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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This clause provides local content for Clause 17 (Economic Development).

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Key Issues

The key planning issues and challenges relating to economic development include:

- Encouraging the ongoing development of the Shire's primary production output
- Facilitating the expansion of the Shire's value adding processing industries
- Facilitating retail and industrial growth in the urban areas
- Enhancing the growth, development and diversification of the Shire's tourism industry while ensuring the long-term protection and viability of the Shire's natural assets

An overview of these issues and challenges is described below.

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Agriculture

Overview

The *Moira Economic Profile 2013* confirms the Agriculture sector generated \$386.9M in 2011 – or 14.6% of the municipal economy. This comprised:

- Cereals for grain;
- Vegetables;
- Orchards;
- Fruit;
- Dairy production; and
- Meat production.

Irrigated primary production and the processing of that product underpin the municipality and the Region's economy. The level of production is nationally important and the region is responsible for significant parts of the nation's milk production, deciduous canned fruit production, stone fruit crop and tomato processing production.

The region's workforce is heavily dependent on the agricultural sector (19.2% in 2011) with many people directly involved in agricultural production on farms, and an estimated similar number involved directly and indirectly in the processing and transport of that product. In both irrigation and dryland production the drivers of future successful agribusinesses, regardless of the scale of enterprise, are likely to be:

- Continuing current trends for significantly increased scale of production which is achieved by expanding the land area of production and/or by increasing the intensity of the production system.
- A shift to individual management of their own business risks such as consolidation into contiguous properties to manage all their own water supply.
- Agribusinesses that seek to minimise the number of neighbours.
- Agribusinesses that expand into land that is priced competitively because it is used for agriculture rather than having inflated land values because it has been subdivided for hobby farms.

The *Regional Rural Land Use Strategy 2008* has identified planning measures in the 'growth' and 'consolidation' areas to encourage new investment and provide for the expansion of businesses.

Objective 1

To ensure that agriculture is and remains the major economic driver in the region.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Facilitate growth of existing farm businesses.
- Strategy 1.2 Provide for small scale, specialized agriculture.
- Strategy 1.3 Encourage growth and expansion of existing farm businesses and new investment in 'growth' and 'consolidation' areas.
- Strategy 1.4 Encourage opportunities for smaller scale, specialised agriculture in 'niche' areas.

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Processing / Value adding

Overview

The intensity of agricultural production and the cluster of food processing industries are a prominent feature of the Shire and the broader region. The processing industry stimulates economic activity, providing employment opportunities and creating wealth for the Shire's local communities. As a direct consequence of investment in the food production and processing sectors, the engineering, transport and specialist service industries are experiencing rapid growth.

The agricultural sector was second only to the manufacturing sector relative to the size of the local economy however when agricultural value adding is considered it would be the largest part of the municipal economy.

Objective 1

To facilitate the growth of new agricultural investment.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Support the processing and value adding agricultural industries

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Tourism

Overview

Tourism is an economic and employment growth sector and is an important aspect of the social, economic and physical make-up of the Shire. Council encourages the development of new tourist attractions and services throughout the Shire to complement the existing tourist enterprises and further the economic wellbeing of the community through the creation of employment opportunities and wealth. The *Regional Rural Land Use Strategy 2008* found strong support for rural based tourism that builds on existing tourism activities and takes advantage of the natural attributes of the region such as the Murray River and the agricultural landscape and produce.

The area to the east of Cobram and to the east and west of Yarrawonga is zoned Rural Activity Zone where accommodation uses such as bed and breakfast and farm stays are encouraged, and where recreational and leisure activities that complement existing uses such as boating, ecotourism and nature retreats will also be encouraged.

Tourism is dependent upon the protection and enhancement of a number of key natural assets, such as the Murray, Goulburn and Ovens Rivers as well as the Barmah Forest. The dominant role of Yarrawonga as a tourist town needs to be recognised and promoted. Tourism development needs to be enhanced in order to multiply the expenditure benefits tourism brings to the municipality. It will be of paramount importance that any development does not jeopardise the long-term viability of the Shire's natural assets.

Objective 1

To encourage the growth of the tourism industry.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Promote tourism use and development that is compatible with agricultural production and the environmental attributes of the Rural Activity Zone land.

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Implementation

Further strategic work

Prepare an industrial land development master plan.

Reference documents

- *Moirā Economic Profile 2013*
- *Regional Rural Land Use Strategy 2008*