



# Wodonga Economic Development Background Report

2026

## AUTHORS

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Urban Enterprise is located on Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Country. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging and also acknowledge all Traditional Owners of Country on which we work.

Wodonga Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of the Country. We also acknowledge them as Traditional Owners and Custodians across various lands. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, Elders, children and young people. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and recognise their continuous connections to lands, waters and communities across the country.

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## Acronymns

|      |                               |       |                                |
|------|-------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|
| AAGR | Annual average growth rate    | SA2   | Statistical area level 2       |
| ABR  | Australian business register  | SEIFA | Socio-economic index for areas |
| EDS  | Economic Development Strategy | SME   | Small to medium enterprise     |
| LGA  | Local government area         | TRA   | Tourism research Australia     |
| PA   | Per annum                     |       |                                |

## Glossary of terms

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Economic output</b>                | Represents the gross revenue generated by businesses in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Gross revenue is also referred to as total sales or total income.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Regional exports</b>               | Represents the value of goods and services exported outside of the defined region that have been generated by businesses and organisations in each of the industry sectors within the region.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Employment</b>                     | Employment data represents the number of people employed by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Employment data presented in this report is destination of work data. That is, no inference is made as to where people in a defined region reside.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Daytrip visitor</b>                | Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Overnight visitor</b>              | People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope of the NVS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>International visitor</b>          | A person is defined as an international visitor to Australia if they are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia for less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>SEIFA</b>                          | Developed by the ABS, this measures the relative level of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage for a defined area. The index score is based on a weighted combination of census variables that reflect disadvantage (e.g. income, education, employment, etc.), which is then standardised around the national average score of 1000. Therefore, a score above 1000 indicates a lower level of disadvantage relative to the national average, while a score below 1000 indicates a higher level of disadvantage relative to the national average. |
| <b>Small to medium enterprise</b>     | The ABS defines a business entity employing less than 20 employees as a small to medium enterprise.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Non-employing business</b>         | A business that does not have employees. This may include a range of entity types, such as non-employing sole traders or any other businesses without employees.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Statistical area level 2 (SA2)</b> | SA2s are medium-sized, general-purpose, geographical areas. Their purpose is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically. Data from the ABS is available at an SA2 level, noting that the SA2 is the smallest area for the release of data.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Overview

The *Wodonga Economic Development Background Report* supports the *Wodonga Economic Development Strategy 2026-2028* (EDS or strategy) which outlines Wodonga's economic development priorities over the next two financial years. The strategy aims to leverage the region's attributes and competitive advantages to drive sustainable growth and prosperity in Wodonga. This strategy also seeks to enhance the competitiveness of Wodonga and attract regional, national and international investment, to ensure the long-term viability of the municipality.

The information in the strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, residents, local businesses, council and government stakeholders.

## Wodonga

Wodonga is one of Victoria's fastest growing regional cities and a thriving economic and service hub. The municipality is located along the Victorian and NSW border, adjacent to its twin city Albury and about 300 kilometres north-east of Melbourne.

Wodonga is the ideal destination for investment, through its diverse economy and unparalleled access to export, labour and consumer markets across regional, urban and capital cities. Wodonga's strategic location, alongside its twin city Albury, makes it the region's economic hub and primary location for retail, services and employment, catering to a broader catchment that extends across south-east NSW and north-east Victoria

Wodonga has a flourishing community, with its high quality of life and unique regional attributes that supports residents, workers and visitors. This is complemented by the provision of key services and network of businesses that has supported a robust and diverse economy. This diversity offers a variety of investment potential to support industry growth, as well as attracting growth in supporting and complementary industries.





# 1. INTRODUCTION

This Background Report was developed in close consultation with council, industry and community, in order to reflect the unique issues and opportunities relevant to economic development in Wodonga. A summary of stakeholders engaged as part of the development of this report is provided below.

Table 1 Consultation summary

| Engagement format             | Stakeholders                                               |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Council workshops             | Councillors, council officers and Executive                |
| Industry workshops            | Key industry representatives from a variety of sectors     |
| Targeted interviews           | Major employers, service providers and government agencies |
| Industry and community survey | Residents and business owners                              |

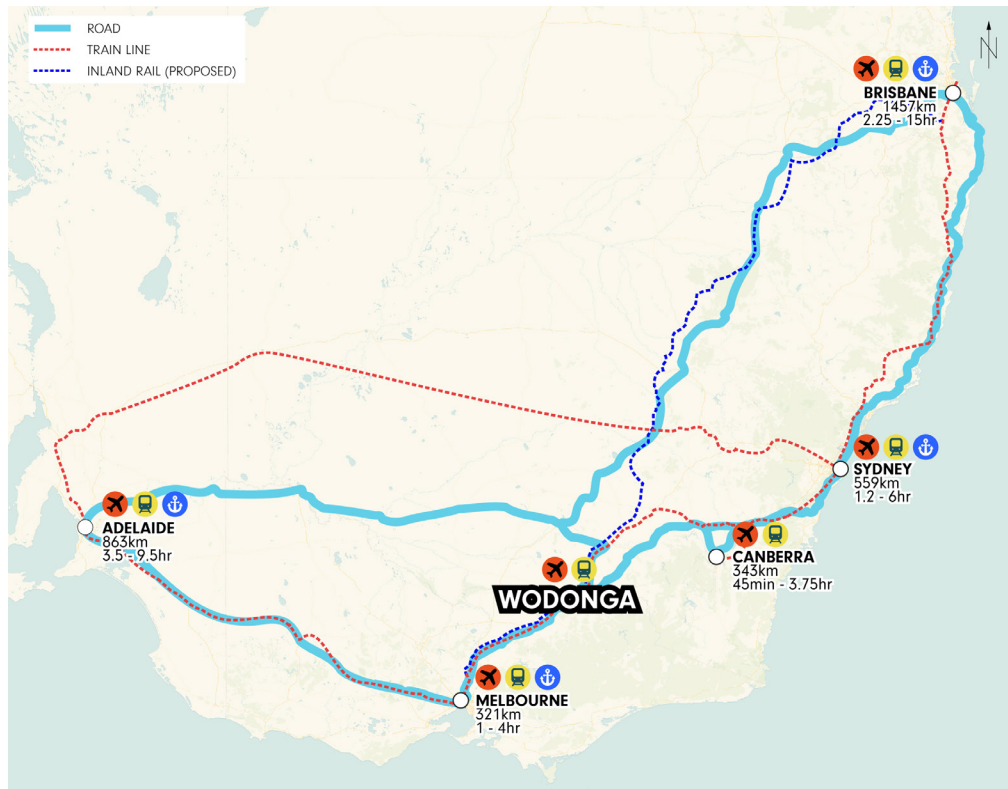


## 2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### 2.1 Wodonga

#### Overview

Figure 1 Wodonga connectivity



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2023

Wodonga is one of Victoria's fastest-growing regional cities and a thriving service hub, with an estimated resident population of 47,354 and is Victoria's seventh largest city. Situated on the Murray River in North East Victoria – about 3½ hours drive from Melbourne and 5½ hours drive from Sydney – the municipality plays a vital role in the regional economy and community.

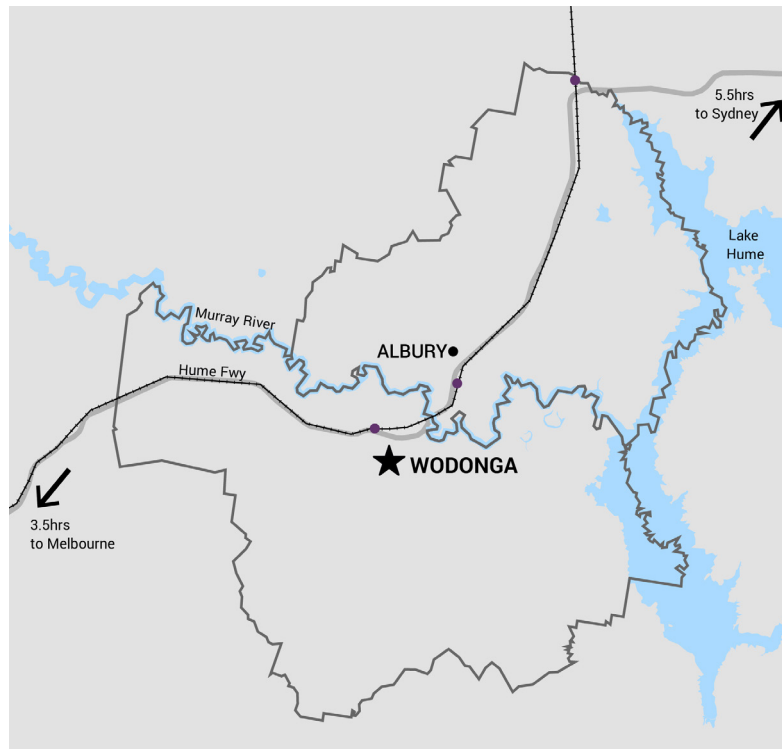
Wodonga is located along the Victorian and NSW border, adjacent to its twin city Albury, and is strategically placed along key transport corridors. As shown in figure one, Wodonga has well-established road, rail and air transport connections, including the Hume Freeway, passenger and freight rail, as well as Albury Airport. This supports Wodonga's strategic role as a 'gateway' and provides access to:

- Surrounding regional lifestyle assets (such as Lake Hume, the snowfields and wineries);
- Metropolitan cities across the eastern seaboard (comprising more than 75% of Australia's population) within 24 hours travel time; and,
- Major sea and air freight infrastructure.

This ensures reliable and efficient connectivity to regional, national and global markets, providing a conducive environment for Wodonga to capture future investment and growth opportunities.

## Albury-Wodonga partnership

Figure 2 Albury-Wodonga



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2023

When combined, the twin cities of Albury-Wodonga are home to over 100,000 residents, making it Australia's 19th largest city and Australia's fifth largest inland city. Albury-Wodonga is located in between Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra (figure two).

While each town functions separately, they also share many common aspirations and priorities. This presents opportunities for collaboration and adopting a regional focus for the benefit of the Albury-Wodonga economy and community. Partnership arrangements, such as Visit Albury Wodonga and Invest Albury Wodonga, part of the greater Two Cities One Community (2C1C) collaboration are currently in place. Those initiatives are designed to foster collaboration and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> Includes neighbouring local government areas (LGAs) such as Indigo Shire, Towong Shire, Federation Council and Greater Hume Shire.

## Regional catchment

Figure 3 Regional catchment



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2023

These cities are the region's primary location for retail, services and employment, catering to a broader catchment that extends across south-east NSW and north-east Victoria (see figure three)<sup>1</sup>, including:

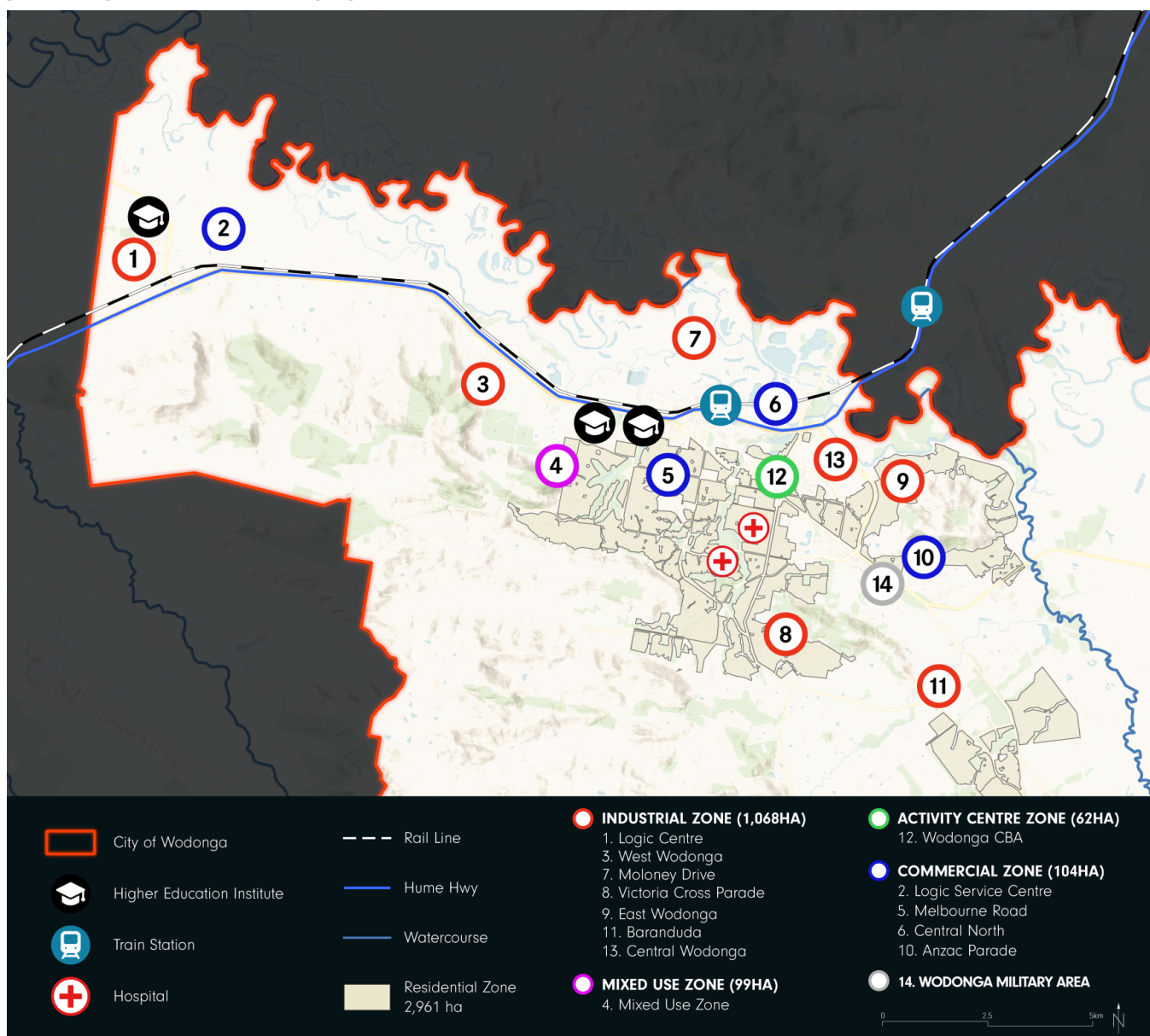
- Over 155,000 residents;
- Over 5.5 million visitors;
- Over 13,000 businesses; and,
- A labour force of over 65,600 resident workers.

This expands the economic base of Wodonga and increases access to businesses, labour and consumers, making it a more attractive location for investment.

The city's role as a regional service centre is a significant influence on Wodonga's economy and will help inform future directions for the strategy to facilitate economic growth.

## Key economic and employment areas

Figure 4 Key economic and employment areas



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2023

Figure four illustrates the supply of employment land and key economic areas across the municipality. These areas provide key services and amenity to residents, workers and visitors, as well as supporting business activity, local consumption and investment opportunities.

- Seven **industrial precincts** at Logic, West Wodonga, Moloney Drive, Central Wodonga, East Wodonga, Anzac Parade and Baranduda. In particular, Logic has approximately 120ha remaining for future development.
- A **mixed-use area** in West Wodonga, which can support investment in commercial and residential uses.
- Four **commercial** precincts that provide retail services catering to surrounding residents and businesses in industrial areas.
- A thriving **activity centre** within Wodonga central business area (CBA) that supports retail services and hospitality for residents, workers and visitors.

- A major **health precinct** (Albury Wodonga Health), surrounded by supporting health businesses, clinics and allied health.
- An **education precinct** in West Wodonga, including La Trobe University and Wodonga TAFE, which provides training, education and research.
- The **Albury Wodonga Military Area** in Bandiana, which trains and supports about 6000 personnel annually, utilises a range of local support services and provides significant infrastructure.
- **Residential land** to accommodate residents and workers, concentrated in central Wodonga, with some land across the east in Bandiana, Bonegilla, as well as the Leneva Baranduda growth area to the south-east, which will accommodate more than 15,000 residents over the next 20 to 30 years.

These attributes ensure that businesses of all sizes and sectors can secure suitable locations and operate successfully within the region. As such, Wodonga provides a broad economic base which supports a diverse range of investment opportunities.



## 2.2 Policy context

Economic development in Wodonga is supported by a range of relevant state, regional and local policy documents. These documents establish existing policies that can help achieve economic development outcomes and helps identify community and industry priorities and aspirations.

The key strategic documents influencing economic development are listed below.

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>State documents</b>    | Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry, and Regions Strategic Plan 2023-2027<br>Infrastructure Victoria 30-Year Strategy<br>Creative State 2025<br>Experience Victoria 2033                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Regional documents</b> | Ovens Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy 2022<br>Murray Region Destination Management Plan 2023-2027<br>Murray Region Tourism Strategic Plan 2021-2024<br>Albury Wodonga Destination Management Plan 2019-2023<br>Two Cities One Community Strategic Plan 2022-2025<br>Albury Wodonga Local Area Plan and Recommended Actions 2023<br>Invest Albury Wodonga Marketing Plan 2022                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Local documents</b>    | Wodonga Industrial Land Strategy 2018<br>Logic Future Directions Report 2020-2024<br>Wodonga Aboriginal Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-2023<br>Wodonga CBA Revitalisation Plan 2014-2034<br>Wodonga CBA Policy Framework Plan 2016<br>Wodonga Growth Strategy 2016<br>Wodonga Activity Centre Hierarchy Strategy<br>Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2022-2027<br>Wodonga Youth Strategy 2019<br>Sustainability Strategy 2022-2026<br>Wodonga Economic Development Strategy 2020 – 2025<br>Wodonga Housing Strategy 2018<br>Wodonga Open Space Strategy 2021 |





## 2.3 Major employers

The number of nationally recognised businesses located in the area proves Wodonga to be an exceptionally conducive location for large-scale businesses. Wodonga boasts strong business ties with the logistics and manufacturing industry, tertiary institutes (to support workforce training and skills development) and health care services.

With a rich industrial ecosystem, combined with education and training facilities, Wodonga is a prime destination for big businesses and jobseekers searching for growth opportunities and economic prosperity.

| Major business                                                                         | Industry                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Woolworths Distribution Centre<br>SCT Logistics                                        | Transport and logistics                     |
| Visy Board<br>Opal Fibre                                                               | Paper and packaging                         |
| Mars Incorporated<br>Vitasoy<br>Wodonga Rendering Pty Ltd                              | Food and beverage manufacturing             |
| Wilson Transformers Company                                                            | Electrical equipment manufacturing          |
| Parker Hannifin                                                                        | Equipment manufacturing (hoses)             |
| JC Butko Engineering<br>Bradken                                                        | Fabricated metal manufacturing (steel)      |
| BAE Systems                                                                            | Transport equipment manufacturing (defence) |
| Albury Wodonga Health<br>Disability Attendant Support Services Inc. (DASSI)<br>Wodonga | Health care and social assistance           |
| Wodonga TAFE<br>La Trobe University                                                    | Tertiary education                          |

## 2.4 Major projects

Wodonga is experiencing significant investment through a series of major regional, state and national infrastructure projects that are in progress or planned over the next few years. These projects are detailed in the following table.

**Table 2 Major projects**

| Project (and funding)                              | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Junction Place (\$250m)                            | Junction Place is regional Australia's largest urban renewal initiative. The project will double the size of Wodonga's central business area. This transformative development integrates quality public spaces with a mix of retail, dining, entertainment, residential and commercial offerings - setting the tone for Wodonga's modern city centre. |
| Opal Fibre Packaging Facility (\$140m)             | A state-of-the-art manufacturing facility producing up to 720,000 square metres of corrugated packaging board per day. This advanced facility reinforces Wodonga's strength in sustainable manufacturing and supply chain industries.                                                                                                                 |
| Mars Petcare Expansion (\$112.6m)                  | This expansion adds a new 7800 square metre production building, housing specialised equipment to manufacture 290 million single serve pet food pouches annually. The facility supports supply across Australian and New Zealand markets and enhances Wodonga's advanced manufacturing profile.                                                       |
| Hydrogen Park Murray Valley (\$65.46m)             | A pioneering renewable energy project led by the Australian Gas Infrastructure Group. The facility will use water and grid-supplied renewable electricity to produce hydrogen, blended with natural gas and distributed via existing networks - supporting a clean energy future.                                                                     |
| CBD West Development (\$40m)                       | A landmark private development transforming the western edge of Wodonga's central business district. Featuring multi-level buildings incorporating residential and office spaces, along with basement and onsite parking, enhancing the city's commercial and lifestyle offering.                                                                     |
| Baranduda Fields Sporting Complex (\$24m)          | Launched in August 2024, Stage 1 delivered two National Premier League standard turf football fields, large pavilion with grandstand seating, a full sized Australian Rules oval, two netball courts and public amenities. Future stages will triple capacity, making it the premier sporting venue between Sydney and Melbourne.                     |
| Defence base redevelopment (\$360m)                | A comprehensive upgrade delivering new mess and living-in accommodation, advanced training facilities, refurbished buildings, expanded parking and modernised infrastructure services, boosting defence capabilities and local contracting opportunities.                                                                                             |
| Albury- Wodonga Hospital Redevelopment (\$558m)    | A major healthcare consolidation on a single campus with expanded ICU, new operating theatres, a children's ward, maternity and mental health units, outpatient spaces and improved parking.                                                                                                                                                          |
| Inland Rail - local section (\$403.5m)             | The Beveridge–Albury section has been completed, with Tranche 2 underway and completion set for late 2027. The Albury–Illabo section is approved and major works commenced in 2025. This national freight corridor enables double-stacked container transport, cost efficiencies and boosted exports.                                                 |
| Wodonga TAFE's Logical Innovation Precinct (\$22m) | Stage 1 will deliver a heavy vehicle workshop and off-road circuit, a corporate and client services building with showroom and a cyber range facility, positioning Wodonga as a leader in logistics and advanced technical training.                                                                                                                  |

Source: Wodonga Council, 2026

Major infrastructure projects generate positive flow-on impacts for the regional economy, providing economic stimulus throughout construction, as well as delivering economic, employment and community benefits once complete and operational.

The value of current infrastructure projects demonstrates Wodonga's appeal as an investment destination, as well as its growth potential, with major projects enabling future economic activity and supporting additional investment opportunities.

## 2.5 Macroeconomic context

The future growth and development of the economy will be influenced by the following external economic factors.

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | <p><b>Workforce and skills shortages</b></p> <p>Skills and workforce shortages are being experienced across most industries in regional areas, including primary industries like manufacturing and service industries such as childcare, aged care, retail and hospitality. This has had a substantial impact on business operations and service provision for residents.</p> <p><b>Implications for Wodonga</b></p> <p>This is a pressing issue for Wodonga, given the existing business base and the city's role as a regional service hub. Ongoing workforce and skills shortages present a risk to business productivity and future investments. Developing local skills and attracting skilled labour is increasingly important to support growth outcomes.</p>         |
|    | <p><b>Cost of living pressures</b></p> <p>Price pressures from supply chain issues, as well as rising interest rates have led to an increase in the cost of daily essentials, utilities and basic services, which has the potential to affect business activity and local consumption levels in the short term.</p> <p><b>Implications for Wodonga</b></p> <p>Decreased consumer sentiment has the potential to affect business activity in Wodonga, as well as constrain the levels of investment attraction. There is opportunity for the council to implement measures that create a more productive and resilient economic and industry base in Wodonga to mitigate against these shocks.</p>                                                                            |
|  | <p><b>Construction and housing market</b></p> <p>Ongoing supply-side constraints like materials and labour, coupled with rising construction costs, have led to a softening of the residential housing market on a national level, including reduced demand and decreasing (or stagnant) prices.</p> <p><b>Implications for Wodonga</b></p> <p>A constrained property market is significant for the Wodonga economy, as any reduction in the volume of new residential developments will add to existing housing shortages and accentuate workforce shortages. Supporting the current and future supply of housing is critical to achieving economic and employment outcomes in the region.</p>                                                                              |
|  | <p><b>Growth of advanced manufacturing</b></p> <p>Manufacturing has been a key part of Australia's COVID-19 response, particularly in responding to the global supply chain impacts and the need to produce goods locally. There is an opportunity for manufacturing businesses to scale up and become more competitive and resilient, through investment in more advanced and emerging manufacturing activities.</p> <p><b>Implications for Wodonga</b></p> <p>Manufacturing is the largest economic driver in Wodonga. This provides significant opportunities to attract further investment in advanced and emerging manufacturing activities, including leveraging existing land and the local skills base, as well as supporting existing manufacturing businesses.</p> |



## Climate resilience and environmental sustainability

Given the recent government commitments to reducing emissions, environmental sustainability is playing an increasing role within the economy and influencing business and consumer decisions. As a result, there is increased demand for investment in new, clean energy technologies to increase energy efficiency and reduce emissions, as well as transition to more efficient practices to improve business productivity.

### Implications for Wodonga

There is an opportunity for the council to attract diverse industries and support increased productivity of the existing business base through policy support, engagement and advocacy.



## Growing demand for health care

As the population ages, demand for health care will increase and significantly grow healthcare-related spending, demand for public health facilities and workforce requirements to meet demand.

### Implications for Wodonga

Health care and social assistance is the largest employing industry and, together with an ageing population, the provision of healthcare to service a large regional catchment will be an ongoing concern for Wodonga.

## 2.6 Economic development partners

The following table outlines the key partners and stakeholders responsible for delivering economic development locally, regionally, state-wide and nationally. Wodonga Council and supporting stakeholders are encouraged to maintain ongoing relationships to ensure alignment with broader priorities and initiatives. This collaboration is important to promote local projects and initiatives, particularly through attracting funding for investments and infrastructure in the region to support economic growth.

**Table 3 Wodonga economic development governance structure**

| Organisation                   | Description                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National level                 |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Regional Development Australia | Regional Development Australia works to improve economic development across regional Australia, as well as attract investment and create jobs.                                   |
| Austrade                       | The Australian Trade and Investment Commission, promotes Australian trade and investment opportunities internationally to support the growth of Australian businesses.           |
| State level                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Regional Development Victoria  | Supports the economic development of rural and regional areas within Victoria. RDV works with regional businesses and communities and all levels of government.                  |
| Visit Victoria                 | The primary tourism and events organisation for the Victorian Government and is involved in research and advocacy, as well as domestic and international marketing.              |
| Invest Victoria                | Invest Victoria is the state government's investment attraction agency.                                                                                                          |
| Business Victoria              | Business Victoria is a comprehensive online resource that delivers a number of programs and services to support Victorian businesses to start, run and transform their business. |
| Development Victoria           | The government agency responsible for driving urban renewal and development projects to enhance the economic and social well-being of Victoria.                                  |

| Regional level                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Visit Albury-Wodonga              | A tourism organisation that represents the Wodonga and Albury councils and supports tourism in the Albury-Wodonga region, showcasing its attractions and activities to visitors through marketing and promotional activities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Invest Albury-Wodonga             | Supported by the Wodonga and Albury councils, Invest Albury Wodonga incorporates a suite of services and information to facilitate investment and business relocation, focusing on target industries and areas suited to the region.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Live Albury-Wodonga               | Showcases the Wodonga and Albury municipalities for prospective residents and workers seeking to relocate. Includes an overview of regional assets, employment opportunities, housing availability and general regional lifestyle attributes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| AlburyCity Council                | AlburyCity is Wodonga's partner in investment attraction, as well as supporting regional growth in economic development and the visitor economy, which is detailed in the <i>Two Cities One Community Strategic Plan</i> . This includes collaborative activities to live, invest and visit in Albury-Wodonga. AlburyCity also provides tourism support for Wodonga through funded council officer positions.                                                                                |
| Ovens Murray Regional Partnership | The Ovens Murray Regional Partnership was established to engage with local communities, businesses and other stakeholders in the Ovens Murray region of Victoria. The partnership serves as a platform for collaborative decision-making to address local priorities and facilitate economic and social development within the region.                                                                                                                                                       |
| Tourism North East                | <p>Tourism North East is one of twelve Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs), established at the directive of the Victorian State Government.</p> <p>Tourism North East is the peak tourism organisation for North East Victoria, the region known as Victoria's High Country.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Murray Regional Tourism           | Murray Regional Tourism unites the Murray region's tourism industry, providing a clear developmental direction, focused product development and support for infrastructure. The organisation works across both the Victorian and NSW borders and aims to strengthen the region's visitor economy by building tourism product, industry resilience, developing quality and inspirational visitor experiences and promoting the region in partnership with both the public and private sector. |
| Local level                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Wodonga Council                   | Wodonga Council's economic development unit provides support to businesses and facilitates initiatives that promote economic growth and employment opportunities in the Wodonga region.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Business Wodonga                  | Business Wodonga is Wodonga's chamber of commerce, supporting and advocating for local businesses by providing networking opportunities, business resources, and community engagement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## 3. KEY TRENDS

### 3.1 Key demographic trends and findings

Figure six provides an overview of the population and demographic profile for Wodonga. Key points to note include the following.

- Wodonga is forecast to grow to more than 62,837 residents by 2046. To ensure sustainable population growth, it will be critical that investment in services, amenity and infrastructure keeps pace with local growth, and considers the growth of the broader region.
- However, consideration of the broader catchment that is serviced by Wodonga includes a resident base of about 150,000, which is forecast to grow to more than 176,000 by 2036. Planning for regional growth will require significant investment in infrastructure and services, including housing, land supply and businesses, to meet demand.
- More locally, population growth is expected to be greatest among cohorts over 70 years of age, which will impact demand for health care and aged care services. It will be important to foster the growth of all working aged residents and young families to support the local workforce and sustain the economy.
- While house prices have increased over time, median house prices are consistently lower than the national average. This provides an opportunity to attract residents and workers from more expensive regional areas and metropolitan cities. However, it is critical that there is a sufficient supply of diverse housing to meet the contemporary needs of various demographic groups (and also improve liveability outcomes for existing residents).

### 3.2 Key economic trends and findings

- The economy is driven by the following industry specialisations that generate majority of output, exports and local jobs.
    - **Primary industries and trade** (manufacturing, construction, transport and warehousing)
    - **Knowledge and public sector** (health care and social assistance, education & training, public administration and safety)
    - **Population support** (retail trade, property, hospitality, other services)
- These specialisations are fundamental to the function and productivity of the local economy and are likely to drive future investment and growth in the city.
- There is a large commuting workforce in the region, given that both Wodonga and Albury provide a large jobs base with 35 per cent of local workers commuting into Wodonga from the surrounding region, while 35 per cent commute out to other municipalities (primarily Albury). Industry in Wodonga can benefit from a regional workforce by leveraging the job opportunities in Albury to attract resident commuters, as well as attracting workers from Albury to support businesses.
  - Although the majority of businesses in Wodonga are non-employing, the municipality supports many major private and public employers across its industry specialisations. These large-scale businesses achieve employment outcomes, generate flow-on economic activity and can facilitate future investment in supporting and complementary industries.
  - Wodonga receives a high proportion of non-holiday visitors, including visiting friends and relatives, business travellers and healthcare visitors. Given the role of Wodonga as a service centre, as well as a gateway for regional and metropolitan destinations, there are opportunities to support visitor economy growth by leveraging its strategic location and existing services and amenity.

## 4. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

### 4.1. Overview

The following provides an overview of the strategic considerations to inform the Economic Development Framework, including:

- **Strengths** and attributes to be leveraged to achieve growth outcomes;
- **Challenges** to be considered and overcome; and,
- **Economic opportunities** to guide future decision-making and priorities for the council.

This information is drawn from a combination of background research, policy review and stakeholder consultation.

### 4.2. Strengths

The following outlines Wodonga's economic strengths and competitive advantages that should be leveraged to achieve growth outcomes.



#### **Location and accessibility to regional destinations and metropolitan cities**

Wodonga is a gateway to surrounding regional destinations, including the Alpine snowfields, the north east wineries, as well as all major metropolitan centres across Australia.



#### **Established transport corridors**

The city is strategically positioned along key road, rail and air connections, providing access to regional, national and international markets.



#### **Access to education and research facilities**

Wodonga boasts tertiary education assets, including both La Trobe University and Wodonga TAFE, providing a steady stream of skilled talent to sustain a thriving workforce, as well as research opportunities to support industry development.



#### **Regional hub for employment, retail and health services**

Wodonga is the key regional city for Victoria's North East, making it the primary location for services and employment. This supports economic outcomes for residents, workers and businesses, which helps facilitate investment opportunities.



#### **Regional lifestyle attributes**

Wodonga has a number of attributes that make it an attractive and liveable place to reside, including local community, recreation and sporting facilities, as well as access to key services. This contributes to resident amenity and wellbeing.



#### **Major industry employers and diverse industries**

The number of nationally recognised businesses in the area, across a range of industry specialisations such as manufacturing, health, defence, proves Wodonga to be a conducive location for investment and business activity.



#### **Collaboration with Albury (and other neighbouring councils)**

The unique relationship with Albury (as well as surrounding municipalities as the service centre) provides significant economic and community advantages. This includes including access to labour and consumption markets, as well as expanding the range of available services and amenity. Collaboration with Albury and neighbouring councils will help Wodonga capitalise on future economic and investment opportunities.



#### **Diverse employment land supply**

The diverse employment land supply in Wodonga accommodates a broad spectrum of industries, from heavy manufacturing to public services and commercial enterprises – bolstering economic resilience and employment prospects.

### **4.3. Needs and aspirations**

In order to meet the vision for Wodonga, the following areas will need to be addressed.



#### **Increase stock of diverse housing and accommodation**

Wodonga is experiencing a shortage of housing, rentals, as well as commercial accommodation supply to cater for residents, workers and visitors. Provision of diverse housing stock (covering the spectrum of low-high density and quality) to meet market needs is critical to support employment and business activity. In particular, housing for construction workers is critical to support the development of current and future major projects planned in the region.



#### **Ensure supply of a skilled and “job-ready” workforce**

There are significant workforce shortages across a range of sectors critical to the Wodonga economy, including healthcare, construction, manufacturing and hospitality. As such, it is essential to ensure there is sufficient availability of skilled labour to meet industry needs and ensure key services are provided to residents.



#### **Optimise underutilised and vacant retail, commercial and industrial land in strategic locations**

There are strategic parcels of employment land across Wodonga that is vacant or underutilised, including state-owned land in the CBA. This constrains the level of investment and activation across Wodonga's commercial and industrial centres.



#### **Support provision of quality retail and dining experiences**

Residents, workers and visitors would benefit from a greater range of hospitality in the municipality, including retail, dining and other entertainment product, which could help support resident growth and generate local consumption.



#### **Provide planning support for critical development infrastructure**

It is essential that zoned land is serviced by critical infrastructure (eg. water) to facilitate both residential and commercial developments. This requires strategic planning for future land releases and collaboration with service providers to ensure future developments align with growth needs and meet industry and community requirements.



#### **Enhance connectivity to key employment areas**

Community and industry stakeholders identified a lack of transport options for commercial and industrial areas outside the CBA, including at Logic and the Leneva Baranduda growth area. This includes both public and active transport connections for workers accessing employment in these locations, which may constrain workforce attraction and business activity.

## 4.4. Economic opportunities

The following summarises the range of economic opportunities that the council could pursue to guide future decision-making and priorities. These opportunities seek to leverage Wodonga's strengths, as well as overcome identified challenges, to achieve positive economic development outcomes.

- ✔ Continue to develop and improve access to Logic precinct to attract industry investment.
- ✔ Capitalise on Junction Place project to attract commercial (ie. retail, entertainment, hospitality) and mixed-use developments.
- ✔ Leverage the pipeline of major private and public infrastructure projects to support economic growth and attract flow-on business investment.
- ✔ Strategically plan for development infrastructure (eg. water) to service zoned land in order to attract industry and residential investment.
- ✔ Support infill residential development on existing serviced land to accommodate residents and workers.
- ✔ Activate state-owned land within the CBA to expand the range of commercial precincts.
- ✔ Collaboration with the private sector and higher education to support training and employment pathways.
- ✔ Grow ecosystem of organisations involved in defence-related activity, including support services, manufacturing and research.
- ✔ Collaborate with regional, state and national entities (including government and private sector) to support investment priorities and achieve economic and employment outcomes.
- ✔ Support the Events team and Visit Albury Wodonga to deliver on the Cultural Services Plan and Destination Management Plan through development facilitation.

