



Murrumbidgee
COUNCIL

Economic Development Strategy 2019



An aerial photograph of a rural town. In the foreground, there's a large, flat, light-brown field. To the left, a river flows through a dense line of trees. The middle ground shows a residential area with many small houses, some with swimming pools, and a large green field. In the background, there are large, rectangular agricultural fields in shades of green and brown. A yellow text box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

Statement of Acknowledgement

Murrumbidgee Council acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present.

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Executive Summary

The Murrumbidgee Council Economic Development Strategy, with proposed actions, aims to guide economic development activity in the Council area.

It was developed with the assistance of key stakeholders, individuals and organisations to ensure a proactive and engaged approach is taken towards the sustainable growth of the Murrumbidgee Council area.

The information gathered highlights both opportunities and challenges in this regional economy.

Six strategic themes were identified to support the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy:

- Attract new business investment
- Support existing business to grow and diversify
- Education, training and skills development
- Grow the population
- Infrastructure
- Develop and promote tourism



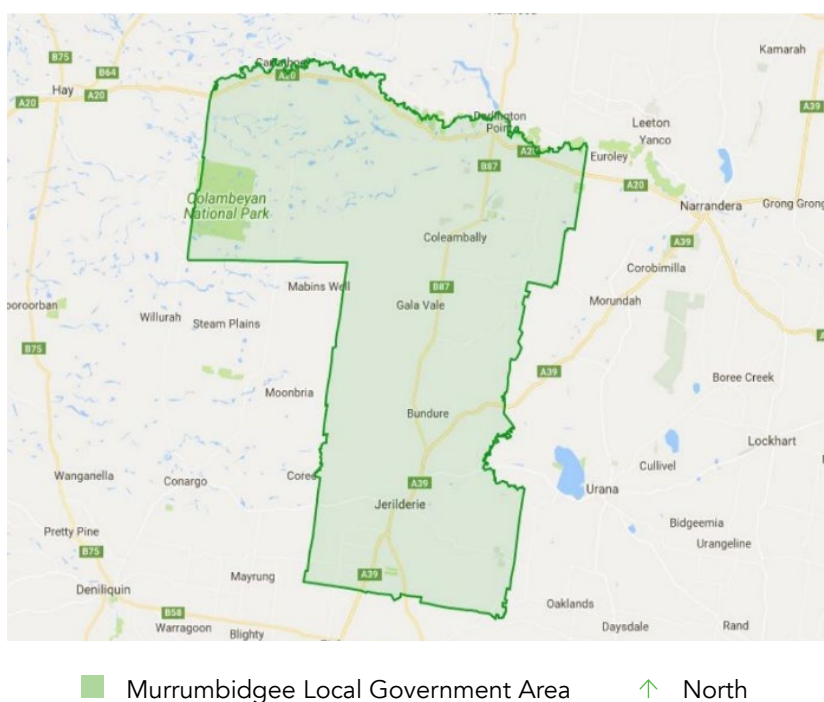
1.0 Introduction

The Economic Development Strategy was developed with the assistance of key stakeholders, individuals and organisations involved in the consultation process. The strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure currency and alignment with community, industry and government expectations.

1.1 Background

Murrumbidgee Council is a local government area in the Riverina region of south-western New South Wales. The Council was formed on 12 May 2016 when the Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee Shire Local Government Areas (LGAs) were merged into one LGA. It falls within the two State electoral divisions of Murray and Albury, and the Federal electorate of Farrer.

The population of the Murrumbidgee Council area is estimated as 3,961 (Source: ABS Estimated Resident Population, June 2018). The area comprises the three townships of Coleambally, Darlington Point and Jerilderie, and the surrounding rural localities of Argoon, Bundure, Carrathool (part), Coree (part), Four Corners (part), Gala Vale, Logie Brae (part), Mabins Well (part), MairJimmy, Nyora, Oaklands (part), Steam Plains (part), Waddi and Yamma, all of which form one vibrant rural community.



Murrumbidgee Council is located within a rich and diverse agricultural area bordered by the Riverina and Murray regions, home of NSW's food bowl. The mix of temperate climate, rural location, food and fibre production, and the natural assets of the Murrumbidgee River and Billabong Creek make the area ideally suited to agricultural production. The area is proud of its deep connection to the land that includes recognition of Indigenous heritage.

The Council area is located between the fertile irrigation and river systems of the Riverina and the dryland agricultural area of the Hay Plains. It covers a geographical area of 6,880 square kilometres (688,302 ha).

The Council plays a strong role in providing services and facilities to support those agricultural activities and the families and businesses within the respective communities of the region.

The Murrumbidgee Council area is linked to major markets including Melbourne (approximately 420 kilometres south) and Sydney (approximately 640 kilometres north east). These links have the potential to drive major economic opportunities.

1.2 Purpose of the Strategy

Murrumbidgee Council is seeking an Economic Development Strategy with proposed actions to guide economic development activity in the Council area.

The Economic Development Strategy will identify opportunities to support sustainable regional economic development, promote economic diversification, and identify opportunities to increase economic output and value-added production of the Murrumbidgee Council area, Riverina and NSW economies. A key outcome of the Economic Development Strategy is a shared vision for Murrumbidgee Council which has been developed through detailed community engagement and data analysis.

The Economic Development Strategy considers agriculture and manufacturing as the sectors that will contribute to the future economic development of the Murrumbidgee Council area. The construction industry is also currently generating a significant number of jobs, both directly and through flow on impacts.

The Strategy also highlights the potential growth for tourism development and promotion. It guides the direction for tourism in the region, and emphasizes the need for regular reviews to ensure it is properly aligned with current trends and visitor expectations. It is expected the tourism aspects of this strategy will also be reviewed in line with the Destination Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018.

Overall, the Murrumbidgee Council Economic Development Strategy highlights the proposed actions needed to create a sustainable and competitive economy that can respond effectively to changes in demographics, workforce, technology and climate. It identifies the collaboration and partnerships needed to support a whole-of Council and community vision for economic development and constructive steps to achieve outcomes.

1.3 Strategy Process

To assist in understanding how the Economic Development Strategy has been developed, a summary of the key stages in the project is presented below:

Research and analysis	Stakeholder engagement	Strategy and Action Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify, collect and collate socio-economic data.• Review of local, regional and state plans• Identify and analyse trends and influencing factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement with key stakeholders to ensure they have the opportunity to contribute to and guide the process through forums, meetings, and one-on-one interviews.• A business survey• Hosting of Destination Management Planning Forums in Darlington Point and Jerilderie	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collating the structure of the strategy.• Production and distribution of a draft Strategy for comment by community and key stakeholders.• Presenting the strategy to Council for consideration and feedback, amend accordingly and submit the final strategy for implementation.

2.0 Economic Snapshot

2.1 Economy



Gross Regional Product (2018)

\$486 million

(Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research NIEIR 2017)

Value of Annual Exports

\$222.5 million

(Source: NIEIR 2018)

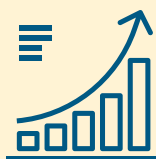


Construction: most productive industry

Generating \$155 million in 2017/2018

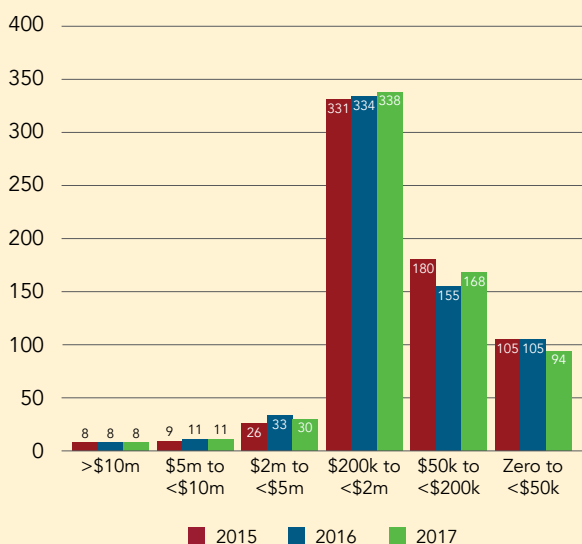
5th highest LGA in NSW for Worker Productivity (GDP/worker) at \$206,641

(Source: NIEIR, 2018)



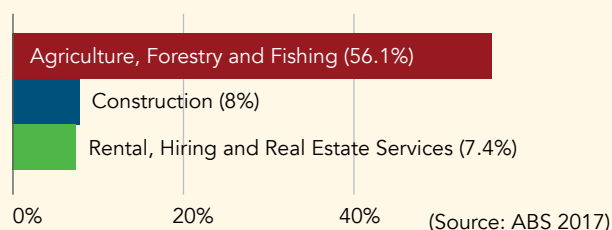
Value add for Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
\$109.376 million

Business Counts (turnover) for Murrumbidgee Council area



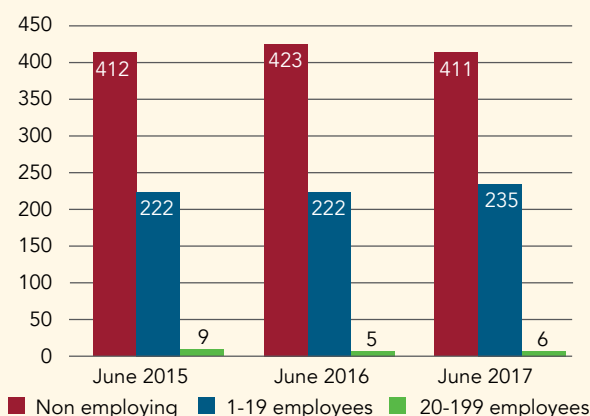
601 Businesses Registered

Industries with the most number of business:



Business Counts by Staff Size by Year

From the 411 non-employing business in the Murrumbidgee Council area, 59% of these are in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry, compared to 35% of businesses in the Riverina. (Source: ABSBR, 2017)



1,970 Jobs

(Source: NIEIR 2018)



Land area
688,502 ha

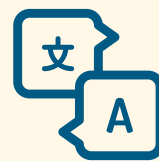
Approximately
106,000 hectares
of farming land
is irrigated



2.2 Population and Demographics



41



Population estimated as 3,961

(Source: ABS Estimated Resident Population, June 2018)

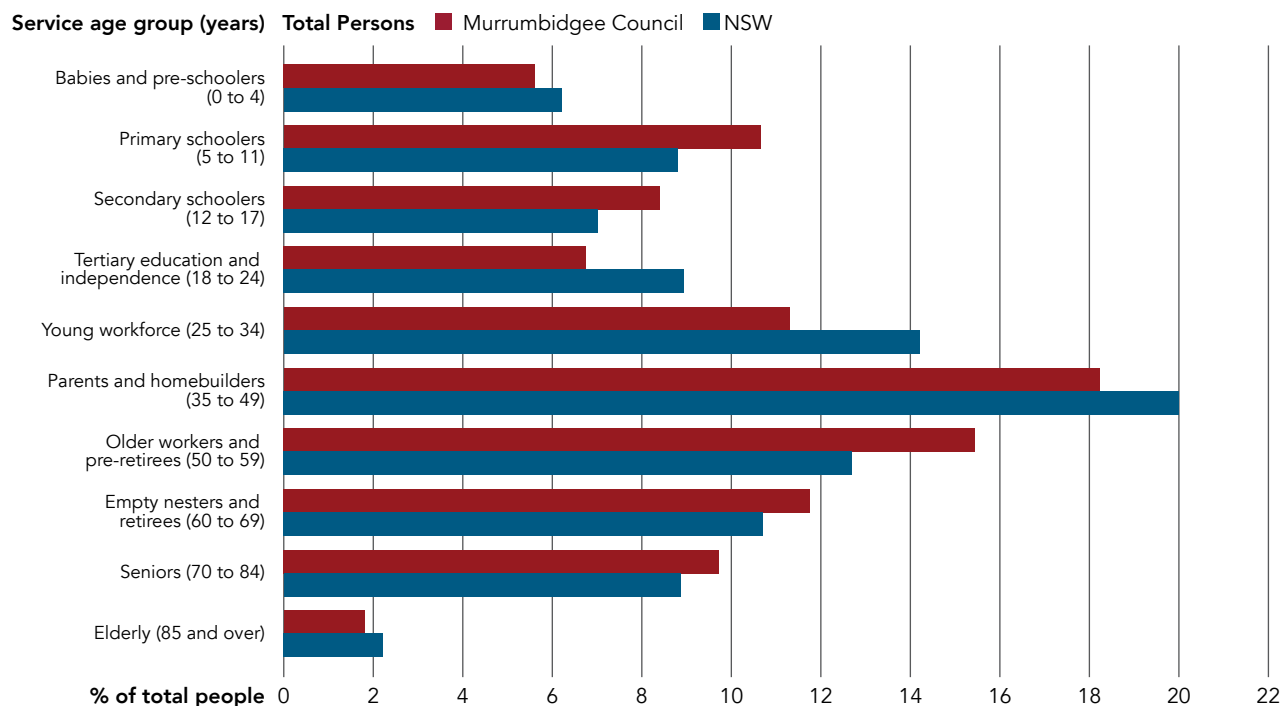
Median age 41 (compared to 43 for Regional NSW and 38 for NSW)

Median weekly household income \$1,180 (compared to \$1,166 for Regional NSW)

6% of the population is overseas born (compared to 28% for NSW)

3% of the population speak a language other than English at home (compared to 25% for NSW)

Age Structure - service age groups, 2016



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016 (Usual residence data).

2.2.1 Indigenous population

The Murrumbidgee area is home to a significant indigenous population. The Murrumbidgee River, in Wiradjuri country, was central to the local Aboriginal lifestyles, especially as a source of food (Hope, 1995, cited in Eardley 1999). In 2016, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Murrumbidgee was 284. This represents round 7.4% of the total Murrumbidgee population, well above the regional NSW average of 5.5% and 2.9% for NSW. From an economic perspective, a number of indigenous owned or led organisation have established themselves in Murrumbidgee, including Tirkandi Innaburra and Waddi Housing and Advancement Corporation.

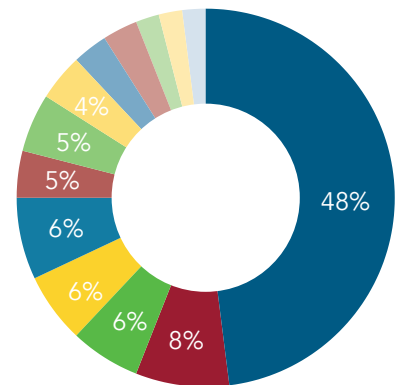
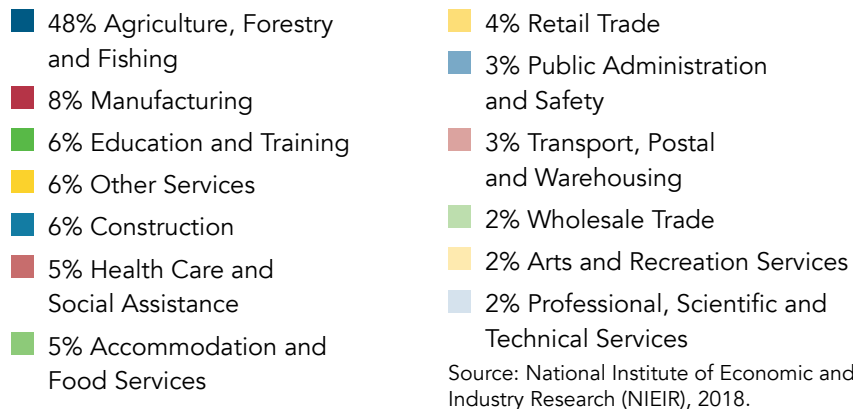
2.2.2 Employment

The three largest industries by employment in 2017-2018 were:

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (945 people or 48%);
- Manufacturing (159 people or 8.1%);
- Education and Training (122 people or 6.2%).

In combination, the three largest industries accounted for 1,226 people in total or 62.3% of the local workers.

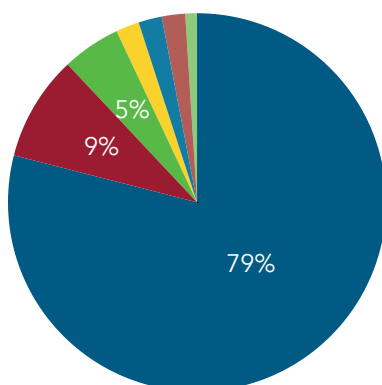
Employment by Industry 2018



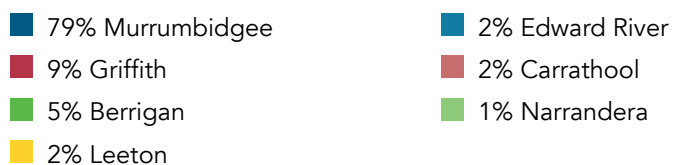
The breakdown of Murrumbidgee Council area's workforce is:

- Managers (33.5%)
- Labourers (17.2%)
- Technicians and trade workers (9.7%)

Of the 1,575 people who work in the Murrumbidgee Council area, 79% also live in the area.
(Source: ABS, 2016)



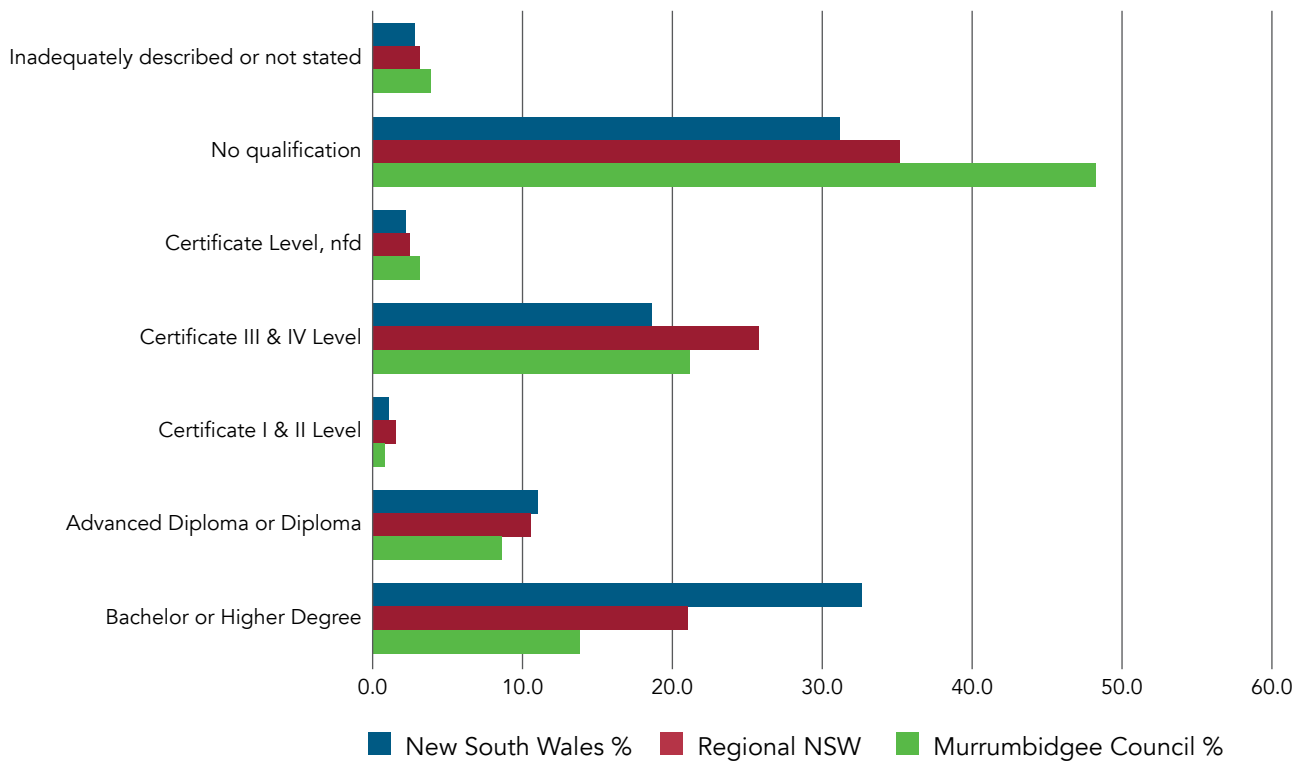
Residential location of local workers by LGA



Unemployment in the Murrumbidgee Council area is 3.5% (Department of Jobs and Small Business, Small Area Labour Markets (SALM), 2018), compared to the Riverina of 4.5% and NSW of 4.8%.

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016

Local workers' qualifications - all industries, 2016



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016

2.2.3 Dwellings



1,903 dwellings in the Murrumbidgee Council area
(Source ABS, 2016)



Median weekly loan repayments \$199
(compared to \$366 for Regional NSW and \$456 for NSW)

Median weekly rent \$153
(compared to \$384 for NSW)

Dwellings in Murrumbidgee Council area by ownership



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016

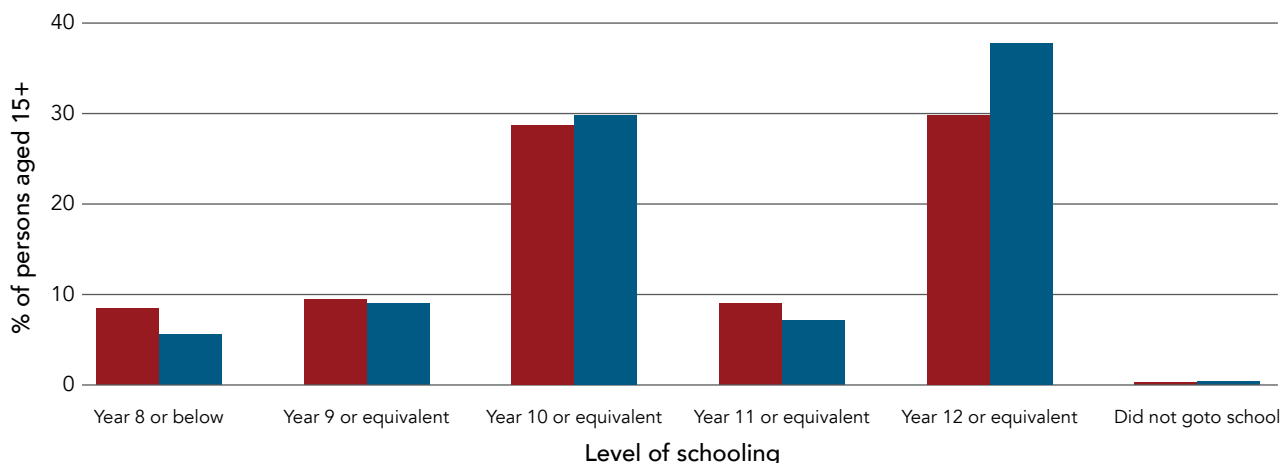
2.3 Education, training and skills development

The area shows a large and increasing gap in education and skills development. In 2016, 30% of people aged 15 years had completed Year 12 schooling, well below the Regional NSW rate (38%). The differential between Murrumbidgee Council and Regional NSW was 7.9 percent in 2016, up from 5.4 in 2011.

Low qualifications and skill levels impact on the type of professions that residents can seek employment in.

Highest level of schooling completed, 2016

■ Murrumbidgee Council ■ Regional NSW



- The Murrumbidgee Council area has lower levels of local residents currently attending TAFE and University (2.9% compared to 5% Regional NSW, Source: ABS 2016).
- The workforce has a lower (13.9%) proportion with tertiary qualifications compared to Regional NSW (12%) and NSW (32.6%) (Source: ABS 2016).
- 55% of those working in the Agricultural, Forestry and Fishing have no qualification (ABS, 2016).

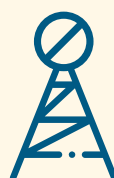
2.4 Digital Connectivity



65.1% of households have internet access (compared to 78.2% in NSW)
(Source: ABS, 2016)

457

457 premises are connected and using the NBN
(Source: NBN Co, 2019)



There are 12 reported Black Spots
(Source: Australian Government – Department of Communication and the Arts, 2016)



14 telecommunication towers across the Murrumbidgee Council area
(Source: RFNSA, 2019)

2.5 Tourism

2.5.1 Profile

Jerilderie

Jerilderie is known in history as the only place in New South Wales to be visited by the Ned Kelly Gang. Jerilderie (the English translation for the local Jeithi Aboriginal Tribe's word of 'djirridhuray') meaning 'with reeds' or 'reedy place'.

Coleambally

Coleambally was established in 1968 and is NSW's newest town. It was established to service the Coleambally Irrigation Area. Central information boards explain the history of irrigation and the diverse irrigated production. There are many walking tracks surrounding the town. Five kilometres north of Coleambally is Yarrow Park Cellar Door.

Darlington Point

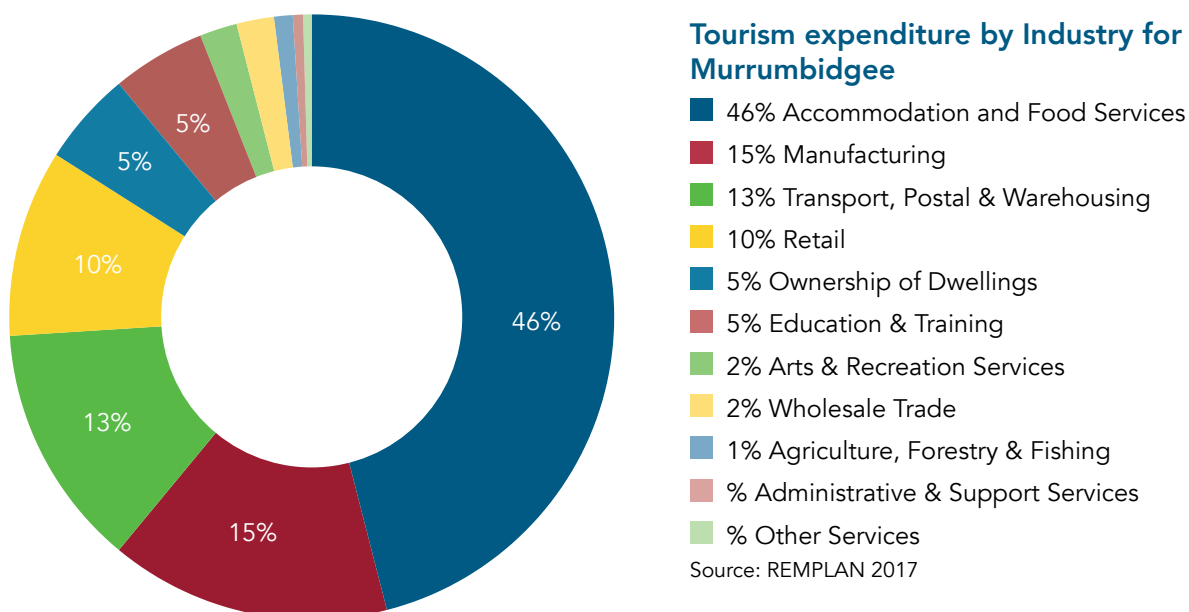
Darlington Point on the Murrumbidgee River is a nature-based haven for travellers. Situated three kilometres north of the Kidman Way and Sturt Highway intersection, it is the perfect places for lazy days of fishing, boating, walking and touring. The Murrumbidgee River and Murrumbidgee Regional Park at Willbriggie offer river redgums and water access for recreational activities. Ten kilometres east of Darlington Point, off the Sturt Highway is the outstanding Altina Wildlife Park, which offers unique tours via personalised carts.

2.5.2 Statistics

The Murrumbidgee tourism profile shows that the Council area plays a day-trip visitation function in the Riverina region. Over the last five years, around 56% of visitation to Murrumbidgee and surrounds was from day-trippers. Murrumbidgee and surrounds received 15% of day-trip and 8% of domestic overnight in the Riverina Region (Source: ID profile, 2017).

Of the 75,265 people working in Riverina it is estimated that 4,390 jobs are supported by tourism, with 49 of those in the Murrumbidgee Council area (Source: REMPLAN tourism estimate, 2017).

The tourism industry is the ninth most productive industry in Murrumbidgee Council area, generating \$4.404 million in 2016-2017 (Source: REMPLAN tourism estimate, 2017).



2.5.3 Accommodation

The Murrumbidgee Council area has approximately 106 rooms available. February was reported as the month with low occupancy rates. The area also has a number of free camping areas.

2.5.4 Attractions

The Murrumbidgee Council area has a number of attractions:

- Rivers and waterways
- National parks and regional parks
- Nature walks
- Historical attractions (particularly Ned Kelly and General Sir John Monash)
- Monuments
- Wildlife attractions (Altina Wildlife Park)
- Birdlife and fauna
- Gourmet food attractions
- Events

2.5.5 Events

Events in the Murrumbidgee Council area include:

January	Australia Day – Jerilderie has fireworks
February	Jerilderie Working Dog Auction (last Sunday) Riverina Classic Catch and Release Fishing Competition in Darlington Point (second weekend)
May	Jerilderie Ned Kelly Show’n’Shine and Tractor Trek
June	Queen’s Birthday Weekend – League of the Silent Flight Model Glider Tournament in Jerilderie
July	Jerilderie Roundup (B&S) Ball
August	Riverina Vintage Machinery Club Rally in Coleambally (biennial)
September	Jerilderie Gold Cup Races Darlington Point Spring Fair
October	General Sir John Monash Dinner & Lecture in Jerilderie Taste Coleambally (biennial)
November	Cyprus View Lodge Auxiliary Annual Market

While some of these events attract large numbers of visitors from outside the region, there is still room to grow the events and improve the yield and benefits from them.

2.5.6 Hospitality

The Murrumbidgee Council area has 18 restaurants, cafes, takeaway, and bakery establishments.

2.5.7 Tourism SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murrumbidgee River and natural environment • Location on major traffic corridors (Newell Highway, Sturt Highway and Kidman Way) • Altina Wildlife Park is a major tourism asset for the region • Jerilderie's built heritage (including the history of the Kelly Gang) • Jerilderie's location on the Newell Highway • Events • Proximity to larger regional towns to attract day-trippers • Links to General Sir John Monash • Indigenous culture and heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of current quality images to promote the Council area • The Murrumbidgee Council area has a lack of unique or high end accommodation options, experiences and basic visitor infrastructure to accommodate potential growth markets. • Poor signage • Lack of promotional material • Limited range of café and restaurant options required to support higher levels of overnight stays or Sunday trading. • Distance from major visitor markets of Melbourne and Sydney • Level of digital literacy/online presence of businesses • Lack of quality tourism data, such as hotel occupancy rates, event attendance
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three towns of Coleambally, Darlington Point and Jerilderie are not recognised as tourism destinations • Competition for accommodation with temporary workers • Events run by community groups which rely on volunteer efforts • Increased competition from other destinations within NSW, Interstate and internationally to attract visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and supporting new and a variety of experiences that provide broader appeal to attract visitors. • Increased promotion of the area, including signage. • Development and promotion of farm/agricultural tours. • Coordinated approach to tourism • The existing nature-based attractions on offer could support further development of adventure, sport and recreation product. • The maintenance cost of heritage infrastructure is also reported by the Council to be high, particularly in Jerilderie, making it difficult to showcase assets. Adaptive re-use of suitable heritage buildings may provide a viable opportunity and, at the same time, address a gap in regional level art space. • Darlington Point Destination Development – improvement of boating infrastructure, upgrade of town beach and existing caravan park. • Education and interpretive centre, new exhibition space and self-guided experience at Altina Wildlife Park. • Federal and state support for the development of authentic aboriginal tourism opportunities.

2.6 Understanding the forces driving growth

A broad spectrum of factors influence the Murrumbidgee Council's economy and its potential for future economic growth. While some of these factors are internal and over which the local government area has control, many are not. Each of these factors has been considered in identifying challenges for business and industry.

Influencing factor/ trend	Implication
Exchange Rate – influences the competitiveness of Australian businesses in the global economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Murrumbidgee Council, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing had the largest total exports by industry, generating \$177 million in 2017/18 (Source: ABS, 2018) • If the Australian dollar declines, as it has done in recent years, it is likely to have a positive impact on export-focused businesses through an associated increase in global competitiveness. • Global competitiveness also affects the ability to effectively compete across all sectors, creating the need for Australian production to focus on higher quality, premium and/or niche products.
Changing nature of agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased consumer awareness of and willingness to pay for 'clean or green' produce. • Growing competition from emerging agricultural producers (eg Brazil), with low cost structures. • Changes in farming practices, including a shift to more intensive production methods (eg feedlots, aquaculture), improved land and water management, and introduction of higher yielding plant and livestock varieties.
Ageing population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murrumbidgee Council has a larger percentage of 'Older workers and pre-retirees' (15.5% compared to 12.7% for Australia) (Source: ABS, 2016) • Increased demand for health, aged care and allied facilities and services. • Additional spending on health and aged care might be required, while creating significant market niches servicing an older demographic. • Risks of skill shortages if older workers are not replaced. • Re-skilling older workers, in particular the use of IT and technology.
Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming an increasing concern as population growth (both nationally and international, particularly Asia) will be a key driver of agricultural production and investment. • Strong long-term demand for new and existing agricultural crops. • More productive and intensive farming.
Emerging technology and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of efficiency in industries such as agriculture production, manufacturing and transport and logistics through the emergence of technologies. • Productivity enhancing machinery and processes have led to a decline in agriculture and manufacturing sectors' labour demand for the same output. • Communication technology advances provide opportunities to work remotely and access larger markets.
Digital Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased competition for local businesses from external businesses (eg online shopping). • Increased applications (eg remote monitoring, robotics) in agriculture and manufacturing – resulting in a reduction in demand for unskilled workers and increased demand for workers with IT/digital skill. • Increased competition from business servicing the region remotely, which can lead to opportunities for local businesses to improve their decision making and productivity and access new markets. However, it can also lead to lack of ability to keep up with demand and risk of losing industry investment and population. • Opportunities for businesses and workers to relocate away from the cities and continue to operate nationally/internationally. • Opportunities for businesses to significantly increase their exposure and also to engage and communicate directly with potential customers. • Potential for greater access to services (professional, financial) through online delivery.
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world's climate is becoming increasingly variable, with extreme weather events more common and a level of uncertainty around longer term temperature and weather trends. • Increased risk for agricultural producers and agricultural dependent industries and services. • Climate change driven impacts (e.g. drought, floods, bushfires) reducing attractiveness of locations to relocate business/industry.

3.0 Key strengths, challenges and opportunities

The key strengths, challenges and opportunities identified through the targeted stakeholder consultation and engagement, help inform the economic development vision for the Murrumbidgee Council area.

Strength	Benefit & Opportunity
Water and Irrigation System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Murrumbidgee River is a significant natural resource that enhances the attractiveness and lifestyle of the Council area and supports a range of agricultural, tourism and recreational activities. Access to water and irrigation systems is a critical input for agricultural production. Modernised irrigation system leads to effectively receiving and delivering water when and where it's needed.
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive arable land available in the Murrumbidgee Council area which can be used for agriculture. Murrumbidgee Council area has developed strengths around agriculture, with opportunities for both irrigated and dry-land production. Capitalising on its natural resources and irrigation assets, agriculture has become the primary driver of economic growth in Murrumbidgee Council. Agriculture is a highly productive industry in Murrumbidgee, generating \$100.9 million in value add in 2017/18 (Source: NIEIR, 2018). Agriculture is an important source of export earnings for the Murrumbidgee economy. It exports 79.5% of its agricultural output in 2017/18 outside the Murrumbidgee Council boundaries (Source: NIEIR, 2018). Most went to the Australian market, but \$44.5 million went to international markets. The industry is even more important from an employment perspective, with Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, making up over 40% of the employment in the area. Unfortunately, specialisation comes at a cost - agriculture is highly exposed to adverse impacts such as drought, flooding, water security, commodity prices and policy changes. This industry is also being driven by productivity improvements which are leading to growth in production using less labour. The increasing size of farms has led to the challenge of young (or emerging) farmers accessing affordable land. Opportunity to support export capabilities and opportunities, such as complementary manufacturing in corn, cotton, and almonds.
Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The people who live in the area enjoy an enviable country lifestyle, high levels of personal security and social amenity, and a good representation of services. High levels of volunteerism and above average working hours contribute to engaged and committed communities. Sporting infrastructure is excellent across a range of pursuits.
Transport Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newell Highway (major freight link between Melbourne and Sydney) and Sturt Highway (major freight link between Adelaide and Sydney). With increased population in these cities in recent years, expanding market opportunities are available to the Murrumbidgee Council area. Opportunity to support projects that improve connections and supply chain efficiencies.

Issue	Challenge for Murrumbidgee Council
Water Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water security and allocation is seminal to the future of Murrumbidgee townships, and to agricultural production. Council will need to partner with key water management stakeholders to pursue regional and catchment scale approaches to better manage our water resources. Murray Darling Basin Plan - a Commonwealth Government initiative affecting four States. It aims to sustainably share the water in the system. However, it is an issue for Murrumbidgee Council area's agriculture industry. The ramifications are becoming more evident, and are spread throughout the business and broader community as a whole.
Residential Land and Housing Shortages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential land availability and affordable rental accommodation are an issue in parts of the Murrumbidgee Council area. This adversely impacts upon the capacity of businesses in the region to attract and retain workers. It also limits the availability of housing for seasonal workers, particularly in Coleambally and Darlington Point. Murrumbidgee Council is an agricultural based economy. The region has a high proportion of seasonal workers, who utilise short stay accommodation in the region during peak periods of agricultural activity, generally related to horticulture harvest/picking seasons.
Industrial Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of industrial land in parts of the Murrumbidgee Council area, which adversely impacts on the attractiveness of the Murrumbidgee Council area to prospective businesses and investors.
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A shift in the size and structure of the population, including the outward migration of young people (20-24 years) as they leave the region to study and/or seek employment. Globally, from 2011 to 2016, 21% of people move every five years, but in Australia, the rate is 39%. Liveability means different things to different people when attracting new residents.
Dependence on Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A heavy reliance on agriculture means that the flow-on impacts of downturns is large, affecting most people in the Murrumbidgee Council community. Murrumbidgee has relatively low mass and population. There is an increasing reliance on agricultural production which exposes the Community to external forces such as security of water assets, strong commodity prices, and rising input costs. Economic diversity and transformation of the sector is needed.
Regulatory and Land Use Planning Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was reported that Council planning regulations are not keeping pace with the changing needs of business and industry growth.
Barriers to Education and Skill Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills and educational attainment are challenges for the Murrumbidgee community. Low levels of education comparative to regional New South Wales is a challenge for planning social change and economic growth.
Digital Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connectivity is complicated by low levels of digital enterprise in the small and medium sized businesses and visitor industry sectors.

4.0 What our community told us

While the Economic Development Strategy is a Council document, the underlying objectives of economic development are to service and support business, industry and the community of the Murrumbidgee Council area. Consultation with stakeholder groups was undertaken to understand the issues surrounding the local economy to assist with the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy.

Strengths	Barriers to Growth	Council's Role
Liveability and lifestyle	Drought and future water security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water security is identified as a major concern for businesses. Climate variability and uncertainty of irrigation water allocation make it difficult for businesses. • Water allocation • Cost of irrigation water 	Advocate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation at State and Federal level • Make more water available • Farmers' rights
Community spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging to a connected, friendly and safe community • High levels of volunteerism 	Perceived lack of population growth	Facilitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new business and industries • Small business • New business with incentives • Approving developments
Access to water and irrigation systems	Taxes, Government regulations/ red tape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results from the Economic Development Strategy Survey indicated that one of the less than satisfactory factors relevant to attracting new businesses was the Development Application process. 	Promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment • Industrial land • Natural assets • Local produce
	Lack of Government Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray Darling Basin Authority • NSW Environmental Protection Authority 	Service Provider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in land and infrastructure to attract business • Maintain local infrastructure

5.0 Role of Council

Council alone will not be able to deliver outcomes for key themes for the Strategy. Community leaders, State and Federal agencies and partnerships with different stakeholders all play an important role in working together to drive the Murrumbidgee Council economy forward and address challenges head-on through innovation and the strength and resilience that the local community has fostered.

These collaborations will strengthen Council's capacity to attract funding and economic development activity in the Council area, as well as potential impacts to the community.

The role of Council will vary depending on the priorities and opportunities to drive economic growth.

The roles may include:

- **Advocacy** - The Council acts as a leader that engages with the business community and State and Federal Government to develop commitment, energy and attitude towards identified priorities.
- **Facilitation** - The Council can act as the information link between government, business and consumers, as relevant information is vital in generating local awareness and demand for identified priorities. The Council can also market events and activities that support business capacity building and other economic development related initiatives
- **Investigation, planning and regulation** - The Council's planning framework and feasibilities provides mechanisms to regulate and/or encourage certain activities and developments that influence economic activity.
- **Service provider** – The Council should provide a consistent and reliable supply of services and information to support economic development related opportunities.
- **Stakeholder** - There are initiatives that are developed and implemented across the community that the Council does not 'own' or is not viewed as the service provider for, but still remains part of to the successful implementation of the desired outcome.

Council's main role will be directional support, facilitation and planning with each term of Council determining what actions will be included in its four year Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

It will be important to monitor and evaluate the success of the Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy will be monitored by the Economic and Tourism Development Manager in collaboration with the Murrumbidgee Economic and Tourism Advisory Group (METAG) and other key stakeholders to ensure it remains relevant and responsive.

It is also acknowledged that the successful implementation of the Murrumbidgee Council Economic Development Strategy will likely require additional resourcing, including State and Federal Government funding, or collaboration with stakeholders and partners.



Our Vision

The Murrumbidgee Council Vision was developed in 2017 based on community consultation:

“Murrumbidgee Council values creativity and innovation to reliably deliver quality service and facilities to its communities. It does this through traditional principles, forward thinking, providing strong, positive leadership to nurture who we are, where we live and what we have built.”

From the Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027, the five strategic themes are:

- Our Community
- Our Environment
- Our Infrastructure
- Our Economy
- Our Leadership

The theme most relevant to this strategy is theme four, Our Economy. This theme entails creating our own opportunities and working with new and existing businesses and industries to proactively provide regional economic opportunities, development and tourism, which will lead to stability and future growth.

(Murrumbidgee Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027).



6.0 Strategic Themes

Six themes were identified to support the implementation of Murrumbidgee Council's Economic Development Strategy:

Attract new business investment	Support existing business to grow and diversify	Education, training and skills development
Grow the population	Infrastructure	Develop and promote tourism

Murrumbidgee Council recognises that the private sector is the major contributor to economic development in the region, and Council can facilitate and promote economic development by influencing appropriate investment, helping establish business and industry networks, creating a positive business environment and providing regulatory, planning and other support to business and investors.



7.0 Strategy Implementation

7.1 Attract new business investment

Context

Industry attraction and expansion is about facilitating the growth of the economy by attracting new businesses into the region or expansion of existing businesses.

To attract new investment, Council is required to pro-actively seek out new investment opportunities and to facilitate change through its planning function and the delivery of infrastructure.

It is also important for Council to attract industries and businesses that are not always impacted on by seasonal conditions or distance.

Key Stakeholders

- Australian Government – Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Regional Development Australia – Riverina
- Regional Development Australia – Murray
- NSW Government Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Government Department of Industry
- NSW Government Department of Planning and Environment
- Private investors

State and Regional Document Links

- Murrumbidgee Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027
- NSW Government – A 20 year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Centre for Economic and Regional Development - Western Riverina Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment - Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036
- RAMJO Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities 2018-2022
- State Environmental Planning Policy 2008

Outcomes

- An affordable and attractive area to invest and conduct business.
- A resilient business community offering a range of local employment opportunities.
- An attractive and supportive environment for industry investment (less Government red tape).
- Increase 'new' industry investment and industry growth/diversification.
- Provision of industrial land in Darlington Point
- Job creation



Proposed Actions

- Attract new investment in identified industries (such as agricultural support and manufacturing) and new industries to diversify the portfolio of the region, through the development of a targeted investment prospectus and promote/distribute nationally and internationally to send a clear message that Murrumbidgee Council is 'Open for Business'.
- Maintain an economic profile for the Murrumbidgee Council area (ie economic profiling software) and bi-annually compile and distribute economic updates to local businesses and potential investors.
- Provide economic impact analysis for new or expanding ventures.
- Provide a supportive planning framework, through review of the Local Environment Plan (LEP), to foster availability of land development within the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Establish a register of industrial and commercial land available for sale in the Murrumbidgee Council area, and ensure the land is available for businesses and individuals to become established.
- Investigate the potential for the development of a transport hub at Waddi (junction of Sturt Highway and Kidman Way).
- Develop and maintain a centralised developer/investor/new business enquiry database. Follow-up with contacts on regular basis.
- Promote and support 'value-add' opportunities, such as bringing processing to the Murrumbidgee Council region to complement agriculture production.
- Investigate investment attraction and business expansion incentives that Council can offer new businesses and investors. For example, Council could consider business start-up grants or reduced developer contribution charges as part of an investment attraction strategy.
- Participate in forums, expos, trade missions and events that have the potential to bring new investment to the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Develop and implement Development Application guidelines and associated checklists to reduce identified barriers/red tape.
- Implement, through Council's website, online Development Application tracking to improve processes and access.
- Research opportunities for recycling waste operations in the Murrumbidgee Council area.



7.2 Support existing business to grow and diversify

Context

Support for existing businesses is about providing the opportunity for local businesses to develop their skills and capabilities through a range of events and activities designed to assist them to grow and/or be sustainable. This can be achieved through facilitating a range of skills development activities, ensuring that local businesses are aware of trends influencing their industry/business, as well as through the sharing of business and economic information.

The size and health of existing businesses is the foundation of any successful local economy. Building local business skills and capabilities will lead to growing the competitiveness and strength of the local economy. Assisting business to expand and grow their knowledge of new markets, technology and innovation, workforce development and a range of other capacity building initiatives helps to facilitate a diverse and sustainable economy.

The need to engage local businesses will be essential in achieving this goal.

Key Stakeholders

- Australian Government – Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Australian Government – Australian Trade and Investment Commission (AusTrade)
- Australian Government – Department of Jobs and Small Business
- BEC Business Advice South & West NSW
- Coleambally Chamber of Commerce
- Local businesses
- Murray Riverina NSW Business Chamber
- NSW Government Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Government Department of Industry
- NSW Government Department of Primary Industries
- NSW Government Service NSW
- NSW Small Business Commissioner
- NSW Business Chamber
- Regional Development Australia – Riverina
- Regional Development Australia – Murray
- Rural Financial Counselling Service

State and Regional Document Links

- Australia Government Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities – Progress in Australian Regions: State of Regional Australia 2015
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Centre for Economic and Regional Development – Western Riverina Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment - Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036
- RAMJO Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities 2018-2022
- Murrumbidgee Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027

Outcomes

- Businesses are innovative, entrepreneurial and sustainable.
- Increase in number of businesses in the Murrumbidgee Council area (601 in 2018) as measured by the ABSBR data.
- Decrease in business exits per year from the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Increase in value of Gross Regional Product (2.1% per year).

Proposed Actions

- In accordance with the *Privacy Act (2001)* maintain a database of the region's businesses and other relevant economic development organisations.
- Establish an effective bi-monthly communication tool (such as a Murrumbidgee Council Business & Industry Newsletter) to enable quick and effective communication with, and from, the Council area businesses. Content in the newsletter could include major project updates, funding opportunities for businesses, training and skills development opportunities, innovative case studies, and networking opportunities.
- Advocate for and support the agricultural industry in its role as a critical economic driver within the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Continue partnerships and strategic alliances to strengthen relationships with Government agencies, regional organisations and service providers to support businesses.
- Create and support business networks or Chambers of Commerce for Darlington Point, Coleambally and Jerilderie to identify and drive economic initiatives.
- Support and assist local businesses to develop workforce attraction strategies and tools to strengthen key industries.
- Encourage local procurement and industry participation in Council's capital works programs and funded projects, as well as other private major investment projects.
- Provide information and support to businesses wishing to expand.
- Conduct an annual business confidence survey to ascertain what support is further required of Council, and what training or skills development is required by local businesses, and implement programs to address key concerns.
- Develop and implement a series of workshops and seminars with partners to assist and support small business.
- Facilitate for the Murrumbidgee Economic and Tourism Advisory Group to provide input and feedback to economic development matters on a quarterly basis.
- Be aware of and act upon availability of Government funding opportunities and communicate these opportunities to local businesses and industry.



7.3 Education, training and skills development

Context

Access to a skilled workforce is essential for business growth and development. The region must continue to develop career pathways that support industry needs, as a skilled and educated workforce drives innovation. Success in this area will require close relationships with education providers in the region.

Key Stakeholders

- Agskilled
- BEC Business Advice South & West NSW
- Local Secondary Schools
- NSW Government Department of Education
- NSW Government Department of Industry – Training Services NSW
- Regional Development Australia – Murray
- Regional Development Australia – Riverina
- Registered Training Authorities (RTO's) including Universities and TAFE NSW
- Key industry groups

State and Regional Document Links

- Murrumbidgee Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027
- NSW Government – A 20 year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- NSW Government Department of Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022
- RAMJO Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities 2018-2022

Outcomes

- Unemployment rate <5%
- Retention of young people (15 to 24 years) in the Murrumbidgee Council area
- A skilled, capable and productive workforce
- A community dedicated to skills attraction, retention, building strong workforces and growing young people through local jobs and training pathways
- Training pathways and incentives established to meet workforce skills/gaps
- Communication and promotion of training, skills development and employment opportunities



Proposed Actions

- Partner with industry to advocate for improved access to education and training services and flexible approaches to workplace training, apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Support training initiatives that contribute towards providing young people with the option to stay in the region, especially in the region's growth industries.
- Support retention of young people within the community, through programs such as school based vocational training, transition to work/work ready, offering apprentice and traineeships and providing access to tertiary training.
- Providing strong pathways between education and employment to encourage young people to remain in, or return to, the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Understand the workforce skills gap and work with training providers to develop training pathways and skills development opportunities.
- Raise community awareness of TAFE, university and other regional education providers.
- Connect with training providers to develop training programs that are linked to the needs of current businesses and emerging industry. The initial priority is to facilitate the connection of training providers with key industry stakeholders so that programs that match the needs of industry can be developed.
- Explore options for formal relationships with tertiary education institutions to deliver relevant training programs in the Murrumbidgee region.
- Attract skilled professionals and skilled labour to the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Support local businesses to become export ready through export seminars, training and networks.
- Develop a Workforce Workshop Program to build the knowledge and capacity of local businesses. A potential format for the program includes: Invite industry leaders (internal and external to the region) to present on their knowledge and experience of topical themes of facilitate events that encourage businesses to learn from each other in both a formal and informal environment.
- Participate in relevant employment and skills development programs and initiatives (eg Regional Development Australia - Riverina – Grow our Own program).
- Partner with industry to advocate for improved access to education and training services and flexible approaches to workplace training, apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Facilitate and support Murrumbidgee Council based traineeships.
- Support the Charles Sturt University Accommodation Scholarship, Murrumbidgee Council Education Scholarships and General Sir John Monash education bursary annually.
- Investigate incentives for businesses to bring in skilled labour.



7.4 Grow the population

Context

Growing the population will increase demand for local goods, services, education and health care, while also improving economies of scale to the Murrumbidgee Council area. Lifestyle and work-life balance play a major role in relocation and investment.

To achieve employment and population growth for the Murrumbidgee Council area, there needs to be an adequate and diverse range of housing and rental options. Suitable accommodation options are also required for seasonal workers, as many current options offered are difficult to obtain or based outside the Murrumbidgee Council area.

Key Stakeholders

- Coleambally Chamber of Commerce
- Regional Development Australia - Murray
- Regional Development Australia - Riverina

State and Regional Document Links

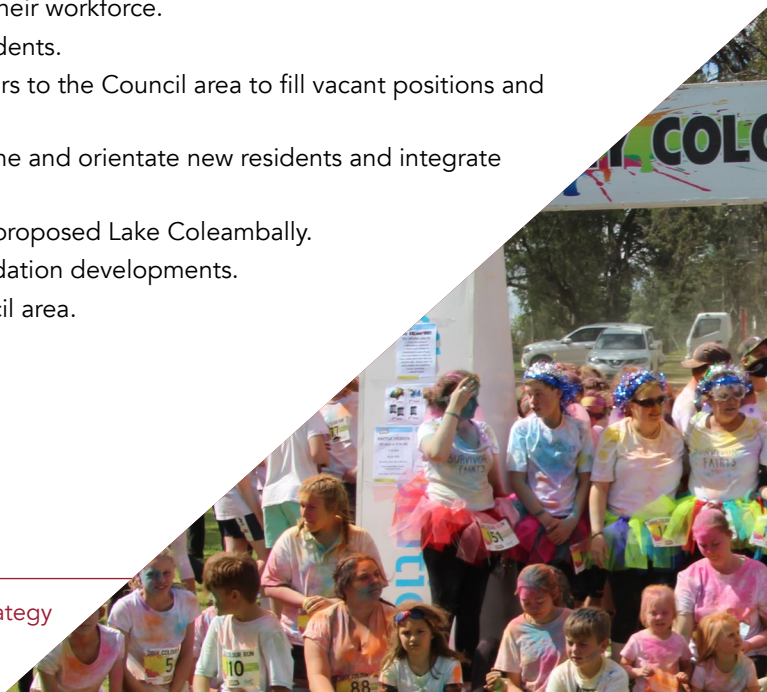
- Murrumbidgee Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027

Outcomes

- A community with well serviced health, education and recreation opportunities.
- Continued increase in population of 1.5% per annum for the Murrumbidgee Council area to ensure a sustainable community.
- Increased awareness of the benefits of living and working in the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Maintain a welcoming, caring and safe community.
- Maintain a population with an average age of <43 years.
- A community that plans for the housing and recreation needs of its current and future residents.

Proposed Actions

- Enhance lifestyle opportunities through expanding and improving recreation, sporting, and leisure facilities to increase the attractiveness of the Murrumbidgee Council region to skilled workers.
- Develop and promote a “New Resident Guide” featuring all three townships, services offered and recreation and community groups.
- Promote Murrumbidgee Council area as a preferred area to live, work and invest.
- Develop and implement an annual marketing campaign to attract residents from outside the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Develop the residential subdivision of Young Street, Darlington Point to address accommodation constraints limiting the ability of businesses in the region to grow their workforce.
- Encourage affordable housing to attract and retain residents.
- Work with industry and business to attract skilled workers to the Council area to fill vacant positions and address skills gaps.
- Host welcome events biennially in each town to welcome and orientate new residents and integrate them into the community.
- Support Coleambally Chamber of Commerce with the proposed Lake Coleambally.
- Pursue appropriate investment in short term accommodation developments.
- Advocate for new services to the Murrumbidgee Council area.



7.5 Infrastructure

Context

Infrastructure underpins economic activity and is fundamental to a prosperous economy. It includes transport infrastructure, power and water, serviced industrial/employment land and communications.

The region has large agricultural and manufacturing sectors that require transport and logistics services. As such, transport and logistics play an integral and enabling role in the growth and development of these two important sectors. Focusing on transport and freight that aligns with State and regional policy and improved linkages can increase productivity of agriculture and manufacturing.

Digital communications technology has become a fundamental enabler of business innovation and economic development. The emergence of the digital economy has increased the propensity for individuals and businesses to interact and trade with suppliers, partners and customers through information and communications technologies. Digital connectivity is widely-recognised as being of a poor quality throughout the Murrumbidgee Council region.

Access to natural gas, electricity and water for industry is constrained and a lack or perceived lack of industrial land in Darlington Point adversely impacts on the area's attractiveness to prospective businesses and investors. These are critical elements of the region's enabling infrastructure that need to be addressed to support the region's economic development prospects.

Key Stakeholders

- Australian Government – Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Australian Government – Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities
- NSW Government Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Government Department of Industry
- NSW Government Department of Planning and Environment
- NSW Government – Roads & Maritime Services
- Private industries
- Regional Development Australia – Murray
- Regional Development Australia – Riverina
- Telecommunication providers

State and Regional Document Links

- Murrumbidgee Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Centre for Economic and Regional Development – Western Riverina Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment - Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036
- NSW Government – A 20 year Economic Vision for Regional NSW
- NSW Government – NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023
- RAMJO Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities 2018-2022
- Transport NSW – Future Transport 2056 Strategy



Outcomes

- Increase in funding for infrastructure and services for the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- The Murrumbidgee Council area is locally, regionally and globally connected.
- Reliable digital coverage across the Murrumbidgee Council area (no black spots).
- Road, air and water infrastructure meets the demands of the Murrumbidgee Council communities and its businesses, industries and visitors.
- High speed broadband through NBN access.

Proposed Actions

- Advocate for funding to support infrastructure development. Engage with State and Federal Ministers to advocate for funding to support the identified priority projects for Murrumbidgee Council area. These advocacy efforts should be maintained at a consistent level, whether there is current funding or not, to ensure that ongoing relationships are developed and nurtured.
- Work with State and Federal Governments to deliver key infrastructure needs.
- Advocate for black spot funding.
- Champion a transport hub at the intersection of the Sturt Highway and Kidman Way.
- Improve the accessibility and ease of travel to, from and throughout the region for freight vehicles.
- Advocate and work with communication service providers to fund and deliver infrastructure projects to address Murrumbidgee Council area needs.
- Facilitate and advocate for investment in infrastructure to support industry growth.
- Represent the interests and economic development aspirations/projects at regional/State and national level to influence and guide key decisions.
- Advocate and actively pursue opportunities to improve public transport services to and within the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Work with surrounding Local Government Areas and RAMJO for collaborative investment opportunities.



7.6 Develop and promote tourism

Context

Statistical tourism information for Murrumbidgee Council area can be found in Section 2.5. Whilst tourism is not currently a strategic industry for Murrumbidgee in terms of comparative economic contribution, it has the potential given the local assets.

Key target markets

- Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)
- Day-trippers from surrounding region
- Drive tourism
- Caravan and RV market
- Coach and tour groups
- Events market

Key Stakeholders

- Destination NSW
- Destination Riverina Murray
- Kidman Way Promotions Committee
- Local accommodation and tourism operators
- Local event organisers
- METAG
- Ned Kelly Touring Route
- Newell Highway Promotions Committee
- Thrive Riverina
- Western Riverina Arts
- Office of Environment and Heritage

State and Regional Document Links

- Destination NSW – Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2017-2020
- NSW Government Statewide Destination Management Plan 2019
- NSW Government Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan 2030
- Destination Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018
- Tourism Research Australia – Events: Drivers of Regional Tourism 2014
- Murrumbidgee Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027



Outcomes

- Murrumbidgee Council area becomes a recognised tourism destination.
- Increase in awareness of tourism experiences in the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Increase in number of visitors, length of stay and visitor expenditure.
- New tourism experiences developed.
- Improved signage across the Council area (both promotional and directional).
- Better tracking of Murrumbidgee Council tourism data.
- Diversified accommodation options available for tourists.
- Increased event attendance by visitors from outside the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Increase new visits to the tourism pages on Council and Visit NSW websites by 15% annually.

Proposed Actions

- Support tourism initiatives and grant applications as identified through the Strategic Development Themes in the Destination Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018.
- Product and Infrastructure Development – Facilitate and support the development of tourism assets to make Murrumbidgee Council more attractive to visit. Consideration should be given to product development related to:
 - Agriculture, food and wine tourism sector: This includes opportunities for experiences (e.g. farm stays, cellar doors, tours, etc) as well as growing and promoting food and wine produce and development of agricultural based business and education events.
 - Nature based activities: The Murrumbidgee River, Murrumbidgee Regional Park - Willbriggie and Billabong Creek (e.g. boat ramps, walking tracks, amenities, equipment hire, tours).
 - Altina Wildlife Park: the development of the education and interpretation centre.
 - Arts and Culture: Indigenous arts and cultural assets, existing or proposed.
 - Caravan and camping: the development and promotion of the caravan and camping sector.
 - Develop and support of specialised touring routes, such as The Ned Kelly Touring Route, food/wine trails and nature based tourism trails.
 - Support and assist with café development, micro-brewery or boutique distillery offer opportunities for leveraging off the Newell Highway and Kidman Way location.
 - Collaborate with key agencies to implement the recommendations from the Murrumbidgee Council's section of the Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan, prioritising 'Tier 1' projects including Darlington Point Destination Development and Altina Wildlife Park.
- Destination Awareness
 - Develop, update, and distribute a comprehensive range of marketing collateral, including visitor guides, promotional footage and information on the Murrumbidgee Council websites and social media platforms.
 - Development and installation of consistent and relevant signage (both promotional and directional) for visitors to the region.
 - Participate in regional tourism initiatives, such as Kidman Way Promotions Committee, Ned Kelly Touring Route, Newell Highway Promotions Committee, and Thrive Riverina.
 - Grow market segments including RV, Caravan and Camping, and drive tourism.
 - Review and update the Murrumbidgee Council tourism image gallery.



- Events Development
 - Develop and distribute an event management planning guide with budget, marketing plan and critical path templates to local event organisers to maximise opportunities and event knowledge.
 - Develop and distribute a Murrumbidgee Council Venue Guide as a one stop shop for event organisers to assist with planning an event.
 - Support event organisers to undertake research on current events to better understand their social and economic impacts and opportunities for development.
 - Identify and attract new events to the Murrumbidgee Council area.
 - Run annual events training and development to assist local event organisers to deliver events.
 - Develop and implement a sponsorship program to support new and existing events to the Murrumbidgee Council area.
- Governance and Support
 - Collaborate with local tourism operators by building and growing relationships through holding social networking evenings, and the provision of METAG.
 - Support and promote accessible/inclusive tourism initiatives.
 - Support industry participation in tourism awards programs.
 - Promote and facilitate access to tourism and event workshops offered by Destination NSW and Destination Riverina Murray to tourism operators and event organisers to provide product development, advice and industry resources to help grow the local tourism industry.
 - Support or provide a training program/famils for tourism operators to increase tourism knowledge across the Council area, as well as lift the quality and standard of customer service provided to visitors.
 - Work in partnership with operators to record and collate tourism data for the Murrumbidgee Council area.



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Murrumbidgee COUNCIL

Murrumbidgee Council would like to acknowledge key partners, individuals and organisations involved in the consultation process of the Economic Development Strategy.

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