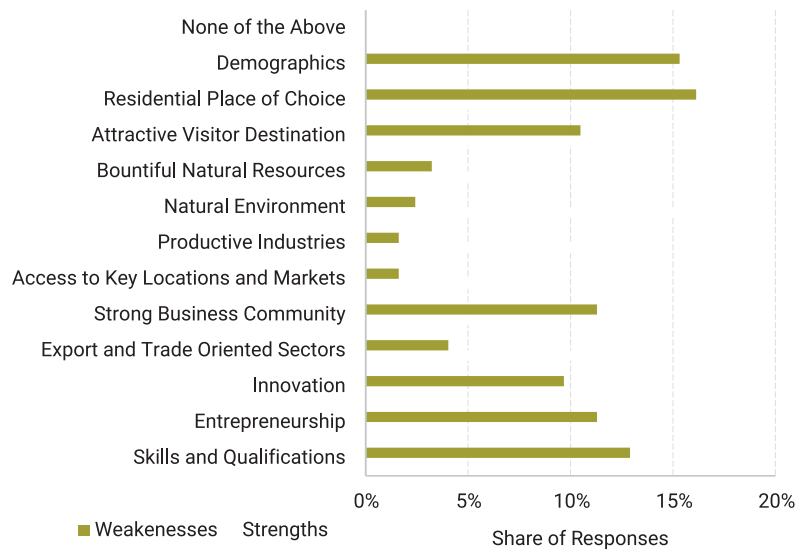


Figure 15 Key Strengths and Weaknesses of the Victoria Plains Economy, Community and Organisation Surveys, April/May 2024

Examining the results of responses to a series of key aspirational/goal oriented questions about the economy, Respondents broadly agreed that Victoria Plaions businesses are sustainably profitable and the area is attractive for industry. However, there were some views that the employment generated could be of a higher quality. Some concerns were also raised on the resilience of the Shire economy to external shocks.

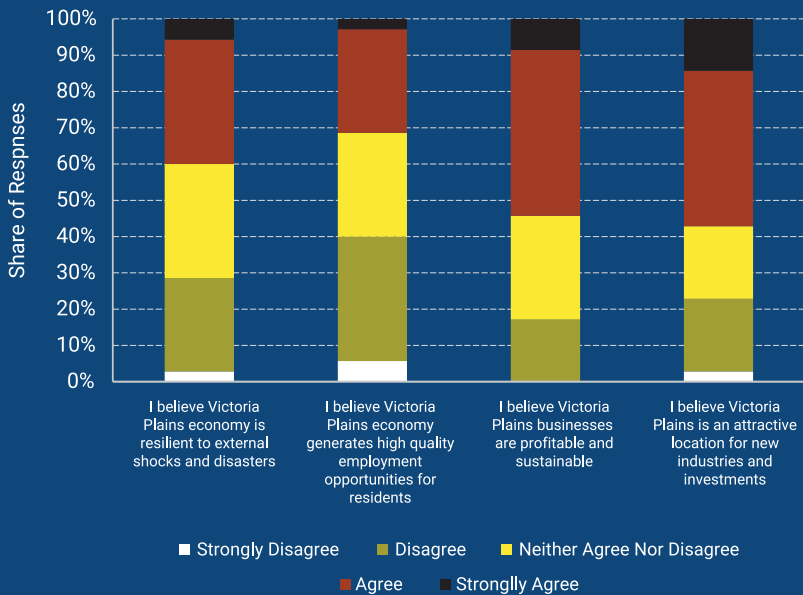


Figure 16 Response to Statements about the Victoria Plains Economy, Community and Organisation Surveys, April/May 2024

Summary of Challenges and Opportunities

Key Challenges and Issues Facing the Shire of Victoria Plains Economy

Major challenges and issues facing the Shire of Victoria Plains economy, now and into the future, are summarised below.



Figure 17 Key Challenges and Issues

The Shire of Victoria Plains has a small and ageing population that impacts the size of local markets and the availability of workers (and housing to accommodate new workers). This is partly a reflection of the existence of an agricultural mono-economy in the region (exposing Shire of Victoria Plains to the impact of trends in farm consolidation). This declining labour force, coupled with low unemployment and decentralised settlement pattern impacts the viability of core and essential services across the Shire as well as the capacity for new and emerging industries and business to be developed.

Strengths and Opportunities for Growth

However, Shire of Victoria Plains also possesses a range of key economic strengths and opportunities for growth, as summarised below.



Figure 18 Key Strengths and Opportunities

Shire of Victoria Plains is presently a \$100m economy with strong alignment to major food security and renewable energy megatrends. The region's proximity and accessibility to Perth, existing and emerging tourism assets and a diversity of regional destinations and townships represent significant opportunities and strengths upon which growth and prosperity can be enhanced and sustained into the future. This will require leveraging the entrepreneurial nature of the community and facilitating increased population growth and workforce access through industry attraction, housing supply availability and critical infrastructure investment.



VISION, OUTCOMES & PROGRAMS

Vision for Shire of Victoria Plains Economy

The following vision statement was established in the Shire’s Integrated Strategic Plan and applies to the economic development of the Victoria Plains economy:

Victoria Plains - a Place to Grow

Desired Outcomes

This vision is supported by a series of elements and desired outcomes. These include:

- **Sustainable Demographics** – improving the demographic balance by attracting and retaining younger and working age people across the Shire to reverse the decline in population.
- **Economic Diversity and Opportunities** – increase the diversity of economic industries and drivers of the region to generate more employment opportunities.
- **Visitors and Investment** – increase the flow of money, expenditure and investment into the Victoria Plains economy, through greater levels of visitation and inward investment in businesses and industries.
- **Greater Housing Choice** – improve the choice and quality of housing options in the Victoria Plains communities to allow key workers, families and young people to stay and build lives in the region.
- **Revitalised Towns and Communities** – improve the quality and capacity of key community facilities, services, assets and infrastructure in critical town and community precincts to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Role of Local Government

Shire of Victoria Plains Shires in partnership with Shire of Victoria Plains itself, fulfil a range of roles and functions in meeting the local economic development needs of the region:



Figure 19 Role of Local Government in Economic Development

Economic Development Programs

To deliver on the vision of this Strategy, the following Economic Development Programs are identified. This Programs represent areas of focus or priorities for Shire of Victoria Plains and associated Shires.



Figure 20 Economic Development Programs

Each of these Economic Development Programs are examined below:

- **Encourage Investment in New Infrastructure and Facilities** – the Shire of Victoria Plains will advocate and support investment from state and federal governments in critical, enabling and catalytic infrastructure and services including telecommunications, electricity, regional waste, social infrastructure and health care.
- **Promote Tourism Opportunities** – the Shire of Victoria Plains will facilitate the development and growth of the tourism sector within the region. This may include tourism product development, visitor accommodation attraction, sector strategy and planning development and tourism asset and attraction investment.
- **Attract New Skills, Businesses and Industries** – the Shire of Victoria Plains will seek to attract and retain new skilled workers, businesses and industries to the region to help improved the demographic and economic sustainability and prosperity of the region and leverage key opportunities and advantages. This includes increasing awareness as well as facilitating investment and development in enabling activities such as industrial land.
- **Revitalise Local Communities** – the Shire of Victoria Plains will facilitate the revitalisation of and investment in local communities in the region including promoting precinct planning, community facility funding attraction and regional-level strategic planning to enhance the liveability and amenity of towns for new and existing residents.
- **Facilitate New Housing Choices** – the Shire of Victoria Plains will work collaboratively with regional partners and State and Federal Government agencies to identify opportunities for the delivery and development of new housing choices and models.

These Programs do not preclude Shire of Victoria Plains from undertaking any and all economic development activities, initiatives, policies and strategies as is required or beneficial for communities. Where possible, all such activities should be pursued collaboratively to maximise community benefit, economic impact and value for money.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Current Major Projects

The following major projects, renewals and refurbishments are being progressed as part of the economic and social development responsibilities of the Shire of Victoria Plains. These represent existing major economic development actions and projects by Council and form the foundation of future activities:

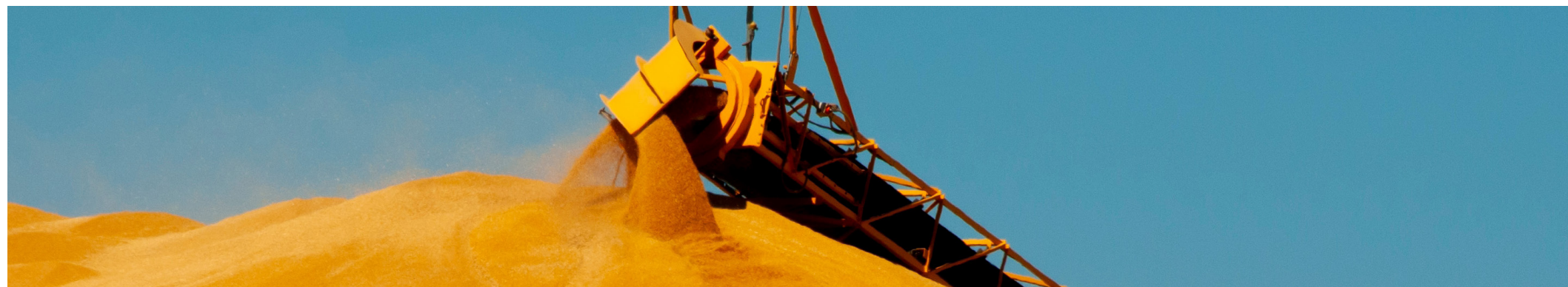
- **Calingiri New Norcia Road and Toodyay Bindi Bindi Road Intersection Realignment** – This project will not only allow for an improved and safe access from the Calingiri New Norcia Road onto the Toodyay Bindi Bindi Road, but will also provide a parcel of land for the upgrade of the CBH Grain Receival site at Calingiri.
- **E-Waste Transfer Stations (Underway)** – As part of the Shire's commitment to a cleaner and greener environment, the Shire will be building three fit for purpose E-waste transfer stations, one for each of the landfills at Bolgart, Calingiri and Mogumber.
- **Mogumber Yarawindah Road Upgrade** – The scope of the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network (WSFN) Program is to upgrade local roads that play a key role in the movement of primarily agricultural freight in the Wheatbelt Region of Western Australia. Agricultural and primary industry products transported along the road network from producer to strategic receival point/port includes grain, livestock, oilseed, seafood, dairy, wool, horticulture, and mineral sands. The Secondary Freight Network in the Wheatbelt region comprises some 4,400km of Local Government roads.
- **EV Charging Infrastructure** – funding has been budgeted to commence the roll out of EV charging infrastructure across the Shire. Initial charging stations are to be installed in Calingiri and Mogumber.
- **Housing Support Program** – Shire of Victoria Plains has received funding support through Stream 1 of the Australian Government's \$500m Housing Support Program. The HSP will support the delivery of increased housing supply by funding projects that seek to deliver enabling infrastructure and provide amenities to support new housing development or improve building planning capability or deliver social housing. Stream 1, aims to provide funding to state, territory and local governments for projects which will improve planning capability.
- **Toodyay Bindi Bindi Road – RRG** – Toodyay – Bindi Bindi Road is a part of a regional network that joins Toodyay with Great Northern Highway at Bindi Bindi and is an important north-south heavy haulage route. It provides access for agricultural produce and mining requirements and is also a heavy haulage route for a strategic grain receival point at Calingiri. This road is a connector route to four towns within the municipality as well as a part of a tourist route from Toodyay, Calingiri, and New Norcia. Toodyay - Bindi Bindi Road in Toodyay Shire is a RAV 4 (conditional), while in Moora and Victoria Plains Shires it is a RAV 5 road.
- **Piawaning Reverse Osmosis Plant Upgrade** – The Piawaning Reverse Osmosis Plant has reached the end of its useful life. The quality of the current water source has diminished significantly and can no longer effectively filtrate the increased levels of iron oxide. As a result, the project will see a new bore located just to the north of the Piawaning townsite, in Shire controlled land. A new reverse osmosis plant with remote monitoring will also be installed at the bore site
- **Shire Water Strategy** – Funding has been secured to commence development of a water strategy for the Shire of Victoria Plains, focusing on ensuring that residents and industry have ready and secure access to suitable and sufficient water supplies in the long-term

Priority Economic Development Actions

A series of actions have been identified for the Economic Development Strategy as part of the Strategy Action Plan. This Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually. Priority actions for each of the Programs for short-term implementation have been identified and summarised below.

Table 5 Summary of Priority Action

Programs	Priority Action	Description	Status	Council Role	Partners
Encourage Investment in New Infrastructure and Facilities	Advocate for Continued Investment and Upgrades to the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network	Continue to support and participate in the WSFN following the Mogumber Yarawindah Road Upgrade and advocate for continued investment and improvement in the Network to enhance economic connectivity and community safety.	Underway	Advocate Partner	WSFN Group MRWA Department of Transport CBH
Promote Tourism Opportunities	Develop a Local Tourism Plan for the Shire of Victoria Plains	The Plan will identify key tourism features and attributes of the Shire of Victoria Plains, including assessments, amenities, accessibility, and assets, and will spatially organise these to showcase the area's extensive tourism offerings.	Underway	Deliver	Tourism WA Asset Owners New Norcia ESA
Support New Businesses and Industries	Develop and implement a Marketing Plan that Promotes Lifestyle and Business Opportunities	The Marketing Plan or Attraction Prospectus will seek to increase awareness of Victoria Plains as a residential, skilled worker, business and investment destination. It will highlight key strengths and drivers of the region as well as outline specific investment and business opportunities.	To Be Commenced	Deliver Partner	Local business and community groups
Revitalise Local Communities	Prepare Local Community Precinct Plans for Victoria Plains Communities	Development of local precinct master plans and business cases for 6 communities and settlements across the Shire. These plans will establish opportunities for transformative development from the Australian Government in the communities to increase connections, grow regional economies and service local communities. The project is contingent on successful Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP) funding.	To Be Commenced	Deliver Partner	Progress Associations Community Organisations Australia Government
Facilitate New Housing Choices	AROC + Dandaragan Key Worker Housing Business Case	As part of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils (and the Shire of Dandaragan) investigate and establish a business case for regional investment in key worker housing. This will focus on quantifying economic and social need for housing and develop a business case as part of local and regional housing investment solutions.	Underway	Advocate Partner	AROC WDC Development WA Property developers and land owners



IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Partnering for Success

The successful implementation of this Strategy will require Shire of Victoria Plains and associates Shires to partner with a diverse range of stakeholders. These may include:

- Australian Government agencies
- State Government Departments
- Wheatbelt Development Commission
- RDA Wheatbelt
- Community and not for profit organisations
- First Nations Groups and Aboriginal Corporations
- Private sector businesses and investors

When partnering, Shire of Victoria Plains will seek to clearly define its role and function within the partnership.

Monitoring Progress and Measuring Outcomes

This Strategy should be reviewed and renewed after 5 years, accounting for new evidence and information and the progress of the region against economic development indicators and measures of success.

Potential measures for monitoring include:

- Positive annual population growth rate (Annual - ABS)
- Positive growth in population aged 15-24 (Annual - ABS)
- Increased day trip and overnight visitation (Annual - Tourism Research Australia)
- Improvement in Socio-Economic Status of Shires (5 yearly - SEIFA, Annual - ABS Incomes)
- Value of residential and non-residential building approvals (Annual - ABS)
- Growth in locally registered employing businesses (Annual - ABS)



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