



THE RURAL CITY
OF MURRAY BRIDGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH STRATEGY 2026-2030



GROWING. THRIVING. STRONG.





We acknowledge the Ngarrindjeri people as the traditional owners of this land on which we meet and work. We respect and acknowledge their spiritual connection as the custodians of this land and that their cultural heritage beliefs are still important to the living people today.

We recognise the living culture and combined energies of the Ngarrindjeri people, our global pioneers and community members today for their unique contribution to the life of our region.

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MAYOR AND CEO MESSAGE

As Mayor and Chief Executive Officer, we are proud to present the Economic Development & Growth Strategy 2026–2030 for the Rural City of Murray Bridge.

Our region has entered a defining period of growth. Strong population increases, rising investment, and our strategic location position Murray Bridge as a key driver of South Australia's future prosperity. This Strategy provides a clear and coordinated pathway to harness this momentum and deliver lasting economic, social and environmental outcomes for our community.

Building on extensive planning, advocacy and collaboration, the Strategy brings together our priorities into a focused framework, centred on ten Key Moves across three focus areas, aligned with our Strategic Plan 2024–2028.

Our approach is guided by the four P's; planning for growth, preparing our organisation and community, partnering with key stakeholders, and placemaking to create vibrant, connected places. These principles ensure growth is purposeful, well-managed and community focused.

Importantly, this Strategy adopts a wellbeing economy approach, recognising that success is measured not only by growth, but by improved quality of life, stronger social inclusion, and resilient natural and built environments.

This is a living roadmap that will guide decision-making, strengthen partnerships, and support advocacy to State and Federal Governments – ensuring infrastructure, land use and industry development are aligned to opportunity.

We acknowledge the contributions of our community, industry partners and government stakeholders in shaping this Strategy. Delivering its outcomes will require continued collaboration, innovation and shared commitment.

Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient and prosperous Murray Bridge, a place where people, businesses and industries can confidently invest, grow and thrive.

WAYNE THORLEY
Mayor

HEATHER BARCLAY
Chief Executive Officer

ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

The Economic Development & Growth Strategy 2026–2030 sets out how the Rural City of Murray Bridge will harness population and investment growth to deliver a more prosperous, resilient and inclusive local economy.

The Strategy builds on recent years of planning work, consolidating existing projects and initiatives into a clear framework of ten 'Key Moves' across three focus areas, underpinned by a Strategic Plan (2024-2028) focused on Growing, Thriving, Strong.

The purpose of the Economic Development and Growth Strategy is to:

- Align Council's economic development efforts with its Strategic Plan 2024–2028 under the broader Community Plan's theme of a *"Dynamic Economy - where people, business and industry are seizing opportunities to learn, earn and grow. People thrive when they participate in a dynamic economy"*.
- Provide a practical implementation roadmap for Council, partners and industry over the next four years.
- Embed a wellbeing economy lens ensuring economic growth improves living standards, social inclusion and environmental resilience.

The Strategy is intended as a working document that guides annual business planning, informs infrastructure and land use decisions, and supports funding and partnership negotiations with State and Federal Government.

Recent years of planning, research and advocating for government investment under an aspirational framework has resulted in long-term commitment to critical community building infrastructure. The EDGS aims to deliver these confirmed directions.





STRATEGIC CONTEXT & ALIGNMENT

LOCAL / REGIONAL

The Economic Development and Growth Strategy is anchored in RCMB's broader policy framework:

- **Community Plan 2016-2032 – Thriving Communities:** long term community aspirations shaped by extensive engagement.
- **Strategic Plan 2024-2028 – A Dynamic Economy:** one of four themes, focusing on people, business and industry seizing opportunities to learn, earn and grow.
- **Structure Plan 2024 and Code Amendments:** provide the spatial framework for residential and employment lands growth

STATE

The Economic Development and Growth Strategy draws strands of activity together into a single, implementable framework for economic development and growth, ensuring alignment with South Australian Government objectives outlined in:

- **Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP)** and associated housing and employment targets.
- **The Housing and Employment Lands Roadmap** which provides for a pipeline of both housing and employment lands, to support Local, State and Federal economic aspirations.
- **The State Infrastructure Strategy 2025**
- **The South Australian Transport Strategy 2025**
- **The Storm Water Management Planning Priorities for SA 2022**

As a result of effective advocacy over recent years, the South Australian Government has committed \$103.7 million to public transport, improved connectivity, medical, education and public realm initiatives for delivery from 2026 to 2030.



FEDERAL

Murray Bridge is strategically located and just one hour from Adelaide along the states eastern growth corridor - it offers space and opportunity for large scale development on affordable serviced land - its proximity to Adelaide and direct rail and road freight connections is one reason it provides opportunity to contribute to the Federal Governments ambition to grow Australian Farm outputs, and strengthen export supply chains - it also offers a place to support sovereign capability - it is to be connected to the Port of Adelaide via the high productivity road freight route, providing a strategic base for food and Agri-business, logistics, warehousing, advanced manufacturing and machining, defence aligned industry and critical and emerging technologies.

By concentrating value-adding, cold-chain and logistics activity within its employment precincts and future freight bypass, RCMB can provide a high-efficiency platform for South Australian grain, livestock, horticulture and food products to leverage Federal reforms to export services, digital certification and market access led by Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of Australia and Austrade. Through close partnership with the State Government's Trade and Investment Strategy to 2030 and related export diversification and agrifood programs, RCMB can position its precincts and transport investments as priority regional nodes that translate Federal export policy into tangible jobs, investment and higher value agricultural exports from the Murraylands and broader South Australian regions.

The National Housing and Homelessness Plan (NHHP) sets the long term national framework for safe, affordable and well-located housing and informs Commonwealth-State agreements and investment streams.

Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) and Housing Support Program (HSP) fund new social/affordable dwellings and enabling infrastructure and planning for growth councils. RCMB has already secured Housing Support Program funding for its growth initiatives to develop an infrastructure scheme, open space master plan and growth area code amendment to accelerate housing supply.

RCMB's aspirations for affordable and worker housing overlays, residential code amendments and uplift in public housing directly mesh with HAFF/HSP focus on supply, infrastructure and planning in growth regions.

The RCMB growth-ready positioning under GARP and Structure Plan, with residential expansion at Gifford Hill and other master planned areas supports a strong case into Commonwealth housing programs as a high growth regional city.

RCMB has opportunities to support the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy 2025. Australia's freight task is growing with domestic freight projected to increase by 26% between 2020 and 2050. The National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy is a holistic, coordinated and multi-modal approach to freight and supply chains agreed by all jurisdictions.





NATIONAL GROWTH AREAS ALLIANCE

As mentioned, the Rural City of Murray Bridge is strongly aligned with current Federal Government priorities for housing supply, productivity growth and liveability in fast-growing regions.

As a designated growth area council, Adelaide satellite city and member of the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA), The Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB) is part of the national cohort expected to deliver a significant share of new homes and jobs under the National Housing Accord and related population and regional development frameworks.

The Economic Development and Growth Strategy positions Murray Bridge to support Commonwealth objectives by unlocking housing, enabling infrastructure, strengthening freight and industry connections along key national corridors, and growing a skilled workforce that can contribute to national productivity and resilience.

Council can actively leverage national partnerships, programs and data to ensure that local investment decisions help deliver wider Australian Government goals for sustainable growth, climate-ready infrastructure and inclusive economic participation in regional Australia. Active participation positions RCMB for further external funding to drive these objectives.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The Strategy was developed through a five-step process:

- 1 Economic Profiling:** comprehensive analysis of the current economy, sector structure, workforce trends and performance (Appendix 1)
- 2 External Trends & Emerging Sectors:** assessment of technological disruption (including AI), climate impacts, trade dynamics, visitor trends and infrastructure needs, as documented in the Economic Opportunities and Challenges Discussion Paper (Appendix 2).
- 3 Wellbeing Economy Lens:** application of contemporary frameworks such as community wealth building, regenerative economic development and “doughnut economics” to ensure broader wellbeing outcomes (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).
- 4 Stakeholder Engagement:** targeted engagement with:
 - Murray River Lakes & Coorong Tourism Alliance (MRLCA).
 - Local businesses via roundtable and online survey.
 - Council leadership through multiple workshops.
- 5 Review:** the earlier draft developed through steps 1-4 was updated to align with State Government commitments and consider current geographical and economic climate. The inclusion of Key Move 10 – Marketing & Promotion underpins the three previously identified focus areas to ensure the region’s story is told.

This process identified key challenges such as climate exposure, skills shortages, housing constraints, infrastructure gaps and opportunities arising from AgTech, healthcare technology, professional services growth, renewables and tourism.

The identified 10 Key Moves and associated 51 Actions address these challenges and opportunities.

ECONOMY OVERVIEW

A detailed economic profiling exercise was undertaken of the Rural City of Murray Bridge economy and is fully detailed in Appendix 1.



5.6% of our community are First Nations people



13% of our community were born overseas

Top five birthplaces (other than Australia) are the UK, Philippines, China, New Zealand and Vietnam.



Gross Regional Product has grown 10% in the last 4 years to \$1.38 Billion (June 2023)

The top three industries generate 52.9% of the total RCMB economic output:

Construction generating \$571M (21.8%)

Agriculture generating \$424M (16.2%)

Manufacturing generating \$391M (14.9%)



1,429 registered businesses exist in RCMB

The largest number of businesses by industry include:

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry businesses **265 (18.5%)** (9.9% average in South Australia)

Construction industry businesses **236 (16.5%)**

Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Service businesses **154 (10.8%)**



Over the past four years, the most significant changes have occurred in the Rental, Hiring and Real Estate sector, along with the Other Services sector, which includes repair and maintenance, personal services and a range of other service-based businesses.

The Rural City of Murray Bridge contributed 1.2% of South Australia’s employment and 1.0% of its value added (2022-23).



The total value of agricultural output in 2020/21 was **\$252M**

The largest proportion attributed to Livestock Processing **\$61.1M**

The agriculture sector’s share of state employment increased to **4.9% in 2022/23 (501 new jobs)** (from 3.5% in 2019/20)



Direct Tourism Sector employment increased to **556** in 2024 (from 305 in 2021)

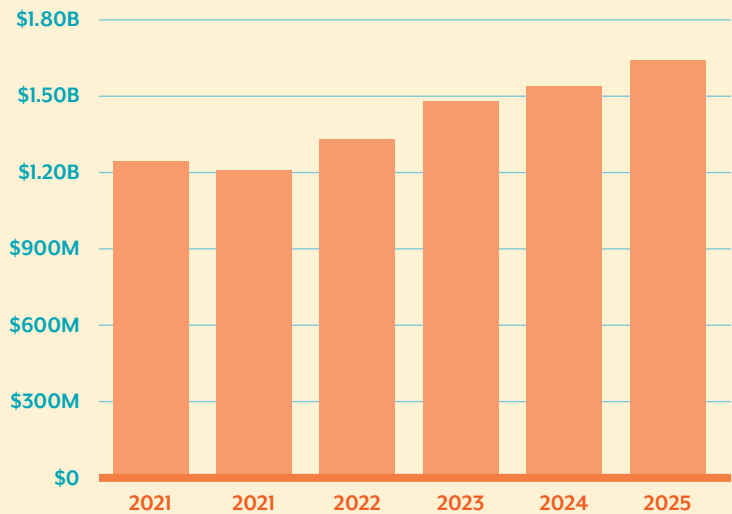
Indirect Tourism Sector employment increased to **378 in 2024** (from 207 in 2021)

ECONOMIC INDICATOR

Gross Regional Product is the key indicator of economic growth.

The RCMB local economy has seen a considerable growth trend between 2020 and 2025 increasing by 10%. A proactive approach by Council is facilitating accelerated growth using levers such as land use zoning, accessibility, effective partnering and dedicated programs.

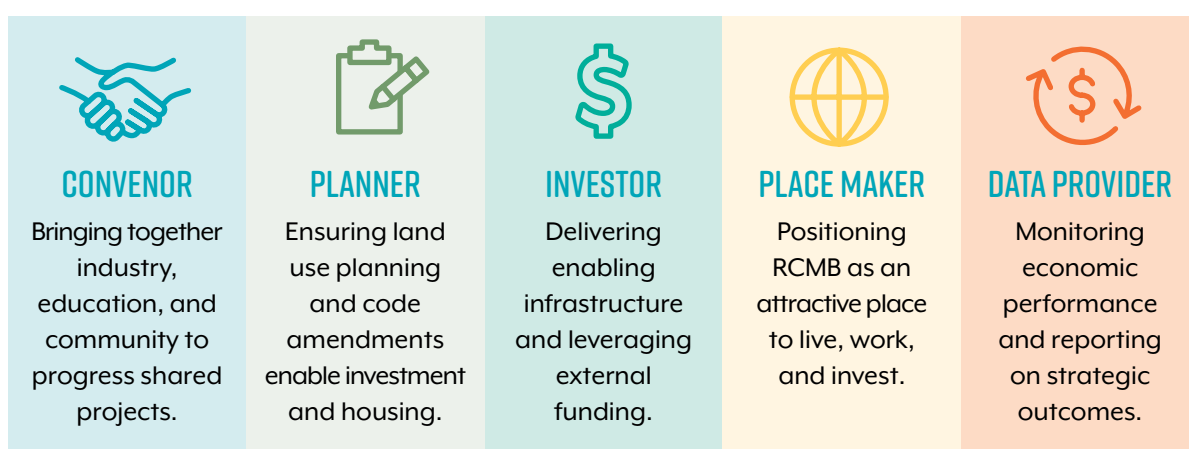
Gross Regional Product



COUNCIL'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC GROWTH

Council's sphere of influence spans a spectrum from direct delivery (e.g. Visitor Information Servicing, events, business support), through facilitation and partnership (e.g. investment attraction, workforce initiatives), to advocacy and policy leadership (e.g. freight corridors, health services, access to tertiary and upskilling educational services).

KEY STRATEGIC ROLES



IMPACT

INFLUENCE SPECTRUM



Given finite resources and a substantial works program, the Economic Development and Growth Strategy emphasises prioritisation, focusing Council effort where it can “move the dial” and generate the greatest return for community.



FRAMEWORK:

FOCUS AREAS & KEY MOVES

The Economic Development and Growth Strategy is organised into three interconnected Focus Areas, underpinned by the Council's Strategic Plan focused on Growing, Thriving and Strong which is realised through brand development and a clear narrative regarding growth directions.

FOCUS AREA 1 PROGRESSIVE WELLBEING

Brings together health, housing, education and climate resilience to ensure sustained economic growth translates into better living standards and long-term sustainability.



Key Move 1 – Health & Housing

Focuses on implementing the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, developing and delivering Growth Infrastructure Plans, undertaking strategic land reviews, advancing growth initiatives, advocating for expanded health services and addressing affordable and workforce housing. In addition, actively participate in National Growth Areas Alliance.



Key Move 2 – Education & Training

Aims to build a robust, adaptable workforce by identifying required skills and existing gaps, local training pathways, a place-based training hub, AI readiness programs and strengthened education-industry partnerships.



Key Move 3 – Climate Resilience

Integrates Council's climate and environmental considerations into economic development through climate risk governance, climate-ready design guidelines, energy efficiency considerations, attracting aligned industry, AgTech and agricultural climate adaptation support.





FOCUS AREA 2 ACTIVATING INFRASTRUCTURE

Concentrates on the linkages between land use, connectivity, infrastructure and major investment to underpin economic growth.



Key Move 4 – Residential & Employment Lands

Ensures fit-for-purpose land supply through strategic land review, advancement of growth initiatives, progression of structure plans and code amendments, and the Outer Towns Project (Mypolonga, Callington).



Key Move 5 – Strategic Infrastructure & Connectivity

Focusing on developing and delivering on growth infrastructure plans and Long-Term Financial Planning, embedding Smart City* and digital connectivity, establishing a developer contributions framework, advocating for and facilitating freight and transport improvements, and aligning infrastructure investment with growth.



Key Move 6 – Large Scale Investment Attraction

Targets transformational investments via investment-ready land, proactive investment attraction with an international focus, creating sector-specific investment prospectuses, and business case development for major opportunities.

* A smart city is a city that uses communication technology and data to improve environmental sustainability, quality of life and the way people work in or visit a city.

FOCUS AREA 3 SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Supports expansion of tourism and events, small business development and attraction of new enterprises.



Key Move 7 – Tourism & Events

Strengthens the visitor economy by reforming the visitor information servicing model, deepening Murray River Lakes and Coorong Alliance partnerships, attracting major events, seeking co-investment and positioning RCMB as Adelaide’s “playground”.



Key Move 8 – Business Support

Builds business capacity and resilience through workforce initiatives, co-working activation, upskilling programs, AI/technology adoption support and local procurement “Buy Local” measures. Leverage the award-winning Study Hub program and facility.



Key Move 9 – Business Retention & Attraction

Utilise enterprise-ready land, education and training facilities for supporting existing business, new target sectors, reducing retail leakage, diversifying into advanced food production/value-added manufacturing and attracting renewables/digital sector firms.



Key Move 10 – Marketing & Promotion

Telling the Story - Growth Directions, Marketing & Promotion

Throughout the Strategy's development, community and industry stakeholders emphasised the importance of a clear narrative about the region's growth and opportunities, and the need to better communicate and fully leverage existing initiatives through stronger storytelling and promotion. In response, the strategy embeds community pride and promotion as an underpinning focus.

Actions are designed to create a compelling narrative supported by targeted marketing and collateral to build local pride, attract new investment and businesses, draw new residents, and grow tourism and visitation.

This will raise the region's national profile by highlighting affordability, lifestyle, housing and employment opportunities and proximity to Adelaide.





IMPLEMENTATION

LOGIC & PHASING 2026-2030

The action plan sequences 51 actions across four years, with ongoing initiatives embedded throughout and recurring.

YEAR 1 (2026-27) – FOUNDATION-SETTING

Land reviews, strategy and framework development, partnership formalisation, quick-win programs and planning processes commence across all 10 Key Moves. Actions and projects already established and underway are built upon.

YEAR 4 (2029-30) – CONSOLIDATION & REVIEW

Transformational projects progress toward delivery, long-term partnership returns materialise, and strategy outcomes are assessed for next cycle.

YEAR 2 (2027-28) – ACTIVATION

Business cases for transformational opportunities, AI readiness programs, international engagement is strengthened, and new experience and tourism products launch.

ONGOING

Across all years, core functions such as workforce development, business support, tourism marketing, events and advocacy on key issues continue on an ongoing basis.

YEAR 3 (2028-29) – SCALING

Infrastructure delivery accelerates, co-investment secured, outer town plans implemented, and sector-specific attraction campaigns enter the market.

MEASURES - WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

The Economic Development and Growth Strategy adopts a blended measurement approach as reflected in the Commonwealth Government's contemporary 'measuring what matters' report.

Recommended measures have been selected for each Focus Area and, in some cases, for Key Moves, based on data availability and frequency of reporting. These will be used to report annual performance and inform iterative adjustments. Using publicly available measures to monitor the impact of the Economic Development and Growth Strategy minimises the investment required as the data is readily available. Further information on measurement and indicators is provided in Section 9 'Measuring Success' of Appendix 1 'The Rural City of Murray Bridge Economic Profile – June 2025'.



GOVERNANCE, RESOURCING & IMPLEMENTATION

Oversight and implementation of the Strategy will be undertaken by Council in close collaboration with Administration. The Strategy forms part of Council's suite of corporate documents and progress will be reported quarterly.

Key governance features include:

- Clear internal ownership for each Key Move and action.
- Regular reporting to Council on progress and outcomes.
- Use of the action plan to inform annual budgets and capital works programs.
- Ongoing engagement with industry and community stakeholders.

Resourcing requirements include the need for economic development, investment and attraction expertise. In addition, tools are required to effectively manage and track strategy implementation success such as a Customer Relations Management system for business interactions (existing and intending) and secure platform to support a confidential network of local business growth intent.

Without this, the risk is that the Strategy becomes aspirational rather than deliverable, and key opportunities are lost to competing regions or are missed.



HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN

This section identifies areas of focus and the steps required for delivery. A detailed Operational Delivery Plan has been developed for internal use. It is an operational document with commercial-in-confidence matters and is therefore confidential.

The 51 actions have been numbered for easy identification and cross-referencing and the role of Council identified (L = Lead, C = Co-lead, S = Support, F = Facilitate, A = Advocate).



FOCUS AREA 1 PROGRESSIVE WELLBEING



Key Move 1 – Health & Housing

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
1.1.1 National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) (S)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People and Industry	Actively participate in the NGAA to raise RCMB profile nationally as a growth area and leverage their activity. Report alliance outcomes annually.	Ongoing
1.1.2 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic participation (F)	Focus Area 2 – Connecting People and Places	Partner with Ngarrindjeri organisations to integrate Indigenous economic participation opportunities into Council programs as outlined in actions 11 & 12 under the 'Opportunities' section in the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (2026 – 2028).	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
1.1.3 Ensure Community Infrastructure for the future population's essential service and amenity needs (L)	Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Continue Growth Infrastructure Planning - Focus initially on completion of Community Infrastructure Model 2 to inform future social infrastructure requirements and contributions framework and mechanisms delivery. - Map social infrastructure gaps against population growth projections, and secure funding for priority community facilities.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
1.1.4 Strategic land for future affordable housing, aged care and health services (L)	Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Complete comprehensive property and land audit identifying parcels suitable for health, aged care and affordable housing. Align findings against planning code and adjust to facilitate. Prepare business cases for priority parcels.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
1.1.5 Advance Urban Design Framework for inclusive urban development (L)	Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Progress Murray Bridge West residential precinct. Develop and implement Urban Design Framework.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 4 (2029-30)
1.1.6 Expanded health services and regional healthcare hub (A)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Communities	Monitor and report on State Government implementation of Murray Bridge Hospital Upgrades including a new renal unit and new maternity ward and birthing unit. Continue to advocate to the private sector for allied health hub (removing need to travel for services – Mt Barker, Adelaide).	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 4 (2029-30)
1.1.7 Address affordable housing supply gap for workers and families (C,F)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Partner with SA Housing Trust and community housing providers to build on the 20 new public homes and 115 minor upgraded investments. Facilitate public housing renewal projects. Investigate partnering opportunities to develop a worker accommodation incentive program for key employers.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)



Key Move 2 – Education & Training

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
1.2.1 Increased supply and availability of skilled workers for key sectors (F)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Conduct annual skills gap analysis across construction, agriculture, healthcare and manufacturing sectors. Partner with TAFE SA and local Registered Training Organisations for tailored training program delivery.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
1.2.2 Targeted local training and development pathways (F, C)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Build on existing partner agency agreements to provide place-based training leveraging existing Study Hub. Source micro-credential programs in AgTech, digital literacy and trades and adapt and tailor existing programs for future business needs. Continue to secure state and federal workforce development funding. Support the development of technical college in Murray Bridge.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 4 (2029-30)
1.2.3 Leverage existing infrastructure to support new business establishment (L)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Maintain Skills Centre partnerships and implement small business incubator/accelerator program; support the delivery of quarterly 'Starting a Business' workshops; connect entrepreneurs with mentors.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
1.2.4 Upskill individuals to leverage evolving digital technology (F)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Develop AI readiness and digital transformation training program for local businesses; partner with universities for regional professional development; monitor AI impact on local employment.	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 4 (2029-30)
1.2.5 Strengthen education partnerships and pathways (C)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Formalise Memorandum of Understanding with TAFE SA, universities and school-to-work providers. Advocate for expanded tertiary presence in Murray Bridge. Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and employment pathway programs.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)



Key Move 3 – Climate Resilience

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
1.3.1 Implement Climate Emergency Action Plan (L)	Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Finalise and adopt Climate Emergency Action Plan with measurable targets; allocate annual budget for priority actions; report progress biannually.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
1.3.2 Engineering Design Guidelines for climate-ready development (L)	Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Finalise and publish guidelines incorporating Water Sensitive Urban Design, water reuse and tree canopy standards; brief developers and building industry; review biennially.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
1.3.3 Industry and local business energy efficiency (F)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Facilitate educational opportunities relating to sustainability and energy efficiency initiatives for the local business sector. Consider Council as a business i.e. Council operations (investigate energy efficient design standards for Council buildings and facilities).	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
1.3.4 Support agriculture sector climate adaptation (F)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Facilitate farmer forums on climate-resilient practices and emerging technology; partner with Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia on drought/flood preparedness; promote crop diversification and water efficiency.	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 4 (2029-30)



FOCUS AREA 2 ACTIVATING INFRASTRUCTURE



Key Move 4 – Residential & Employment Lands

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
2.4.1 Conduct Strategic Land Review to optimise land use (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Complete review of all Council-owned and strategic land parcels; classify as residential, employment, mixed-use or conservation; identify 'preferred precincts / activity hubs' and consult community / developers. Prepare disposal and acquisition development recommendations.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
2.4.2 Advance Urban Design Framework for renewal (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Deliver Murray Bridge West precinct infrastructure staging plan; progress code amendments for growth-supportive zoning; facilitate developer engagement for priority sites (identified in Action 2.4.1).	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 4 (2029-30)
2.4.3 Progress Structure Plan and Code Amendments (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Finalise ongoing code amendment processes; advocate to PlanSA for timely processing; ensure employment lands are zoned for industrial, commercial and mixed-use.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
2.4.4 Deliver Outer Towns Project (Mypolonga, Callington) (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Complete Mypolonga township evaluation including grape/fruit production assessment; commence Callington review; develop action plans for each outer town.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)



Key Move 5 – Strategic Infrastructure & Connectivity

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
2.5.1 Continue Growth Infrastructure Modelling (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Continue Growth Infrastructure Planning - Focus initially on completion of Community Infrastructure Model 2 to inform future infrastructure requirements and contributions framework and mechanism for delivery. - Collaborate with State Government on infrastructure planning and delivery.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 4 (2029-30)
2.5.2 Collaborate on Developer contributions framework with State Government (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Engage on developer contributions under Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act; develop local policy position on infrastructure levies; implement contributions scheme for greenfield areas.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
2.5.3 Freight and transport network improvements (A, F)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Advocate to State and Australian Government on freight road infrastructure; partner with Department for Infrastructure and Transport and regional councils on inter-regional transport; and where appropriate, case manage specific sites in partnership with landowners. Ensure the State Government's commitment for improved public transport is implemented.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
2.5.4 Digital connectivity for knowledge-based industries (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Conduct digital connectivity audit across RCMB to determine needs; advocate to NBN Co and telecommunications providers for priority upgrades; investigate and consider co-investment for fibre to employment precincts.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
2.5.5 Ensure infrastructure investment is responsive to growth (L)	Focus Area 3 – Enhancing Places and Spaces	Establish annual infrastructure needs assessment linked to growth data; align capital works with Economic Development and Growth Strategy priorities; develop 10-year infrastructure investment pipeline.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing



Key Move 6 – Large Scale Investment Attraction

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
2.6.1 Existing business expansion opportunities (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Investigate needs of large enterprises (growth requirements – enabling infrastructure and land) and promote opportunities for processing in Murray Bridge. Apply case management approach assigning dedicated officer as the key contact for each business.	Year 1 (2026-27)
2.6.2 Develop an International Relations Strategy (key area of focus on investment / business attraction) (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Develop a standalone International Relations Strategy including key objectives and deliverables, policies and guidelines, formal engagement program (i.e participate in State Government led trade missions and reciprocal visits) and a reporting tool / mechanism. Leverage experience with Dezhou City (Shandong, China) international partnership under a signed MoU and use as a pilot / case study.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 4 (2029-30)
2.6.3 Sector-specific investment attraction (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Create Investment Opportunities and sector-specific prospectuses (Agriculture/Protein, Renewables, Advanced Manufacturing (AgTech)); attend national and international investment forums, establish Investment Facilitation function (launch Prospectus).	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
2.6.4 Transformational opportunities and economic opportunities (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Undertake strategic advocacy work towards transformational industry investment.	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 4 (2029-30)
2.6.5 Federal & State Government Partnerships (C, A, L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Develop joint funding proposals for State and Federal governments, using the National Growth Areas Alliance network for catalytic infrastructure, coordinate advocacy with alliance members, report on leveraged investment outcomes annually.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 4 (2029-30)
2.6.6 Investment Attraction Strategy (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Develop and implement an Investment Attraction Strategy that provides a coordinated approach to engaging major enterprises, identifying infrastructure and land requirements, facilitating investment opportunities, and strengthening advocacy and partnerships to secure funding for catalytic infrastructure and economic growth.	Year 1 (2026-27)



FOCUS AREA 3 SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



Key Move 7 – Tourism & Events

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
3.7.1 Visitor Information Servicing (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry Focus Area 2 – Connecting People and Places	Implement a review of the Visitor Information Centre operations and service delivery. Explore digital/hybrid servicing options. Implement new model with Key Performance Indicators for visitor satisfaction and expenditure uplift.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
3.7.2 Tourism Promotion (C)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Formalise partnership agreement with MRLCA to co-invest in regional destination marketing; contribute to Destination Management Plan update and implementation.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
3.7.3 Event support and major event attraction (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Develop Events Attraction Strategy and sponsorship framework with clear ROI criteria; actively bid for 2-3 new signature events per year; grow existing program.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
3.7.4 Deliver diverse program of major events (L)	Focus Area 2 – Connecting People and Places Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Maintain and enhance annual major events calendar; measure economic impact annually; develop event infrastructure (power, amenities, staging) at key venues.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
3.7.5 Seek co-investment for expanded event impact (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Apply to South Australian Tourism Commission Regional Events Fund and federal programs; partner with private sponsors; develop multi-year event partnership agreements.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
3.7.6 Adelaide's 'playground' (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Position and promote RCMB as Adelaide's playground. Develop cluster-based experience packaging (food, nature, adventure, culture); partner with operators on bookable experiences; deliver targeted marketing to Adelaide metropolitan area.	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 4 (2029-30)
3.7.7 Grow tourism employment and business opportunities (S,A,F)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Support new tourism business establishment; advocate for accommodation investment; publish annual tourism economic snapshot.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing



Key Move 8 – Business Support

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
3.8.1 Improve skilled workforce availability for key sectors (F,A,C)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Deliver industry-specific workforce development with TAFE SA and Registered Training Organisations; establish annual Business-Education Forum; facilitate work placements and apprenticeships.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
3.8.2 Leverage existing infrastructure to support new business establishment (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Promote the co-working space at Murraylands Skills Centre / Study Hub; deliver quarterly informal networking and capability-building events; provide 'starting a business' concierge service with an "Easy to do business with Council" motto / philosophy.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
3.8.3 Provide upskilling opportunities for workforce demand (F)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Deliver annual workshop program (digital marketing, financial management, compliance); facilitate access to grants and advisory services; develop First Nations business support program as part of action item 1.1.2.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing
3.8.4 Support business adaptation to AI and technology (F)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Facilitate the delivery of 'AI and Digital Futures' seminar series; partner with industry associations and telcos for technology demonstrations and investigate a 'technology adoption' resource hub for subject matter experts.	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 3 (2028-29)
3.8.5 Strengthen local procurement and community wealth building (L,S)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Review Council procurement policy to maximise local purchasing; Support local supplier / regional business directories and scope a 'buy local' campaign; measure and report Council local procurement spend annually.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)





Key Move 9 – Business Retention & Attraction

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
3.9.1 Facilitate contemporary co-working spaces (F)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Promote and build on Murraylands Skills Centre co-working/innovation space; partner with private operators for flexible workspaces; market and promote the spaces to remote and work from home workers, startups and professional service providers (micro businesses).	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
3.9.2 Conduct strategic land reviews for enterprise locations (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Identify and support market-ready commercial and light industrial land opportunities and undertake marketing activities for priority employment precincts. Ensure employment-generating developments are attracted and actively guided through planning assessment.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 2 (2027-28)
3.9.3 Support place-based education and training for business needs (F)	Focus Area 4 – Supporting our Community	Align training delivery with target attraction sectors; develop skills pipeline marketing for prospective investors; partner with local schools on vocational pathways.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
3.9.4 Strengthen retail and commercial Development (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Develop a commercial and retail future demand study, incorporating a retail leakage study, floorspace and activity Centre need analysis. Develop targeted attraction campaigns for under-represented sectors and target business; provide case management for priority retail/commercial prospects.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Year 3 (2028-29)
3.9.5 Advanced food production and value-added manufacturing (L,F)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Encourage diversification in the agriculture sector and develop sector specific prospectus for value-added agriculture; engage with local businesses and anchor firms on supply chain opportunities; attract complementary processing businesses.	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 4 (2029-30)
3.9.6 Target renewables and digital sector business attraction (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Develop renewable energy sector investment prospectus; market Murray Bridge as a regional digital services hub; connect renewable developers with local supply chains to assist industry become climate resilient and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.	Year 2 (2027-28) – Year 4 (2029-30)



Key Move 10 – Marketing & Promotion

Plan Reference and Council role	Strategic Plan Alignment	Action	Timeframe
3.10.1 Content Creation (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Collate stories from community and business about what Murray Bridge means to them. Tell these stories in an authentic way. • Create series of short-form videos for marketing. • Update photography including drone footage for inclusion in marketing campaign. • Develop prospectuses for market segments (residential / investment) include subset for specific sectors: Renewables & Energy, Allied Health, Agriculture.	Year 1 (2026-27)
3.10.2 Promotion (L)	Focus Area 1 – Activating our Rural City and Attracting People & Industry	Undertake a marketing campaign and partner with relevant agencies to expand reach • Residential – Why live in Murray Bridge? Showcase affordability, available development choices, future employment opportunities, lifestyle and accessibility. • Investment – Why invest or establish a business in Murray Bridge? An overarching prospectus that showcases emerging investment trends, supported by case studies, population growth forecasts, and current and planned public sector investment initiatives that will help stimulate future private sector development. The prospectus should clearly articulate the region's competitive advantages, highlight strategic property, development opportunities and outline Council's vision for key precincts and growth areas. By demonstrating strong alignment with the community's long-term aspirations and Council's commitment to supporting planned outcomes, the prospectus will provide greater certainty and confidence for investors.	Year 1 (2026-27) – Ongoing



APPENDICES

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Economic Profile June 2025
- 2 Rural City Murray Bridge
Economic Opportunities &
Challenges Discussion
Paper August 2025



RURAL CITY OF MURRAY BRIDGE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REVIEW
2024 – 2028 Stage

Economic Profile

An overview of Murray Bridge's Economy
June 2025



AQUEOUS.



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1. Introduction

The Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB) is undertaking a review of its current Economic Development Strategy 2020 - 2032.

In 2015, the Council developed its Economic Development Strategy 2015-2030 to be delivered across three stages, with a review at the end of each stage. The 2015 strategy identified the stages as:

- Stage 1 2015-2020 Game changers
- Stage 2 2020-2025 Developing opportunity
- Stage 3 2025-2030 A vibrant future

The Economic Development Strategy 2020-2032 comprised of the 2020 review and a reforecast, to realign the strategy with the Council's Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and Community Plan 2020-2032. It was presented in three, reset four-year stages (noting Stage 1 2015-20 completion) including:

- Stage 2 2020-2024 Developing opportunity
- Stage 3 2024-2028 Consolidating the benefits
- Stage 4 2028-2032 A creative and dynamic future

This realignment resulted in an additional two years of objectives being included in the strategy and provides opportunities for a community consultation process to occur in parallel with the review of the Strategic Plan every four years. The 2020 – 2032 Economic Development Strategy supported the key theme of 'Dynamic Economy' contained in the RCMB Community Plan 2020-2032 and noted its contribution to the vision of 'Thriving Communities'.

As Council has adopted a new 2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan it is appropriate, good practice and good governance to plan for delivering the relevant strategic plan outcomes and consider the current economic status of the region, external environmental trends and consider how the economic development strategy will deliver on one of four community plan's Thriving Communities theme 'Dynamic Economy - Where people, business and industry are seizing opportunities to learn, earn and grow'.

With Murray Bridge formally recognised as a growth zone and the Satellite City of Adelaide by the South Australian Government, its primary food production and food processing hub status, strategic employment land zones and ample space for residential growth supported by the necessary infrastructure this has never been more important.

This economic profile outlines the key demographics, metrics and data that will inform appropriate strategic responses to bring the RCMB Structure Plan to life by understanding the opportunities and challenges associated with achieving the Community's vision for a Dynamic Economy, as it recognises people thrive when they participate in it.

Data presented in this economic profile is sourced from various providers and may vary slightly year to year due to timing of surveys and data collection.

1. District Overview

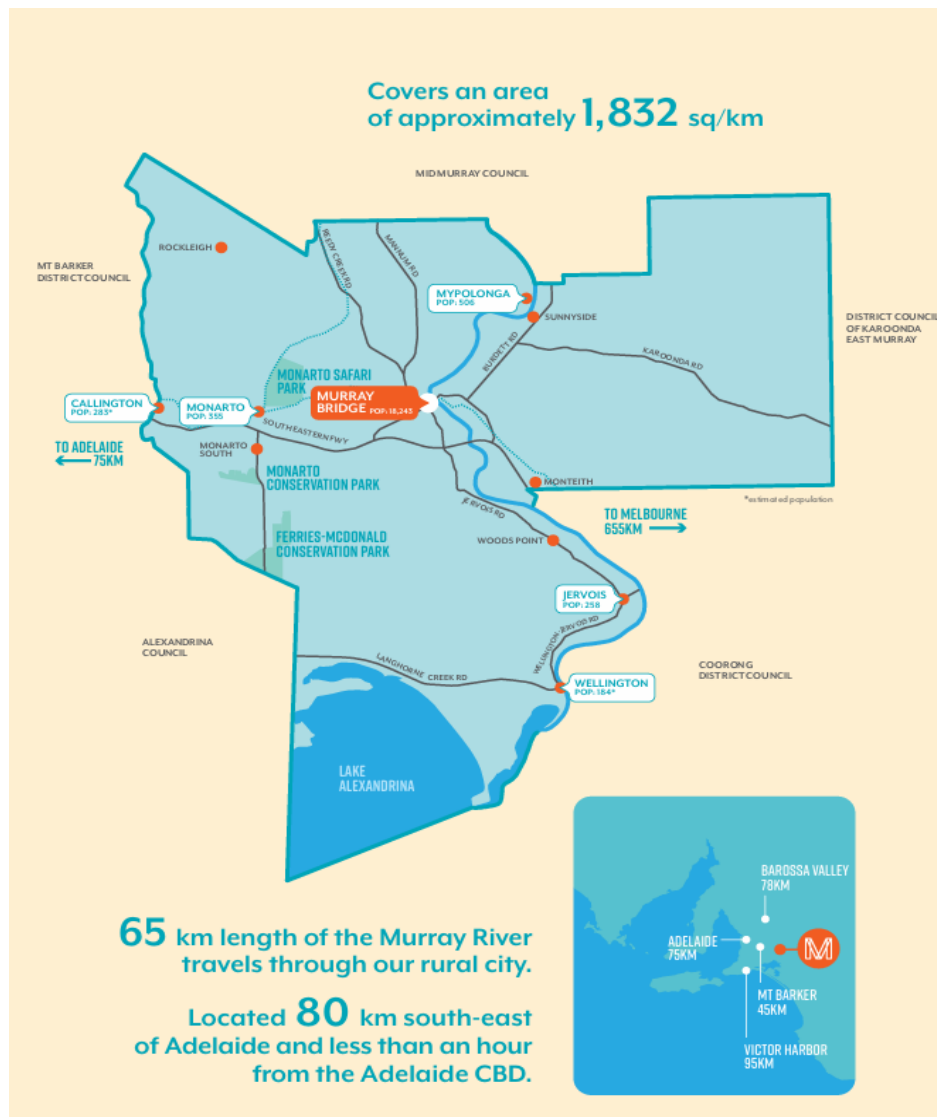


Figure 1. Rural City of Murray Bridge Local Government Area. Source: Rural City of Murray Bridge Strategic Plan 2024-2028.

Spanning a substantial land area of 183,176 hectares, the Rural City of Murray Bridge has a low population density of 0.118 persons per hectare, indicative of its predominantly rural character.

2. Population & Demographic

The Rural City of Murray Bridge is home to an estimated 22,901 residents (2023 ABS data), reflecting moderate population growth from the 22,089 recorded in the 2019 Census. The population is forecast to grow to 39,416 by 2041. The median age of Council's resident population is 43 years with more younger workers (15 to 44 years) than older workers (45 year and over) working in all industries.



Figure 2. 10 Year Estimated Resident Population Rural City of Murray Bridge.

Source: [Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia \(3218.0\). Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id \(informed decisions\)](#)

Between 2016 and 2021, 53.1% of people aged 5 and over Australia-wide did not change address, while 35.3% moved within Australia, and 5.4% moved from overseas. In the RDA Murraylands and Riverland area, population movement was more stable with a higher rate of people not changing address (58.6%), while a lower rate moved from elsewhere in Australia (30.3%) and from overseas (2.0%). A total of 11,810 people, or 57.6% of those who moved within Australia, moved within the RDA Murraylands and Riverland area.

The Gross Regional Product (GRP) totals \$1.38 Billion, translating to \$8,415 in economic output per hectare and \$71,221 per capita, both signalling strong productivity relative to population and impressively, the GRP per worker stands at \$161,145, highlighting economic efficiency and strong output generated by the workforce.

13% of residents were born overseas with the top 5 of these places being United Kingdom, Philippines, China, New Zealand and Vietnam. 5.6% of the community identify as first nations.

Source: [Murray Bridge | Region summary | Data by region | Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Murray Bridge, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics, Rural City of Murray Bridge Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028.](#)

3. Economy

4.1 Gross Regional Product

Headline Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a measure of size or net wealth generated by the local economy. Changes in this figure over time can represent changes in employment, productivity or the types of industries in the area. Local Industry GRP shows the value of the local economy, generated by the local workers within the area regardless of where they live, after taxes and dividends leave the area. It is the GRP produced by local industries.

In the year ending June 2023, Rural City of Murray Bridge's Gross Regional Product was \$1.38 Billion, growing 2.6% on the previous year (refer Figure 3). Local Industry GRP has increased in the last five years except for a slight dip in 2020, likely to the COVID-19 pandemic.

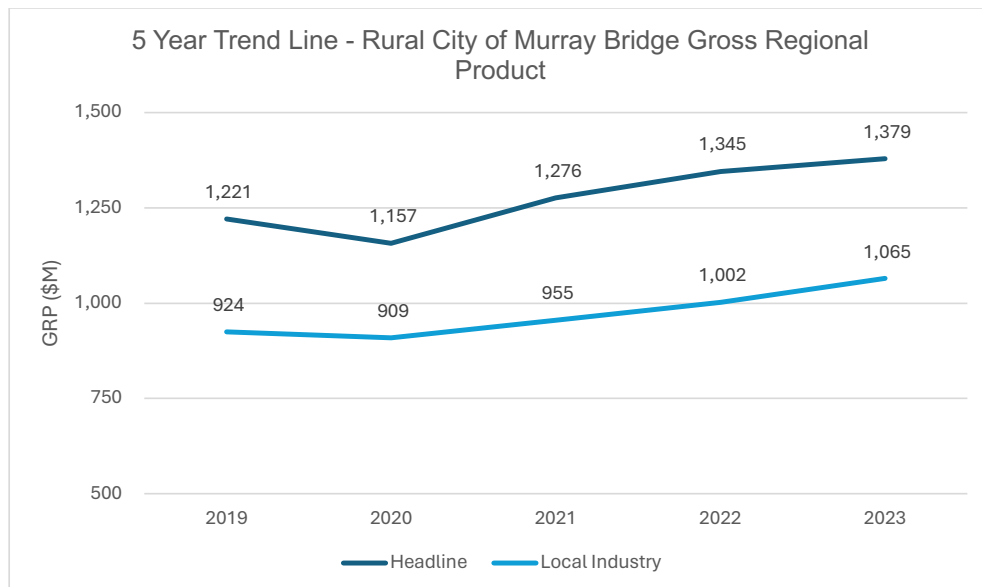


Figure 3. Gross Regional Product Rural City of Murray Bridge 2029 to 2023.

Source: [Gross Regional Product | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#)

4.2 Industry Value-Add

Value added by industry is an indicator of business productivity. It shows how productive each industry sector is at increasing the value of its inputs. It is a more refined measure of the productivity of an industry sector than output (total gross revenue), as some industries have high levels of output but require large amounts of input expenditure to achieve.

Generating \$229 Million in 2022/23, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing continues as the most productive industry within RCMB. Apart from Construction, the top five industries have historically remained consistent (refer Figure 4).

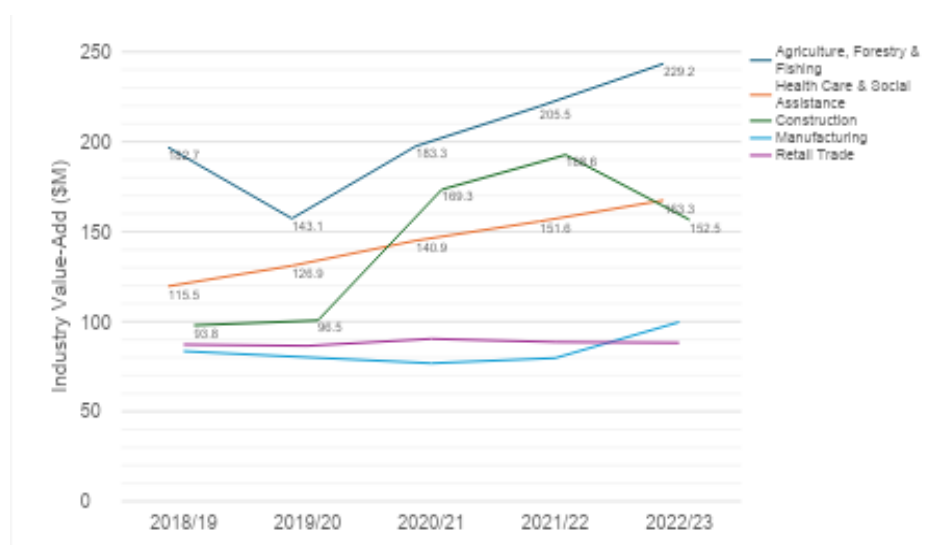


Figure 4. Industry Value Add 2018/19 to 2022/2023 Rural City of Murray Bridge

Source: [Value added by industry | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#)

Change in Industry Value Add (IVA)

Since RCMB adopted its current Economic Development Strategy 2020-32, the largest change in IVA has been within the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry with an \$83.7M increase in the agriculture sector alone.

Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, the total value added by industry in the RCMB increased by \$200M. The largest changes were for Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (+\$86M), Construction (+\$56M), Health Care and Social Assistance (+\$36M) and Manufacturing (+\$20M) (refer Figure 5).

Change in value-added by industry sector, 2019/20 to 2022/23

Rural City of Murray Bridge

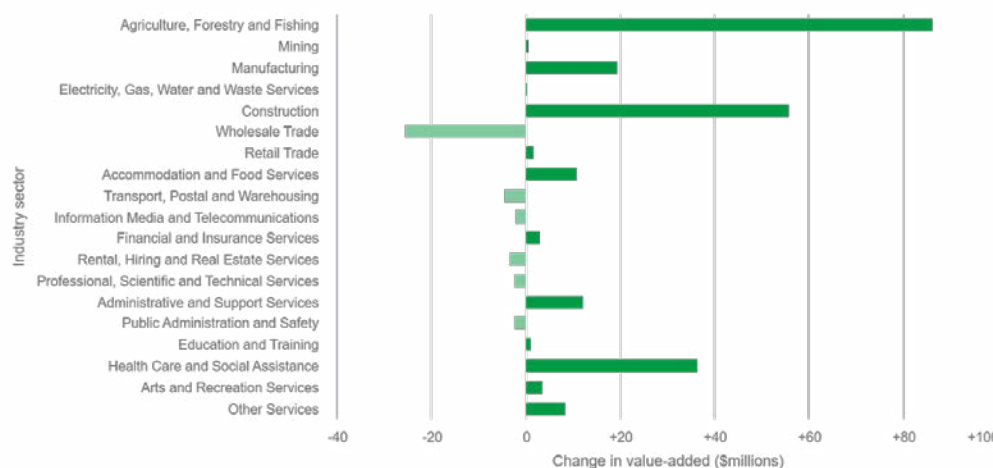


Figure 5. Change in value-added by industry sector 2019/20 to 2022/23.

4.3 Output by Industry Sector

Construction had the largest change in output for RCMB's economy, generating \$571M (21.8%) in 2022/23. This was followed by Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (\$424M or 16.2%) and Manufacturing (\$391M or 14.9%) making up 52.9% of the total output. In comparison, the same three industries in South Australia accounted for 32% of the State's total output.

Output by industry is a gross measure of the total sales of each industry sector in the Rural City of Murray Bridge. It does not measure how productive each industry sector is at producing this output (measured by value added).

The total industry output in the RCMB increased by \$423M between 2019/20 and 2022/23. Figure 6 highlights the largest changes in the output by industries during this time were for Construction (+\$182M), Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (+\$129M), Manufacturing (+\$72M), and Health Care and Social Assistance (+\$53M).

Source: [Output by industry | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#)

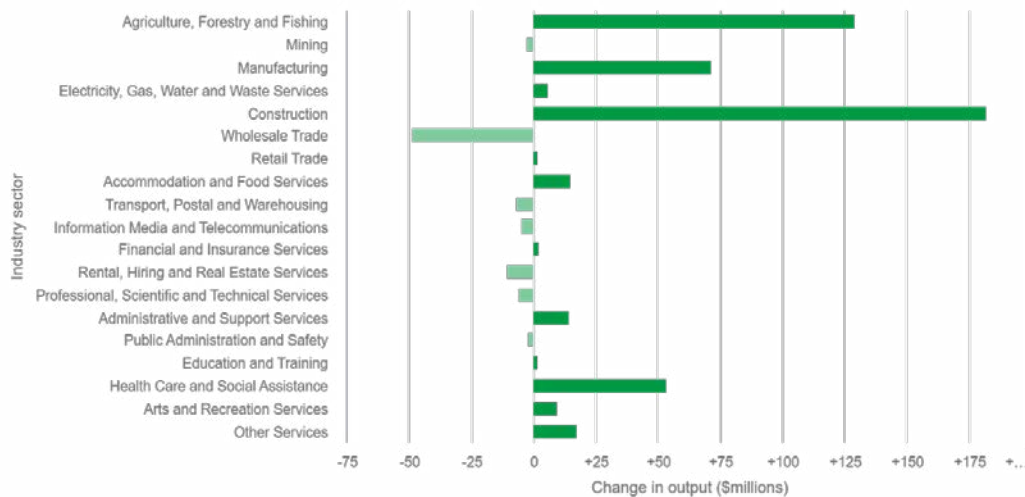


Figure 6. Change in Output by Industry Sector.

Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR). Compiled and presented in economy.id.

4.4 Exports

Exports by industry are sales of goods and services to non-resident households, businesses and other organisations, outside the Rural City of Murray Bridge boundaries. Exports (domestic) include all exports from the area to other parts of Australia. Exports (international) includes all exports from the Region to countries outside Australia.

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Manufacturing and Health Care and Social Assistance industries accounted for 72.6%, or \$602.7M of RCMB's total exports in 2022/23.

The Agriculture and Manufacturing industries experienced significant increases in total exports in the past two years with Manufacturing increasing by \$79.4M to \$262.4M in 2022/23, and Agriculture exports increasing by a combined \$65.1M over two years to \$273.4M in 2022/23 (refer Figure 7).

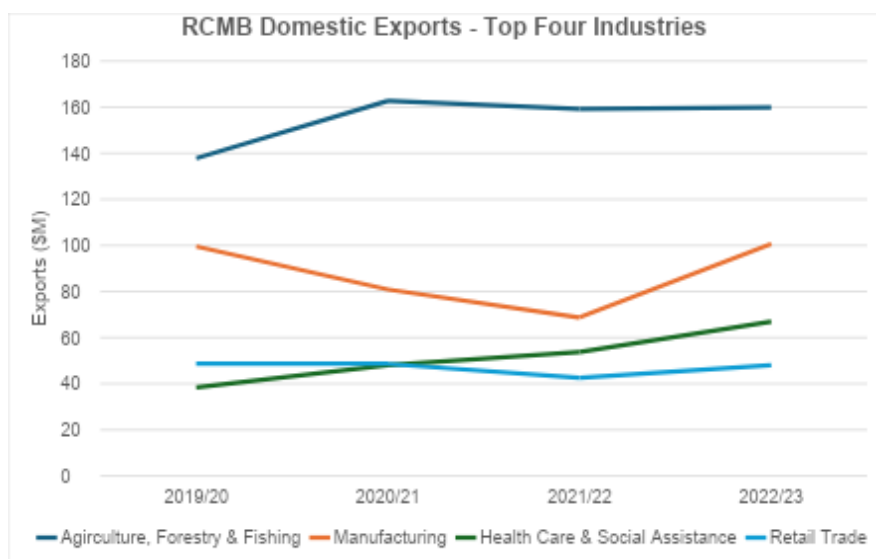


Figure 7. Top Domestic Export Industries.

Source: [Exports by industry | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#)

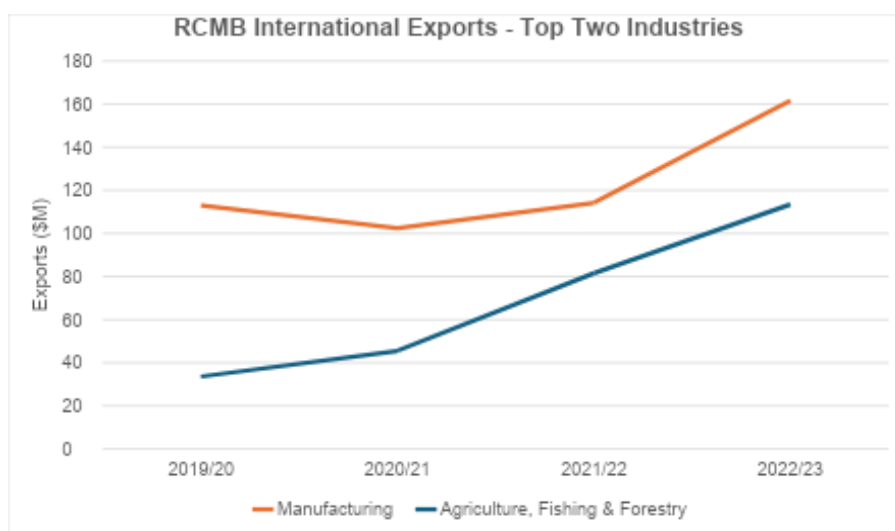


Figure 8. Top International Exports.

Source: [Exports by industry | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#)

4.5 Expenditure by Sector

The analysis shows the value of expenditure by each industry sector within RCMB on goods and services which are purchased from within the region, imported from the rest of Australia and imported from overseas, respectively.

The total expenditure by industry sectors in RCMB on goods and services as inputs into production is estimated at \$1,718.627 million. This includes \$814.588 million of regional (local) expenditure, \$720.544 million of expenditure on goods and services from the rest of Australia, and \$183.495 million from overseas.

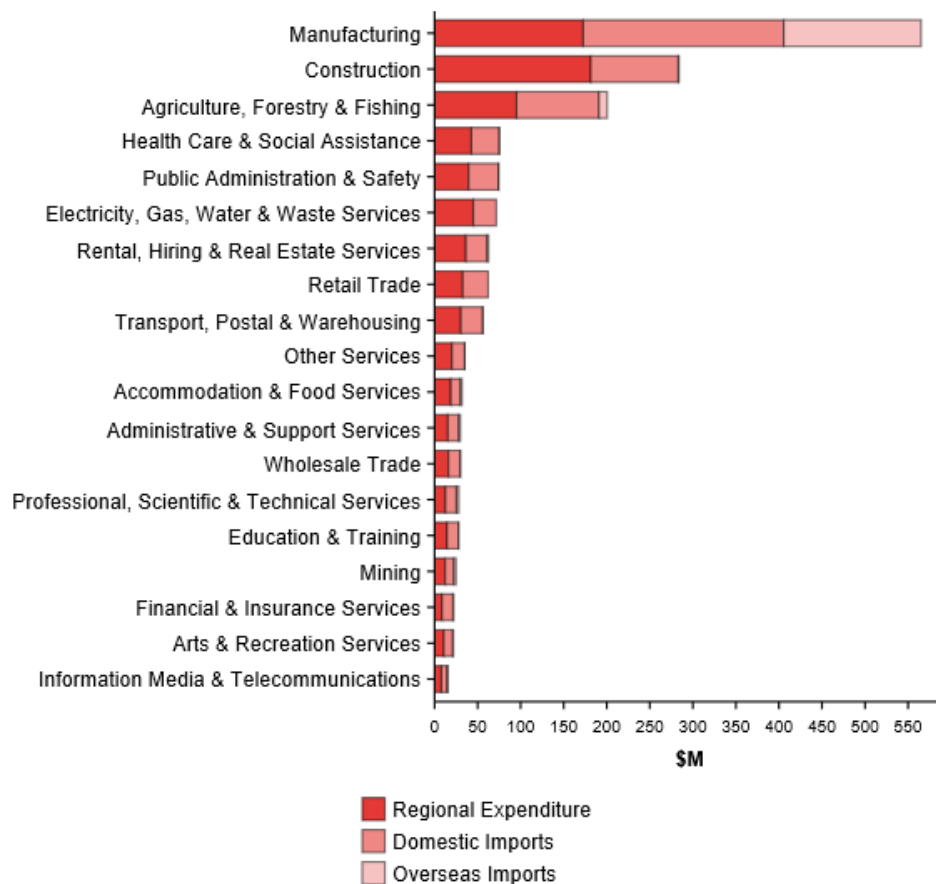


Figure 9. Expenditure Breakdown RCMB. Source: Remplan 2024 release 1.

Industry Sector	Regional Expenditure		Domestic Imports		Overseas Imports		Total	
	\$M	%	\$M	%	\$M	%	\$M	%
Manufacturing	\$172.689	10.0%	\$232.923	13.6%	\$159.443	9.3%	\$565.055	32.9%
Construction	\$181.515	10.6%	\$101.590	5.9%	\$0.719	0.0%	\$283.823	16.5%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	\$95.269	5.5%	\$95.758	5.6%	\$9.513	0.6%	\$200.539	11.7%
Health Care & Social Assistance	\$42.798	2.5%	\$32.368	1.9%	\$0.060	0.0%	\$75.226	4.4%
Public Administration & Safety	\$39.632	2.3%	\$34.497	2.0%	\$0.111	0.0%	\$74.240	4.3%
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	\$44.904	2.6%	\$26.674	1.6%	\$0.000	0.0%	\$71.578	4.2%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	\$36.479	2.1%	\$24.651	1.4%	\$1.487	0.1%	\$62.617	3.6%
Retail Trade	\$32.836	1.9%	\$29.356	1.7%	\$0.000	0.0%	\$62.192	3.6%
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	\$30.636	1.8%	\$25.396	1.5%	\$0.172	0.0%	\$56.204	3.3%
Other Services	\$20.254	1.2%	\$14.817	0.9%	\$0.049	0.0%	\$35.120	2.0%
Accommodation & Food Services	\$18.976	1.1%	\$10.870	0.6%	\$2.046	0.1%	\$31.891	1.9%
Administrative & Support Services	\$15.494	0.9%	\$12.381	0.7%	\$2.013	0.1%	\$29.888	1.7%
Wholesale Trade	\$16.117	0.9%	\$13.651	0.8%	\$0.084	0.0%	\$29.851	1.7%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	\$12.667	0.7%	\$12.728	0.7%	\$2.835	0.2%	\$28.230	1.6%
Education & Training	\$14.490	0.8%	\$13.197	0.8%	\$0.142	0.0%	\$27.829	1.6%
Mining	\$12.403	0.7%	\$9.749	0.6%	\$2.636	0.2%	\$24.788	1.4%
Financial & Insurance Services	\$8.726	0.5%	\$12.697	0.7%	\$0.797	0.0%	\$22.220	1.3%
Arts & Recreation Services	\$10.753	0.6%	\$10.456	0.6%	\$0.575	0.0%	\$21.785	1.3%
Information Media & Telecommunications	\$7.950	0.5%	\$6.787	0.4%	\$0.813	0.0%	\$15.550	0.9%
Total	\$814.588	47.4%	\$720.544	41.9%	\$183.495	10.7%	\$1,718.627	100.0%

Figure 10. All industry sectors RCMB ranked by Expenditure.

Source: Remplan 2024 release 1.

4.6 Business Counts

RCMB had 1,429 registered businesses in 2024.

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry had the largest number of total registered businesses, comprising 265, or 18.5%, compared to 9.9% in South Australia. Construction closely follows with 236 businesses (16.5%), while Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services is the third largest industry with 154 businesses (10.8%).

Comparing 2020 and 2024, the most significant changes were recorded in the sectors of Rental, Hiring & Real Estate, and Other Services, which includes repair & maintenance and personal and other services (Refer Figure 11).

Registered businesses by industry	2024			2020			Change
	Number	%	% South Australia	Number	%	% South Australia	
Total Businesses	1429	100	100	1268	100	100	161
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	265	18.5	9.9	266	21	9.9	-1
Construction	236	16.5	16.1	224	17.7	16.1	12
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	154	10.8	12.3	131	10.3	12.3	23
Other Services	101	7.1	4.9	78	6.2	4.9	23
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	89	6.2	10.2	77	6.1	10.2	12
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	88	6.2	8.5	81	6.4	8.5	7
Manufacturing	84	5.9	4	68	5.4	4	16
Retail Trade	79	5.5	5.5	91	7.2	5.5	-12
Accommodation and Food Services	62	4.3	4.2	55	4.3	4.2	7
Health Care and Social Assistance	59	4.1	7.8	39	3.1	7.8	20
Administrative and Support Services	56	3.9	4.4	42	3.3	4.4	14
Wholesale Trade	47	3.3	3.5	35	2.8	3.5	12
Financial and Insurance Services	34	2.4	4.2	21	1.7	4.2	13
Arts and Recreation Services	30	2.1	1.2	26	2.1	1.2	4
Education and Training	11	0.8	1.3	4	0.3	1.3	7
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	10	0.7	0.4	11	0.9	0.4	-1
Mining	9	0.6	0.3	7	0.6	0.3	2
Information Media and Telecommunications	8	0.6	0.7	4	0.3	0.7	4
Public Administration and Safety	6	0.4	0.2	6	0.5	0.2	0
Industry not classified	0	0	0.1	3	0.2	0.1	-3

Figure 11. Rural City Murray Bridge registered businesses by industry 2024 v 2020.

Source: [Businesses by industry | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#)

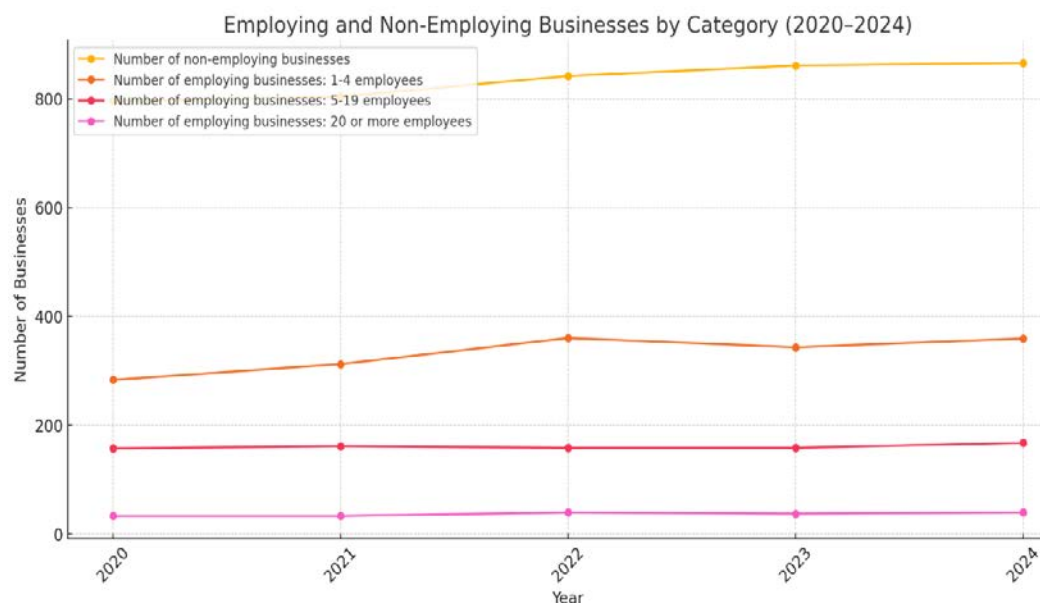


Figure 12. Rural City of Murray Bridge Business & Employee Count at 30 June 2020-2024.

Source: [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

The data in figure 12 reveals stability and small growth in the number of businesses across all size categories, with notable variation in growth rates depending on business size.

The non – employing category consistently represents the largest share of businesses and experienced moderate but stable growth over the past 4-year period, increasing from 795 in 2020 to 866 in 2024. This trend suggests a continued rise in sole proprietorships, freelancers, and self-employment, potentially driven by digital work opportunities and lifestyle preferences.

While all categories experienced some growth, the most significant expansion occurred in the smallest business sizes, particularly non-employing and micro-employing firms (1–4 employees). This trend aligns with broader national and regional patterns highlighting entrepreneurship, flexible work, and small business resilience as key contributors to local economic dynamics.

5. Leading Industries Analysis & Profiles

In 2022/23, the Rural City of Murray Bridge contributed 1.2% of South Australia's employment and 1.0% of its value add (refer Figure 13).

Industry sector profiles show how each industry contributes to the economy in the Rural City of Murray Bridge using ten economic measures generated by NIEIR economic modelling.

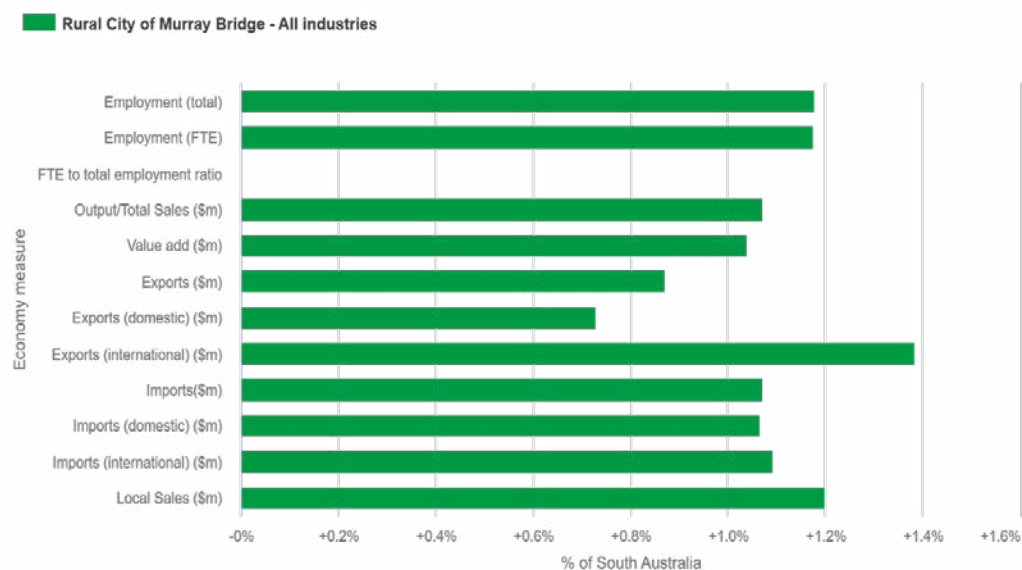


Figure 13. Industry Contribution to South Australian Economy.

Source: [Industry sector analysis | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#). National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR).

5.1 Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector is attributed to the sub sectors of Agriculture, and to a lesser extent, Support Services.

RCMB's Agriculture sector contributed 4.9% of South Australia's employment and 3.3% of its value added in 2022/23 (refer Figure 14). Further to this, Support Services contributed 2.3% IVA, and 2.4% of the State's employment.

Industry sector analysis Agriculture	2022/23			2019/20			Change
	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	
Employment (total)	1,434	29,393	4.9%	933	26,615	3.5%	500
Employment (FTE)	1,392	29,121	4.8%	887	25,857	3.4%	505
FTE to total employment ratio	0.97	0.99	0%	0.95	0.97	0%	0.02
Output/Total Sales (\$m)	395.7	12,013.4	3.3%	277.8	8,582.2	3.2%	117.93
Value add (\$m)	219.4	6,659.9	3.3%	135.63	4,191.7	3.2%	83.74
Exports (\$m)	264.8	9,428.4	2.8%	167.19	6,369.1	2.6%	97.56
Exports (domestic) (\$m)	152.1	5,306.0	2.9%	133.61	4,974.4	2.7%	18.5
Exports (international) (\$m)	112.6	4,122.4	2.7%	33.58	1,394.7	2.4%	79.06
Imports (\$m)	15.2	2,762.7	0.5%	13.85	2,320.3	0.6%	1.32
Imports (domestic) (\$m)	14.7	2,753.2	0.5%	12.41	2,275.6	0.5%	2.28
Imports (international) (\$m)	0.5	9.5	5.1%	1.45	44.6	3.2%	-0.96
Local Sales (\$m)	131.0	2,585.0	5.1%	110.61	2,213.1	5.0%	20.36
Worker productivity (\$ per worker)	\$ 153,013	\$ 226,580	\$ -	\$ 145,334	\$ 157,493	\$ -	\$ 7,680

Figure 14. RCMB Industry sector analysis – Agriculture 2022/23 compared to 2019/20.

Source: [Agricultural industry statistics | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#)

Value of Agricultural Commodities

RCMB's total value of agricultural output in 2020/21 was \$252M with the largest proportion attributed to Livestock Slaughtering (\$61.1M). Other significant contributors are displayed in Figure 14, while industries that contributed less than \$2.5M were Citrus fruit, Other broadacre crops, Grapes, Other fruit, Nuts and Eggs. Data from the 2020/21 Agricultural Census shows the gross value of agricultural commodities in broad categories.

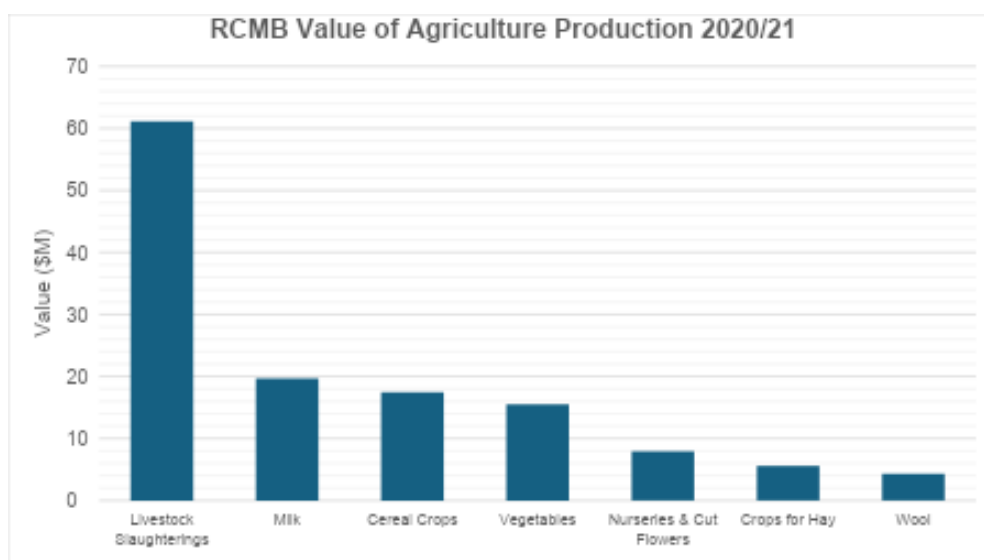


Figure 15. Value of Rural City of Murray Bridge agriculture production 2020/21.

5.2 Construction

Construction includes Building, Heavy and Civil Engineering, and Support Services.

In 2022/23, RCMB's Construction industry contributed 1.0% of South Australia's employment and 1.6% of its value added (refer Figure 16).

Industry sector analysis Construction	2022/23			2019/20			Change
	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	
Employment (total)	794	81,136	1.0%	517	71,034	0.7%	277
Employment (FTE)	730	74,620	1.0%	469	64,053	0.7%	261
FTE to total employment ratio	0.92	0.92	0%	0.91	0.9	0%	0.01
Output/Total Sales (\$m)	571	36,178	1.6%	388.81	31,449	1.2%	182.2
Value add (\$m)	152	9,323	1.6%	96.48	8,208	1.2%	56.0
Exports (\$m)	2	124	1.6%	1.47	125	1.2%	0.5
Exports (domestic) (\$m)	0	-	0%	0	-	0%	0
Exports (international) (\$m)	2	124	1.6%	1.47	125	1.2%	0.5
Imports (\$m)	0	-	0%	0	-	0%	0
Imports (domestic) (\$m)	0	-	0%	0	-	0%	0
Imports (international) (\$m)	0	-	0%	0	-	0%	0
Local Sales (\$m)	569	36,054	1.6%	387.33	31,324	1.2%	181.7
Worker productivity (\$ per worker)	\$ 192,068	\$ 114,911	\$ -	\$ 186,594	\$ 115,549	\$ -	\$ 5,474

Figure 16. RCMB Industry sector analysis – Construction 2022/23 compared to 2019/20

5.3 Health Care and Social Assistance

The Rural City of Murray Bridge Health Care and Social Assistance sector contributed 1.2% to South Australia's employment and 1.2% of its value add (refer Figure 17).

Industry sector analysis Health Care and Social Assistance	2022/23			2019/20			Change
	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	
Employment (total)	1,927	161,845	1.2%	1508	132,194	1.1%	419
Employment (FTE)	1,437	122,297	1.2%	1061	97,542	1.1%	376
FTE to total employment ratio	0.75	0.76	0%	0.7	0.74	0%	0.04
Output/Total Sales (\$m)	229	20,310	1.1%	176.05	17,274	1.0%	53.3
Value add (\$m)	163	14,114	1.2%	126.86	12,120	1.0%	36.5
Exports (\$m)	67	8,650	0.8%	38.4	7,189	0.5%	28.5
Exports (domestic) (\$m)	67	8,619	0.8%	38.36	7,155	0.5%	29
Exports (international) (\$m)	0	31	0.1%	0.03	34	0.1%	0.0
Imports (\$m)	67	7,046	1.0%	56.67	6,156	0.9%	11
Imports (domestic) (\$m)	67	7,046	1.0%	56.2	6,112	0.9%	11
Imports (international) (\$m)	0	0	0.0%	0.47	44	1.1%	0
Local Sales (\$m)	162	11,660	1.4%	137.65	10,084	1.4%	24.8
Worker productivity (\$ per worker)	\$ 84,764	\$ 87,210	\$ -	\$ 84,145	\$ 91,686	\$ -	\$ 619

Figure 17. RCMB Industry sector analysis – Health Care and Social Assistance 2022/23 compared to 2019/20.

5.4 Manufacturing

The Rural City of Murray Bridges's manufacturing sector contributed 1.6% to South Australia's employment and 1.3% of its value added in 2022/23 (refer Figure 18).

Industry sector analysis Manufacturing	2022/23			2019/20			Change
	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	RCMB	SA	RCMB as a % of SA	
Employment (total)	1,167	73,719	1.6%	1132	73,256	1.5%	34
Employment (FTE)	975	64,647	1.5%	974	64,723	1.5%	2
FTE to total employment ratio	0.84	0.88	0%	0.86	0.88	0%	-0.02
Output/Total Sales (\$m)	391	27,531	1.4%	319.46	25,989	1.2%	71.7
Value add (\$m)	100	7,714	1.3%	80.13	7,289	1.1%	19.6
Exports (\$m)	262	18,230	1.4%	212.59	17,011	1.2%	49.8
Exports (domestic) (\$m)	101	9,074	1.1%	99.62	8,730	1.1%	1
Exports (international) (\$m)	162	9,155	1.8%	112.97	8,282	1.4%	48.8
Imports (\$m)	397	34,282	1.2%	332.6	29,390	1.1%	64
Imports (domestic) (\$m)	142	11,897	1.2%	135.35	11,042	1.2%	7
Imports (international) (\$m)	254	22,385	1.1%	197.25	18,348	1.1%	57
Local Sales (\$m)	129	9,515	1.4%	106.87	9,174	1.2%	21.9
Worker productivity (\$ per worker)	\$ 85,471	\$ 104,641	\$ -	\$ 70,765	\$ 99,497	\$ -	\$ 14,706

Figure 18. RCMB Industry sector analysis – Manufacturing 2022/23 compared to 2019/20.

5.5 Tourism

Tourism is predominantly made up of the Accommodation & Food Services and Retail Trade sectors. Although not listed as a top 5 industry in RCMB it is an enabling activity to economic growth as visiting a region and experiencing its lifestyle and attractions is often part of the decision-making process of economic growth drivers such as establishing a business, investment decisions and choosing a place to live. Therefore, it is a useful and important metric to understand and follow over time, especially given local government investment, including the RCMB, in tourism related activities.

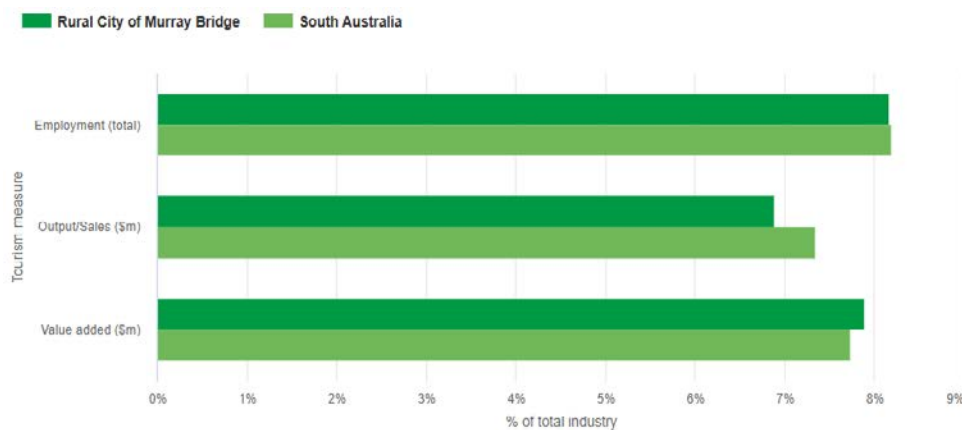


Figure 19. Value of Tourism RCMB and South Australia 2023/2 Source: [National Institute of Economic and Industry Research \(NIEIR\) ©2025](#).

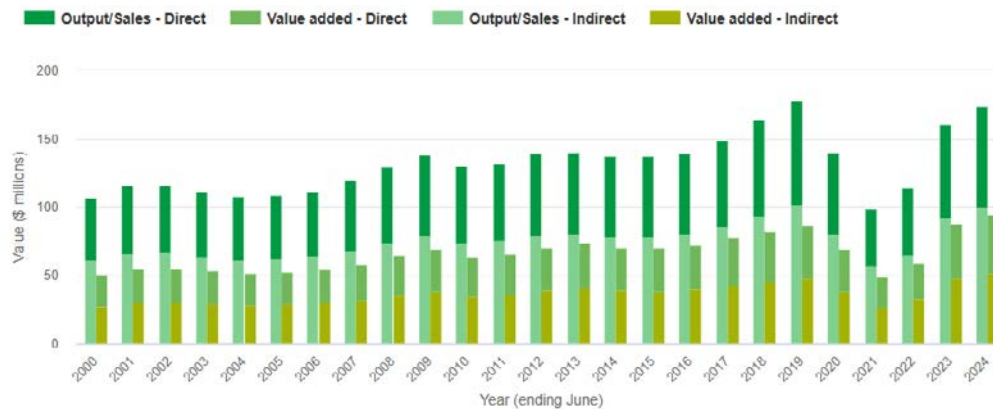


Figure 20. Breakdown of Tourism Value.

Source: [National Institute of Economic and Industry Research \(NIEIR\) ©2025](#).

Direct employment in the Tourism Sector in Rural City of Murray Bridge increased from 305 people in 2021 to 556 in 2024, representing a strong recovery from the covid pandemic period in 2020 and surpassing the 2019 figure of 486. The increases in indirect employment, the flow on benefit from tourism, is important to note to understand the benefit and importance of tourism into Rural City of Murray Bridge. Indirect employment increased from 207 people in 2021 to 378 in 2024, and surpassing the 2019 figure of 331.

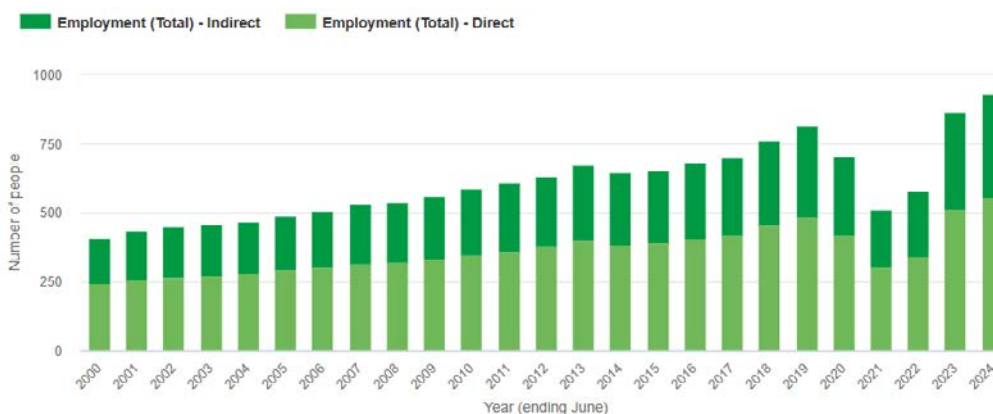


Figure 21. Tourism Employment 2000-2024

Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR). Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id (informed decisions).

Regional Tourism

The South Australia Tourism Commission (SATC) defines regions across the state as per the Regional Visitor Strategy and the RCMB district is one of six Local Government Areas that make up the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Region (refer Figure 22).

At the end of December 2024, the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Region visitor expenditure totalled \$223M, already exceeding the SATC Regional Visitor Strategy December 2025 target of \$196M.



Figure 22. State context

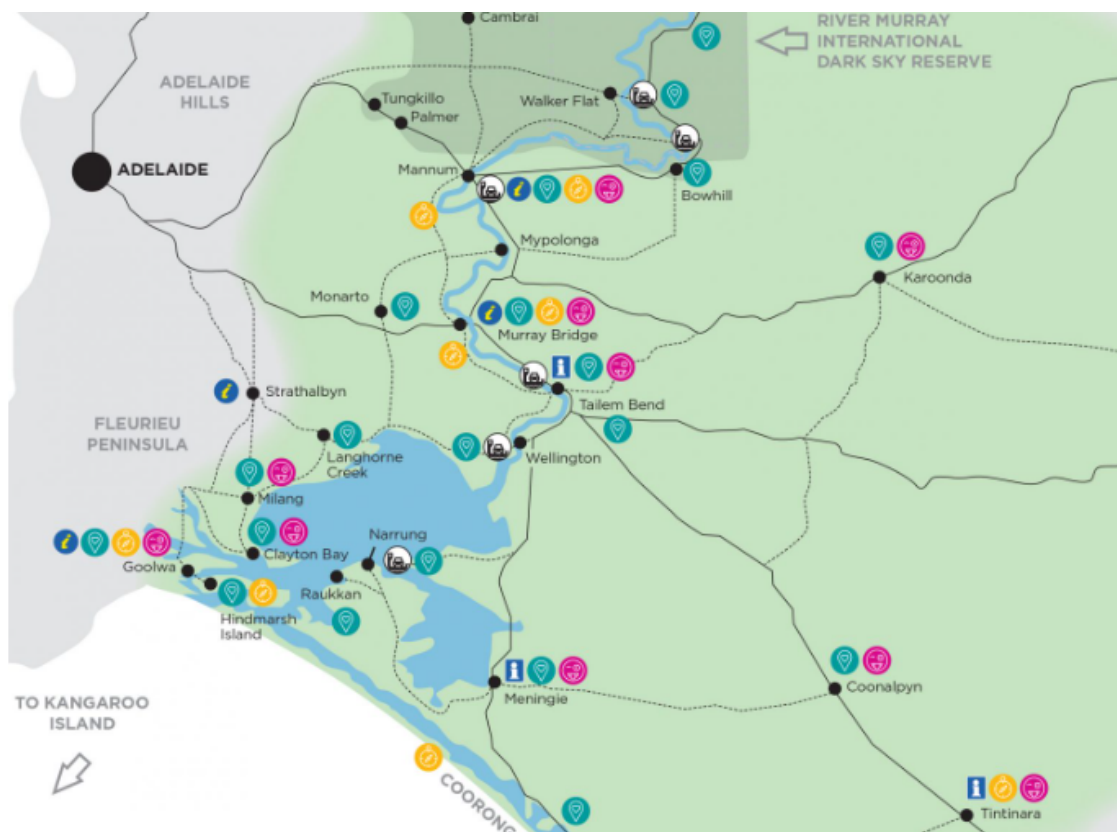


Figure 23. The Murray River Lakes & Coorong region (green shaded area).

Source: Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Visitor Guide.



Figure 24. Murray River, Lakes & Coorong data for the year end December 2024. Source: [South Australian Tourism Commission](https://www.southaustralia.com).

Tourism Subsector – Retail Trade

Encouragingly retail trade sector analysis indicates RCMB's worker productivity has increased over the past decade to be greater than the South Australian average (figure 25), not the case in 2012/13. Figures 25 & 26 \$ values are expressed in 2022/23 base year dollar terms and data figures are inflation adjusted each year to allow direct comparison, and annual data releases adjust previous years' figures to a new base year.

Retail Trade - Constant prices	2023/24			2012/13			Change
	RCMB	SA	RCMB % of SA	RCMB	SA	RCMB % of SA	
Employment (total)	1592	90348	2%	1158	86776	1%	434
Employment (FTE)	1103	61707	2%	881	63439	1%	222
FTE to total employment ratio	0.69	0.68	0	0.76	0.73	0%	-0.07
Output/Total Sales (\$m)	208.8	10946.61	2%	112.22	8872.49	1%	96.58
Value add (\$m)	133.43	6995.74	2%	71.78	5675.39	1%	61.65
Exports (\$m)	111.96	3386.18	3%	25.81	2832.73	1%	86.15
Exports (domestic) (\$m)	104.24	2832.93	4%	24.46	2373.81	1%	79.78
Exports (international) (\$m)	7.72	553.25	1%	1.35	458.92	0%	6.37
Imports (\$m)	9.75	1935.93	1%	9.09	1727.89	1%	0.66
Imports (domestic) (\$m)	9.75	1935.93	1%	9.09	1727.89	1%	0.66
Imports (international) (\$m)	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0
Local Sales (\$m)	96.84	7560.43	1%	86.4	6040.06	1%	10.44
Worker productivity (\$ per worker)	\$ 83,820	\$ 77,431	\$ -	\$ 61,983	\$ 65,403	\$ -	\$ 21,837

Figure 25. Rural City of Murray Bridge and South Australia Retail Trade industry overview & 10-year comparison.

Source: Economy.id (2025)

Tourism Subsector – Accommodation & Food Services

Accommodation and Food Services sector analysis indicates RCMB worker productivity has increased over the past decade and is now on par with the South Australian average, previously more than 10% less.

Economic measure	2023/24			2012/13			Change
	RCMB	SA	RCMB % of SA	RCMB	SA	RCMB % of SA	
Employment (total)	596	59192	1%	522	52075	1%	74
Employment (FTE)	382	37564	1%	349	35834	1%	33
FTE to total employment ratio	0.64	0.63	0%	0.67	0.69	0%	-0.03
Output/Total Sales (\$m)	58.57	5958.89	1%	53.45	5996.32	1%	5.12
Value add (\$m)	36.56	3628	1%	26.85	3033.54	1%	9.71
Exports (\$m)	14.5	2226.43	1%	17.83	2204.33	1%	-3.33
Exports (domestic) (\$m)	13.48	1414.24	1%	17.19	1745.34	1%	-3.71
Exports (international) (\$m)	1.02	812.19	0%	0.63	458.99	0%	0.39
Imports (\$m)	56.4	5911.88	1%	49.81	3855.92	1%	6.59
Imports (domestic) (\$m)	40.17	4286.76	1%	39.56	2801.51	1%	0.6
Imports (international) (\$m)	16.24	1625.12	1%	10.25	1054.41	1%	5.99
Local Sales (\$m)	44.08	3732.46	1%	35.63	3791.99	1%	8.45
Worker productivity (\$ per worker)	\$ 61,377	\$ 61,292	0	\$ 51,423	\$ 58,254	0	\$ 9,954

Figure 26. Rural City of Murray Bridge and South Australia Accommodation & Food Services industry overview & 10-year comparison.

Source: Economy.id (2025)

6. Workforce

6.1 Employment

The number of people who work in the Rural City of Murray Bridge is estimated at 9,566, while the number of RCMB residents who are employed is estimated at 8,671.

RCMB has a workforce of 9,121 Full-time equivalent workers. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the largest employer, generating 1,466 FTE jobs in 2022/23. Health Care and Social Assistance is the next largest employer with 1,437 FTE, followed by Manufacturing (975), and Retail Trade (777).

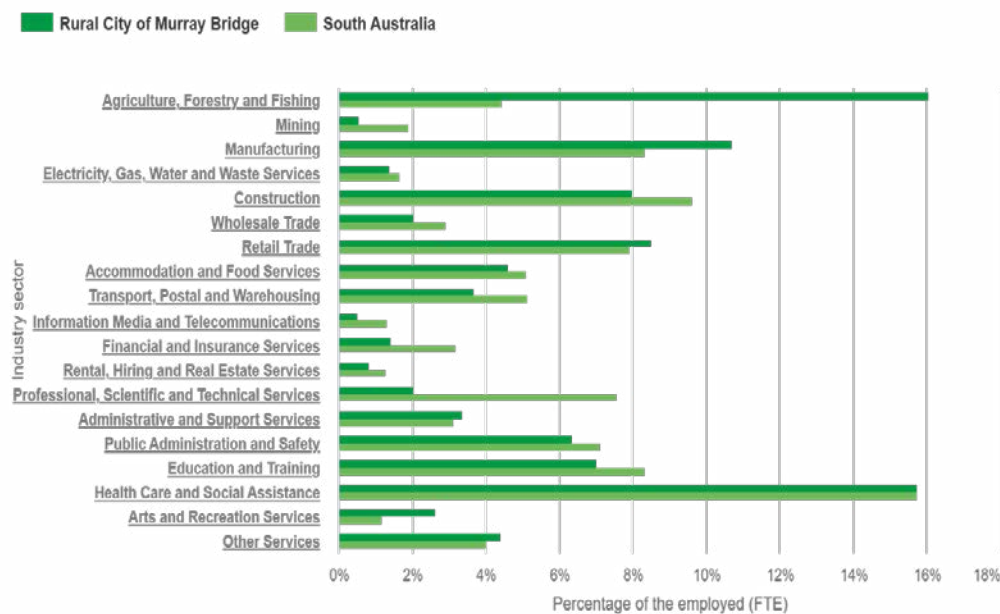


Figure 27. Employment 2022/23 – Rural City of Murray Bridge v South Australia.

Source: [Full time equivalent employment | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#) National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR).

6.1.1 Changes in Employment

The number of full-time equivalent local workers in the Rural City of Murray Bridge increased by 702 between 2017/18 and 2022/23 (noting some left the workforce).

The most significant changes were for those employed in:

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (+439 FTE)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (+425 FTE)
- Construction (+120 FTE)
- Education and Training (+101 FTE)

Rural City of Murray Bridge experienced significant increases in employment in 2021/22 and 2022/23 with 3.8% and 6.4% respectively, surpassing the State's combined increase of 8.9% over the same period (refer Figure 28).

Time series - Employment (total) annual change

All industries

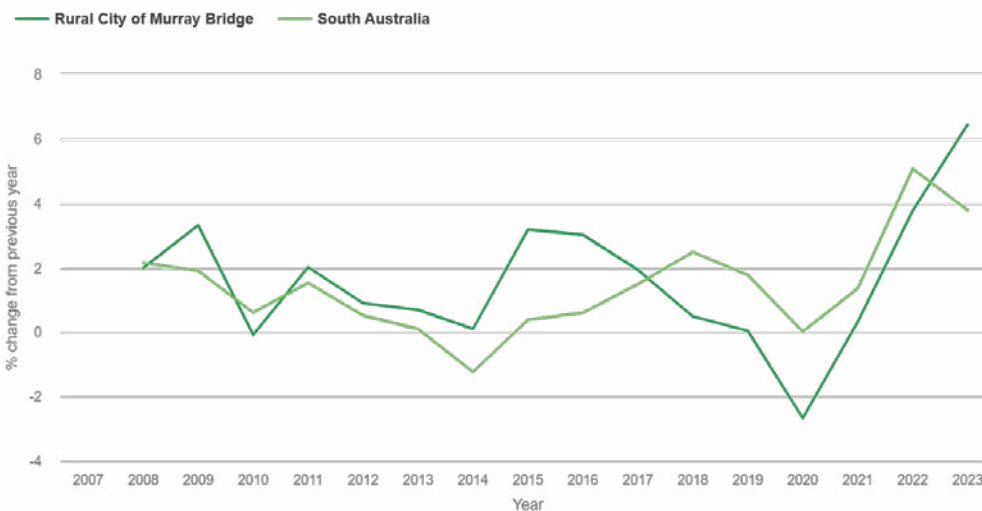


Figure 28. Employment annual change – RCMB v South Australia.

Source: [Time series industry sector analysis | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#) National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR). Compiled and presented in economy.id.

6.1.2 Jobs to Workers Ratio (Employment Capacity)

Employment Capacity measures the balance between local job availability and resident workforce participation within a specific industry. It is calculated by dividing the number of jobs located in the area by the number of local residents employed in that industry, regardless of where they work. A value greater than 1.0 indicates the region offers more jobs than it has resident workers in that sector, suggesting it attracts workers from outside the area. A value less than 1.0 implies more residents are employed in the industry than there are local jobs, indicating a reliance on employment opportunities outside the region.

While the jobs to residents ratio for the RDA Murraylands and Riverland region in 2022/23 was 0.95, meaning that there were less jobs than resident workers, the Rural City of Murray Bridge's ratio of 1.13 meant there were more jobs than resident workers. Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services had the highest ratio (1.56), while the lowest ratio was found in Mining (0.20).

A goal of economic development is to maximise the employment opportunities locally, leading to a more socially sustainable community. Employment capacity is a simple way of looking at

whether the Rural City of Murray Bridge could theoretically provide jobs for all its residents if they were to choose to work locally.

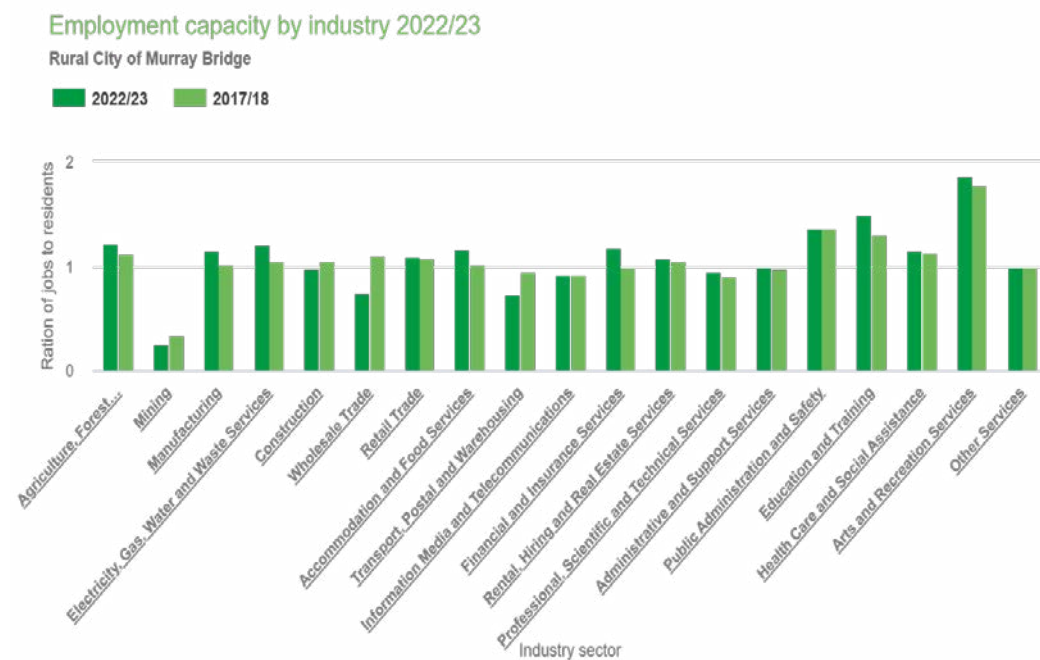


Figure 29. Rural City of Murray Bridge - Employment capacity by industry 2017/18 compared to 2022/23.

Source: [Jobs to workers ratio | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#) National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR). Compiled and presented in economy.id.

6.2 Occupation

6.2.1 Resident workers

Across all industries, there are more Labourers within Rural City of Murray Bridge than any other occupation. In 2021, the three most prevalent occupations among resident workers were Labourers (1,782 people or 21%), Community and Personal Service Workers (1,263 people or 14.5%), and Technicians and Trades Workers (1,205 people or 13.8%) (see Figure 30).

In combination these three occupations accounted for 4,250 people in total or 49.3% of the resident workers across all industries.

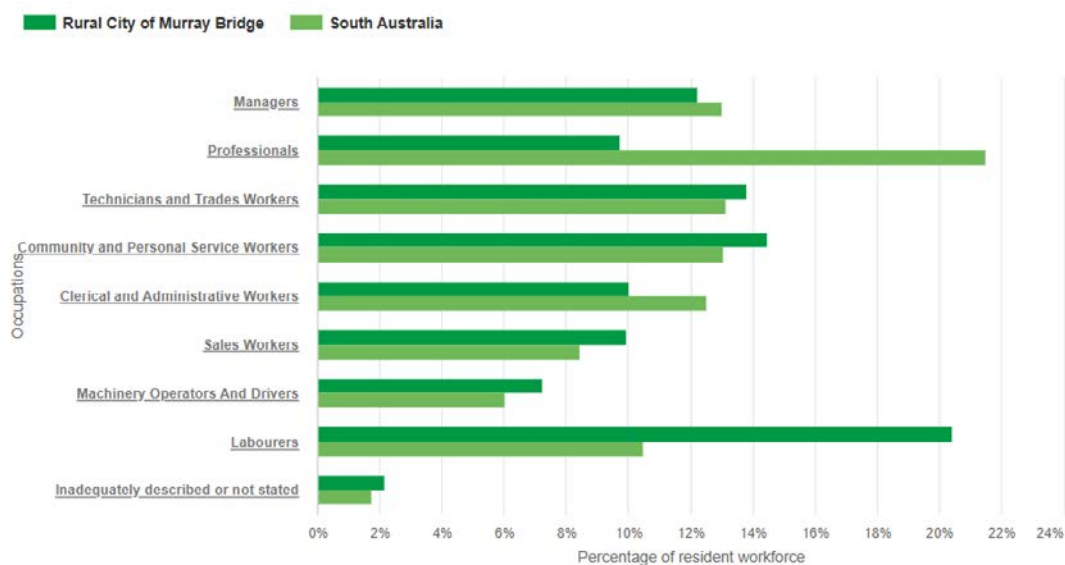


Figure 30. RCMB Resident Worker Occupations 2021.

[Source Economy.id](#)

Importantly, it is apparent there has been a considerable upskilling of the Rural City of Murray Bridge resident workforce over the 4-year period. The largest change in the occupations of the resident workers between 2016 and 2021 were those employed as Professionals (+90 persons), Managers (+120 persons), Community and Personal Service Workers (+248 persons) and a significant reduction in Labourers (-270 persons).

6.2.2 Skills & Qualifications

In 2021, 54.1% of RCMB Resident Workers held educational qualifications and 43.3% had no qualifications compared with the State's 65.8% and 32.1% respectively.

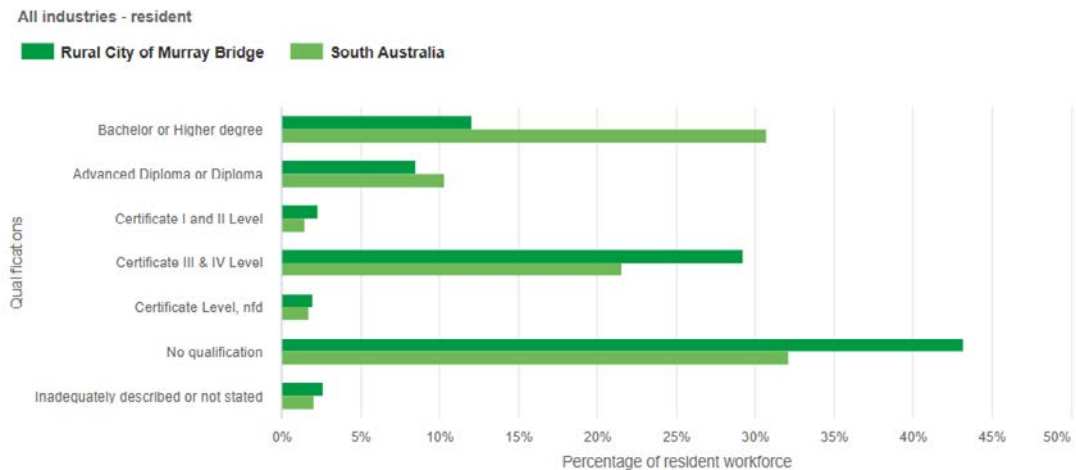


Figure 31. Resident Workers Qualifications, Rural City of Murray Bridge compared to South Australia, 2021.

Source: Economy.id (2025)

As previously mentioned, the change over the 4-year period from 2016 to 2020 is an important indicator to track and measure as is a key indicator of higher incomes and community prosperity. Figure 32 shows an increase of 549 with Cert III or higher (of which 165 received a Bachelor or Higher) and decrease of 295 with those holding less than a certificate level qualification.

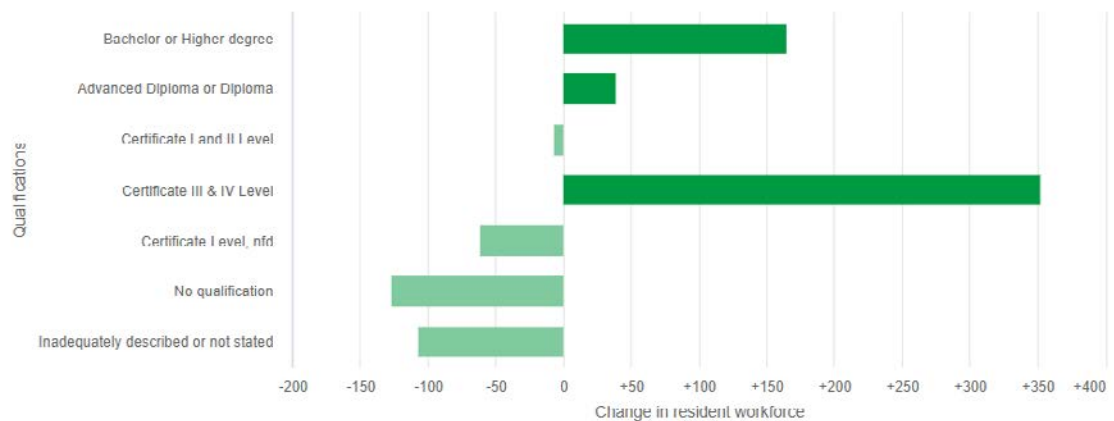


Figure 32. Change in Resident Workers Qualifications, Rural City of Murray Bridge. Source: Economy.id (2025)

6.3 Income

Resident Income

Rural City of Murray Bridge's labour force has a similar proportion with South Australia's average population for those earning a gross weekly income of \$1,000 - \$1,499 per week, but a higher proportion of low-income workers in the wage brackets under \$1,000 per week.



Figure 33. Resident Workers Individual Income, Rural City of Murray Bridge compared to South Australia 2021.

Source: Economy.id (2025).

Household Income

2021 Median weekly incomes (People aged 15 years and over)	Murray Bridge	South Australia
Personal	\$603	\$734
Family	\$1,398	\$1,889
Household	\$1,109	\$1,455

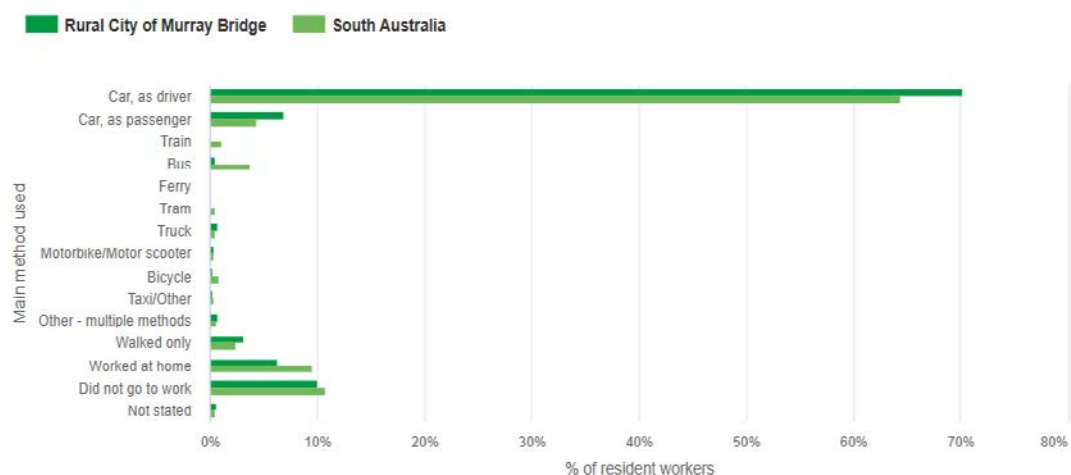
Figure 34. Median weekly income – Rural City of Murray Bridge compared to South Australia, 2021.

Source: [Australian Bureau of Statistics](https://www.abs.gov.au).

6.4 Journey to Work

Most of the resident workforce (70.1%) within Rural City of Murray Bridge use a private vehicle to travel to work, greater than South Australia's average of 64.4%.

The second largest journey to work method was 10% attributed to the 'Did not go to work'* group of the resident workforce, followed by 6.8% who travelled as a car passenger and 6.3% who worked at home.



*Important to note the 'Did not go to work' status or 'Worked at home' status reflects a single point in time when the ABS Census was conducted.

Figure 35. Resident Workers method of travel to work Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021 Compiled and presented in *economy.id* by *.id* (informed decisions).

7. Property

Property investment and movements (often reflected in Development applications and approvals (DAs)) serve as key indicators of economic activity. They often reflect the health, confidence, and future trajectory of a local economy, offering insights into investment patterns, population growth, and supportive infrastructure needs. These include:

Business and Consumer Confidence - An increase in development applications signals optimism in the economic outlook, with businesses and individuals prepared to invest in new projects. Likewise, a decline may reflect market uncertainty, regulatory barriers, or weakening economic conditions.

Catalyst for Employment and Economic Activity - Development drives job creation across multiple sectors including construction, trades, architecture, engineering, and urban planning. The economic multiplier effect extends into supply chains, retail, and service industries, contributing to broader regional prosperity.

Early Indicator of Population and Demand Trends - Growth in residential DAs often aligns with population increases, inward migration, and rising demand for housing. A rise in commercial DAs may point to business expansion, stronger consumer demand, and progress toward economic diversification.

Signal of Property Market Dynamics and Investment Confidence - A strong pipeline of residential projects suggests a buoyant housing market, supporting land values and investor interest. Commercial and industrial DAs reflect business confidence and demand for commercial, retail, and industrial space.

Building Approvals

Monitoring the balance of residential vs. non-residential approvals is useful for tracking economic diversification and infrastructure investment.

The value of building approvals in Rural City of Murray Bridge was \$64M in the 2024-25 YTD (March) financial year. The level of building approvals prior to this over the past 7 years indicate the following:

2019–20 saw a large spike in non-residential approvals, contributing to the highest total value of the period at \$365M. This predominantly relates to the Thomas Foods International facility building approval and commencement in June 2020 valued at circa \$300M+.

Residential approvals peaked in 2022–23, whereas non-residential activity was significantly higher in 2019–20 and 2020–21.

In 2022–23 non-residential approvals dropped from the previous year, with 2023–24 experiencing a more balanced distribution between residential and non-residential, though at a lower overall value (\$79M).

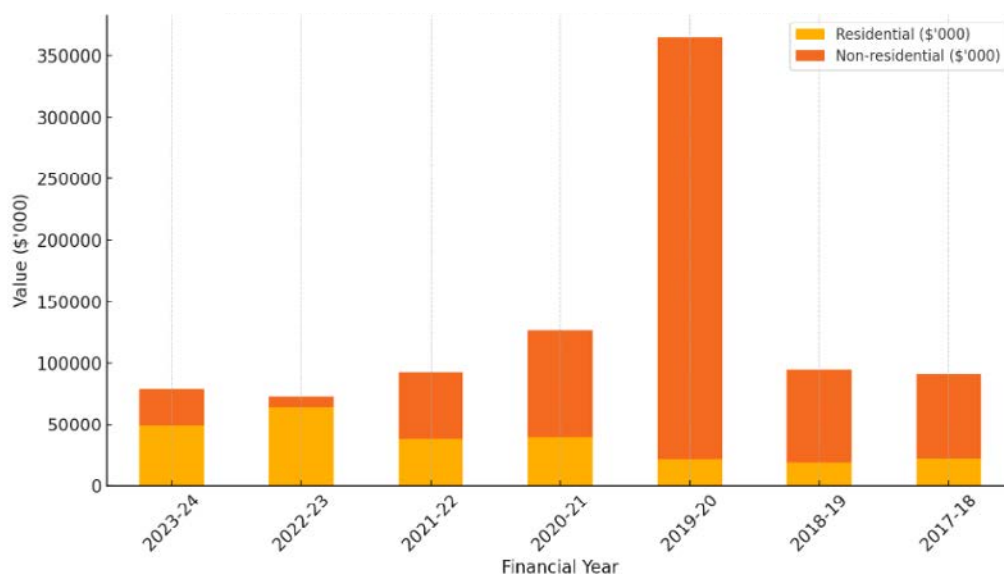


Figure 36. RCMB Building Approvals by Type (Residential compared to Non-residential).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Building Approvals](#), Australia, catalogue number 8731.0.
Compiled and presented in *economy.id*

Housing

The residential property market in Murray Bridge has demonstrated significant growth and resilience over the past five years, reflecting strong regional demand, affordability, and sustained investor interest. Median house prices have risen from approximately \$240,000 in 2018 to around \$400,000 in 2023. The market is characterised by relatively quick sales, with properties averaging 31 days on the market, and a healthy volume of transactions, with 325 houses sold in 2022-23. Strong capital growth and rental yields further underpin the areas investment credentials to both homeowners and investors.

Key highlights include:

- Annual capital growth of 15.6% over the past 12 months indicates robust property value appreciation.
- Median weekly rent for houses is \$470, with a gross rental yield of 4.9%, suggesting favourable conditions for investors.
- The population increased by 3.3% from 2016 to 2021, supporting ongoing housing demand.

Source: <https://www.yourinvestmentpropertymag.com.au/top-suburbs/sa/5253-murray-bridge>

8. Advantages & Emerging Opportunities

The top three RCMB industries with the highest location quotient relative to South Australia were Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (3.6), Arts and Recreation Services (1.9) and Manufacturing (1.3).

The location quotient (LQ) is a simple way of seeing which are the main industries in an area, relative to the wider region. LQ shows the percentage of the local economy characteristic in a particular industry divided by the percentage of the wider area (region, state, nation) that this industry makes up. Where LQ=1, that industry is exactly as prevalent as in the wider region.

A LQ greater than 1.2 indicates a significant specialisation of the industry in the local area – possibly a key economic strength. Higher numbers mean greater specialisations. Anything over 2 is a major specialisation. A LQ between 0.8 and 1.2 means the industry is broadly similar in importance in the local area compared to the comparison region and could be seen as representative. An LQ under 0.8 indicates an industry which is more important in the region than the local area, and may represent an economic weakness or opportunity for growth.

Source: [Economy.id](#)

In the ten years to 2022/23, the largest changes in the employment (total) LQ were in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (+0.7), and decreasing competitiveness in Wholesale Trade (-0.5), Transport, Postal and Warehousing (-0.4) and Information Media and Telecommunications (-0.4).

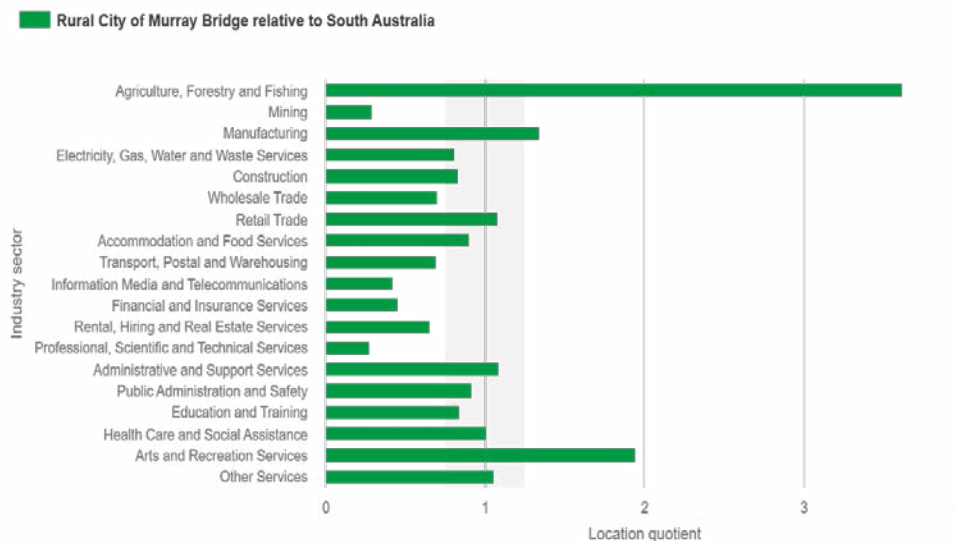


Figure 37. Rural City of Murray Bridge Location quotient by industry sector 2022/23.

Source: [Location Quotient | RDA Murraylands and Riverland | economy.id](#) National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR). Compiled and presented in economy.id.

In early 2025 Council considered the role of international relations in assisting to meet its growth aspirations. Significant investment flows into the region are driving agricultural and manufacturing expansion and this now presents an exciting opportunity to accelerate growth for the region and its community. Importantly, local business growth also has the potential to be accelerated by supporting businesses expand into new markets and equally benefit from importing the latest technology and processes to automate and scale.

The significant investment in attractions such as The Bend Motorsport Park, recent expansion of Monarto Safari Park including a Wild Africa exhibit, a \$17M visitor centre and a \$35M accommodation facility and the redevelopment of the riverfront precinct aim to boost tourism, contributing to economic growth and community vibrancy. This presents an opportunity for tourism promotion and tourism related infrastructure investment attraction.

There are now significant economic opportunities to be realised to deliver Council's strategic objectives and enhance community wellbeing as a result of the strategic approach taken to date to position the council district for growth. These will be investigated in detail in the next tranche of work as part of the economic development strategy review and will involve the drafting of a discussion paper for Elected Member and key stakeholder feedback (industry, Government agencies) as a 'testing / sound boarding' exercise prior to drafting the new strategy for broader community consultation.

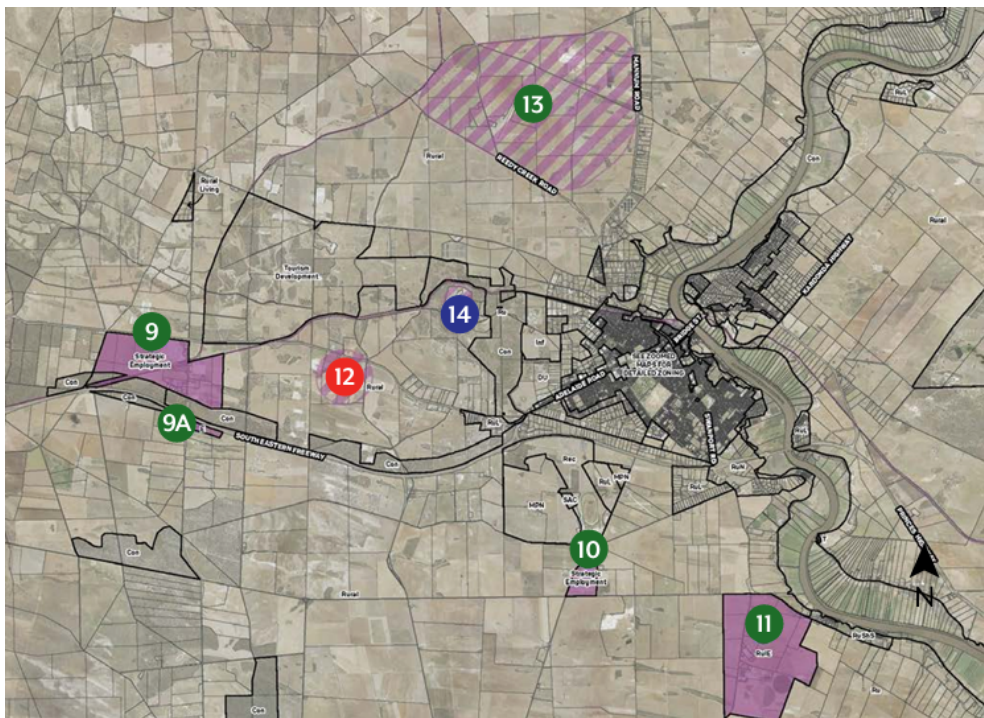


Figure 38. Industrial Growth Areas - excerpt Rural City of Murray Bridge Growth Aspirations December 2024 (page 8).

9. Measuring Success

Community Wellbeing – The Wellbeing Economy

As community clearly informed Council through the 2024 – 2028 strategic plan consultation, there is an opportunity with a new economic development and growth strategy to measure outcomes that the community values. This aligns with the Wellbeing Economy principles where traditional economic measures such as GDP, employment and investment are not to be viewed in isolation. Moving away from ‘growth for growth’ sake perspective to a more holistic overarching principle that economic growth must be good for community wellbeing and inclusive.

To measure the wellbeing economy in the Rural City of Murray Bridge relevant metrics need to be agreed upon to reflect its specific economic, social, environmental, and cultural context. These will be considered in detail in the next phase of developing the economic development and growth strategy.

These metrics align with the RCMB’s Community Plan 2020-2032, Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028 and current Economic Development Strategy 2020-2032, and existing initiatives such as the Murray Bridge Wellbeing Hub, while drawing on broader wellbeing economy principles.

The Australian Federal Government has developed a framework comprising 5 themes with 50 indicators. Communities and Councils can select the measures that track outcomes of various initiatives they prioritise for their community and therefore choose to invest in.



Example Suite of Measures & Relevance

5 broad themes to consider focusing on are provided in this section, including the metric and context for action and implementation ideas and examples of they can be applied.

Life Satisfaction

Health Outcomes

Metric: Life expectancy (82 years in Murraylands) and preventable hospitalisation rates.

Context / Action: Track health disparities in rural areas and among Ngarrindjeri communities, using SA Health and Wellbeing SA data. Focus on access to healthcare facilities.

Mental Health and Subjective Wellbeing

Metric: Self-reported wellbeing scores and mental health service uptake (e.g., via Headspace Murray Bridge)

Context / Action: The Wellbeing Hub pilot launched in 2023 emphasises a focus on mental health, with 29% of 297 survey respondents prioritising social connection and mental wellbeing. Monitor outcomes of Hub programs such as counselling and community event participation.

https://letstalk.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/wellbeinghub?tool=survey_tool

Education Access

Metric: Year 12 completion rates (~85% in SA) and vocational training enrolment (e.g., TAFE SA Murray Bridge).

Context / Action: Address educational attainment gaps for Aboriginal youth and migrants, using Department for Education data and advocate to State Government for support.

Work-Life Balance

Metric: Proportion of workers with flexible arrangements and average commute times.

Context / Action: Measure impacts of major employers on work-life balance by direct survey, travel to work journey using ABS Census data to inform interventions to improve.

Social Equity and Inclusion

Income Inequality

Metric: Household income distribution with 30% of households earning less than \$1,499 per week compared to 24% in Greater Adelaide. [Source Economy id](#)

Context / Action: Influence the lifting of low-income households, particularly in suburbs like Murray Bridge South and East, by tracking ABS Census and SEIFA scores and considering support initiatives to tap into the broader growing economic opportunities.

Poverty and Deprivation

Metric: SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (Murray Bridge ranks in lower deciles) See section 9.3.

Context / Action: Focus on access to affordable housing as a council priority and additional support for low-income groups. Investigate activities offered at local Community Centres for implementing to fill the gap.

Cultural Diversity and Inclusion

Metric: Participation in multicultural events (e.g., All Culture Fest, Yuntu Walun Festival) and migrant employment rates.

Context / Action: Murray Bridge is a Refugee Welcome Zone with 56 nationalities; 16% of residents are born overseas. Track success of council-funded programs such as the Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/rural-city-of-murray-bridge/>

<https://welcomingcities.org.au/network/the-rural-city-of-murray-bridge/>

Aboriginal Wellbeing

Metric: Closing the Gap indicators (e.g., employment, health outcomes) for Ngarrindjeri communities.

Context / Action: Measure outcomes of Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority partnerships, such as the Bunyip/Mulyawonk 50th anniversary event.

Social Cohesion

Metric: Volunteering rates (25% in SA) and community group participation.

Context / Action: Evaluate engagement in council-supported groups like Ngopun Together Reconciliation Group and the Community Action Group. Ngopun Together Reconciliation Group measures outcomes through a combination of community engagement, event success, partnerships, and alignment with reconciliation frameworks. Achievements include the award-winning Sorry Day Song, community events fostering cultural unity, and contributions to local and national reconciliation efforts.

Environmental Sustainability

Water Security and River Health

Metric: Murray River water quality (e.g. salinity levels) and household water usage.

Context / Action: The Murray River is critical for agriculture and 55% of Adelaide's water supply; monitor impacts of drought and irrigation, using SA Water and Murray-Darling Basin Authority data.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Bridge%2C_South_Australia

Carbon Emissions

Metric: Per capita CO2 emissions and renewable energy adoption (e.g., solar installations).
Context / Action: Align with SA's net-zero by 2050 goal, tracking local initiatives like council-led energy efficiency programs. Focus business and investment attraction efforts on aligned businesses to become a regional leader, hub in this area.

Biodiversity

Metric: Conservation area coverage (e.g., Kinchina, Monarto Conservation Parks) and native species health.
Context / Action: Protect Ngarrindjeri lands and Lake Alexandrina ecosystems, using Department for Environment and Water data.

Waste Management

Metric: Recycling rates (80% in SA) and landfill diversion.
Context / Action: Build on council waste education programs, using EPA SA data. Use technology (RFD etc...) to track and measure improvements.

Economic Resilience and Quality

Employment Quality

Metric: Unemployment rate (5% in Murraylands) and proportion of living-wage jobs.
Context / Action: Focus on agriculture (\$252M output in 2020/21), manufacturing, and retail; track job creation in new developments like Gifford Hill.
<https://economy.id.com.au/rda-murraylands-riverland/value-of-agriculture?WebID=150>

Economic Diversification

Metric: Contribution of non-agricultural sectors to Gross Regional Product (\$1.4B, 1.2% of SA's GSP)
Context / Action: Monitor growth in tourism (e.g., Monarto Zoo, river cruises, bed nights) and emerging industries like logistics, using RDA Murraylands data.

Innovation

Metric: Business startups and R&D investment.
Context / Action: Evaluate council support for small businesses and innovation hubs and measure using ABS Business Register data changes.

Financial Inclusion

Metric: Access to banking and digital services in rural areas.
Context / Action: Address digital divides in townships like Mypolonga and Wellington, using [Australian Digital Inclusion Index data](#) and comparisons

Community and Cultural Vitality

Cultural Participation

Metric: Attendance at events like the Murray Bridge Fringe Festival and All Culture Fest.

Context / Action: Leverage council's support for cultural venues (e.g., Murray Bridge Regional Gallery, Town Hall) and Ngarrindjeri heritage projects.

Community Connectedness

Metric: Participation in community programs (e.g., Heart Foundation Walking Group, Community Garden).

Context / Action: Measure engagement via the Murray Bridge Community Centre and Wellbeing Hub activities. <https://www.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/MurrayBridgeCommunityCentre>

Safety

Metric: Crime rates and perceptions of safety.

Context / Action: Focus on urban areas and riverfront precincts like Sturt Reserve, using SAPOL data.

Implementation Ideas

Data Sources

Use ABS Census (2021), Wellbeing SA, RDA Murraylands and Riverland, profile.id, and council reports (e.g., Annual Business Plan). Community surveys from Let's Talk Murray Bridge, to provide local insights

https://letstalk.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/wellbeinghub?tool=survey_tool

<https://profile.id.com.au/murray-bridge/>

Disaggregation

Consider analyse by suburb (e.g., Murray Bridge Central, North, South) and demographics (Ngarrindjeri, migrants, low-income households) to address inequities.

Composite Index

Develop a "Murray Bridge Wellbeing Index", integrating council's Community Plan priorities (Thriving Communities, Dynamic Economy) with OECD and SDG frameworks. Weight metrics based on survey results (e.g., mental health, social connection).

https://letstalk.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/wellbeinghub?tool=survey_tool

Stakeholder Engagement

Partner with Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre, local businesses, and community groups via platforms like the Community Action Group.

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/rural-city-of-murray-bridge/>

Monitoring

Publish annual economic development focused wellbeing reports tied to the council's Strategic Plan, using dashboards to track progress across agreed metrics and indicators.

Example Application

Wellbeing Hub - Monitor participation in mental health and physical activity programs (99.3% community support in 2022 survey).

https://letstalk.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/wellbeinghub?tool=survey_tool

Economic Diversification - Track job growth in tourism and logistics, leveraging Gifford Hill development and Monarto Zoo expansion.

Cultural Inclusion - Measure attendance at All Culture Fest and Ngarrindjeri-led events to assess social cohesion. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/rural-city-of-murray-bridge/>

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

A detailed analysis of the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2021 data for the Rural City of Murray Bridge reveals significant intra-regional socio-economic variations. This assessment utilises data at the Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) and Level 2 (SA2) to provide granular insights into the socio-economic landscape of the area.

SEIFA comprises four indexes currently derived from 2021 Census data.

1. Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) - Focuses on variables indicating disadvantage, such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations.
2. Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) - Summarises variables relating to both advantage and disadvantage, providing a continuum of socio-economic conditions.
3. Index of Economic Resources (IER) - Considers variables related to the financial aspects of socio-economic advantage, including income, housing expenditure, and wealth indicators.
4. Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) - Examines educational attainment and occupational status, reflecting access to skills and employment opportunities.

Each index assigns areas a score, rank, and decile (1 to 10), with lower deciles indicating higher levels of disadvantage.

Key Findings by Sub-Region (SA2 Level)

The Rural City of Murray Bridge encompasses several SA2 regions, each exhibiting distinct socio-economic characteristics:

Murray Bridge SA2

IRSD Decile: 5, IRSAD Decile: 5, IER Decile: 6, IEO Decile: 5

This area reflects average socio-economic conditions, with balanced indicators across all indexes.

Murray Bridge Region SA2

IRSD Decile: 4, IRSAD Decile: 4, IER Decile: 5, IEO Decile: 4

Slightly below average socio-economic status, indicating areas that may benefit from targeted economic and educational initiatives.

Murray Bridge Surrounds SA2

IRSD Decile: 3, IRSAD Decile: 3, IER Decile: 4, IEO Decile: 3

These areas exhibit higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage, suggesting a need for focused community and economic development programs.

Implications for Economic Development and Growth Strategy Consideration

Targeted Interventions in areas with lower deciles, particularly in the Murray Bridge Surrounds SA2, should be prioritised for economic development programs, educational support, and employment opportunities. Understanding the varying socio-economic conditions across sub-regions allows for more effective allocation of resources and services to areas most in need. Data-driven policies can be formulated to address specific challenges identified in each sub-region, enhancing overall community well-being.

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2021*. Retrieved from [ABS SEIFA 2021](#)

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Murray Bridge, Census Community Profiles*. Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA45040>

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release>

RURAL CITY OF MURRAY BRIDGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

2026 – 2030

Economic Opportunities & Challenges

Discussion Paper August 2025

AQUEOUS.



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BACKGROUND

The Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB) is undertaking a comprehensive review of its Economic Development Strategy and is seeking to develop an inclusive plan for Economic Development and Growth, building on work done to date.

The Economic Development & Growth Strategy will ensure alignment with community aspirations, emerging opportunities, and contemporary policy directions for the period 2026 to 2030.

This review draws upon key council documents, including the Community Plan 2016–2032, the current Economic Development Strategy for 2024–2028, and the Strategic Plan for 2024–2028.

The primary objective is to consolidate previous achievements and integrate new initiatives that address the needs of a dynamic and diverse local economy while positioning RCMB to thrive amidst changing regional, national, and global contexts.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & AREAS OF FOCUS

This paper outlines preliminary identified opportunities and challenges based on the current economy, external environmental factors and trends for the Rural City of Murray Bridge to focus its efforts to accelerate local economic growth and prosperity. The work is a review and update to existing Economic Development Strategy and will be referred to as the Economic Development and Growth Strategy 'Growth Directions' 2026 – 2030.

The RCMB region demonstrates robust economic performance, driven by notable strengths in agriculture, construction, and tourism. While the area has shown resilience and grown its Gross Regional Product by 10 percent over the past four years, it remains exposed to global economic shocks, environmental fluctuations, and demographic changes. To ensure future prosperity, the council is focused on capitalising on new opportunities, investing strategically, ensuring diverse industry sectors, and fostering a wellbeing-driven economy that enhances both economic activity and community wellbeing.

The global impact of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence (ai) has been considered and the potential impact on the Rural City of Murray Bridge economy, in particular employment and industry sectors.

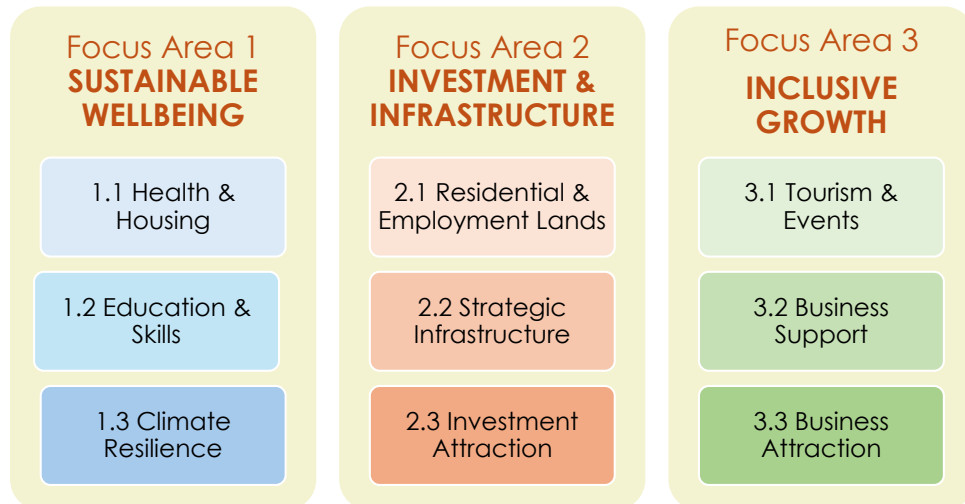
By positioning RCMB as Adelaide's 'playground' with a mix of major events, eco-tourism, and local experiences, the region is well placed to attract visitors, investment, and new residents.

Integrating wellbeing economic indicators across strategy delivery will ensure social inclusion, community health, and community resilience are central to RCMB's success.

This paper provides the foundation for further stakeholder engagement and will be further refined to evolve as the strategy to guide future strategic decision-making, investment and efforts.

Looking Forward

Considering the economic profile, research undertaken in the Opportunities & Challenges paper and endorsed 2025-26 RCMB Annual Business Plan, a framework for delivering on the Council's growth aspirations has been developed including 9 'key moves' under 3 themes in this paper.



1.1 Health & Housing

- Development of a Regional Public Health Plan, Community Wellbeing Plan, Active Aging Strategy and a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.
- Progressing Residential Areas code amendment
- Enabling the Gifford Hill precinct.
- Developing an Open Space Strategy to ensure future community needs are met.

1.2 Education & Skills

- Continue facilitating place-based programs that enhance local skill capabilities. Maximise the Murray River Study Hub and Murraylands Skills Centre to deliver future requirements.
- Maintain contemporary co-working facilities to support entrepreneurship and small business growth.
- Develop a concierge service framework for businesses.

1.3 Climate Resilience

- Develop a Climate Audit Action Plan.
- Develop the Open Space Strategy to maximise environmental benefits of open space and the role they play in climate resilience.
- Targeted climate related business attraction such as renewable energy and related technology sectors.

2.1 Residential & Employment Lands

- Continue Future City Program Schedule

2.2 Strategic Infrastructure

- Implement the next phase of social and infrastructure planning and delivery through the CIM2 initiative.

1.3 Investment Attraction

- *Create a dedicated Investment Attraction Strategy to target development in key precincts.*

3.1 Tourism & Events

- Implement recommendations from the Visitor Information Centre review including an expanded focus on visitor information servicing.
- Collectively promote local attractions, showcasing the region's unique offerings.
- Build on competitive advantages such as the dark sky reserve and support businesses leveraging and further product development.
- Advocate for new events and CBD activation.

3.2 Business Support

- Build on the existing business support program and activities.
- Facilitate place-based programs to boost local skill capability via the Murray River Study Hub and Murraylands Skills Centre.
- Continue contemporary co-working facility provision
- Offer artificial intelligence training and upskilling modules as a key component of future training programs.
- Introduce a concierge service framework will assist embryonic, new and established businesses.

3.3 Business Attraction

- Ensure the new investment attraction strategy identifies gaps and target business types.
- Progress a concierge style case management approach for business to ensure processes are streamlined to be effective and timely.

2. ECONOMIC PROFILE OVERVIEW & TRENDS

Analysis of the current economic profile, historical trends and external environmental factors has assisted in informing Section 5 'Focus Areas' and 'Key Moves' to focus on delivery.

With a population that is becoming increasingly diverse, thirteen percent of RCMB residents were born overseas, most commonly in the United Kingdom, the Philippines, China, New Zealand, and Vietnam. Additionally, 5.6% of the community identify as First Nations people, highlighting a priority for inclusive policy and program design.

Key highlights include:

- Gross Regional Product (GRP) reached \$1.38 billion in June 2023 (10% increase over the previous four years).
- Construction is the leading sector for economic output, generating \$571 million (about 22% of the total), followed by agriculture at \$424 million (over 16%) and manufacturing at \$391 million (just under 15%). Combined, these three sectors account for more than half of RCMB's total output.
- 1,429 registered businesses with the highest proportion in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (18.5%), significantly above the South Australian average.
- Construction and rental, hiring, and real estate services are also prominent sectors.
- Growth in rental, hiring, real estate, repair, maintenance, and personal services sectors has been observed, indicating shifting community and consumer trends.
- Makes up 1.2% of total South Australian employment and 1% of the state's value add.
- In 2020/21 agricultural output was valued at \$252 million, with livestock slaughtering as the largest component.
- The agriculture sector's share of state employment rose from 3.5% to 4.9% between 2019/20 and 2022/23, creating 501 additional jobs.



Tourism is a major pillar for the local economy and has shown strong recovery since COVID, with direct employment rising from 305 jobs in 2021 to 556 in 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Indirect tourism jobs increased from 207 to 378 in the same period, benefiting the economy through increased visitation and event activity.

3.1 EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT TRENDS & EMERGING SECTORS

The Rural City of Murray Bridge is strategically positioned to benefit from shifts in the broader economic landscape, leveraging both its established strengths and new opportunities to foster sustainable growth. The region's agricultural sector stands out as highly competitive, thanks to strong supply chains that not only support local production but also amplify its export capacity at a national and international level.

In recent years, substantial private sector investment, especially in advanced slaughtering facilities and the expanding renewable energy sector, has built momentum for long-term economic consolidation and diversification, providing stability and creating new streams for value-added growth in the local economy.

Tourism continues to emerge as a resilient and dynamic component of the economy. This further solidifies its role as a key economic pillar and a source of ongoing business and employment opportunities. At the same time, there is significant and growing demand for residential housing, driving land development and underpinning population growth, investment planning, and infrastructure upgrades. These are critical factors for ensuring the long-term prosperity and attractiveness of Murray Bridge for new and existing residents. An advantage for Murray Bridge is the enabling infrastructure for this growth is already in place.

While the Rural City of Murray Bridge is well-positioned with a strong and diverse economic base, there are several external challenges that could influence its future growth and capacity to capitalise on emerging opportunities. The region's significant reliance on agriculture leaves it exposed to the uncertainties of climate variability and environmental risks, including drought and flood events resulting from changing weather patterns, which can directly impact productivity and local livelihoods. Shifts in international trade policies, such as new tariffs and volatile commodity prices, add another layer of vulnerability for agricultural producers who depend on both domestic and export markets.

Workforce sustainability also presents a growing concern, as an ageing population and ongoing skill shortages in critical sectors limit growth and put pressure on local businesses to find, attract, and retain talent. Broader geopolitical shifts can introduce further complexities that affect both market access and investment confidence in the region.

Investment in vital infrastructure such as the development of freight and transport routes remains essential, delays or shortfalls could inhibit the scalability and competitiveness of local industries and limit access to broader markets.

Rapid advances in technology, particularly across manufacturing and agriculture, present both a challenge and an opportunity. Without proactive adaptation and uptake by local businesses, the risk of being left behind increases. Conversely, successful adoption could significantly enhance productivity and diversification. AI is globally disrupting traditional business and employment models. Understanding the employment and industry sectors most impacted will ensure the Strategy can respond and position the local economy to benefit.

Evolving visitor and consumer preferences mean that traditional information servicing models in the tourism sector may require rethinking and innovation to continue delivering value and attracting new visitors.

Based on the comprehensive economic profile and external factors, opportunities and challenges are identified across the following five themes:

- Employment Specialisation & Workforce Trends
- Supply Chain & Industry Specialisation
- Infrastructure & Investment
- Policy & Regulatory Environment
- Alignment with Broader Trends

Opportunities

AgTech Innovation Hub Development - Murray Bridge's agricultural strength (18.5% of businesses, 3.6 location quotient) positions it perfectly to become South Australia's premier AgTech capital. The region can leverage its \$424M agricultural output and 4.9% of SA's agricultural employment to attract precision farming companies, drone technology firms, and agricultural data analytics providers. With potential for 300+ new AgTech jobs, this represents a transformational opportunity to modernise traditional farming while maintaining competitive advantage.

Healthcare Technology Expansion - As the region's largest employer (1,927 jobs) with minimal AI displacement risk and a growing population and workforce, healthcare presents strong growth potential. The aging population and AI augmentation opportunities could create 500+ new positions in telehealth, aged care robotics, and predictive health analytics. Focus on a Regional healthcare hub with allied health services serving surrounding communities could capitalise on Murray Bridge's strategic location 75km from Adelaide, whilst removing the need for some residents to seek services from Mt Barker.

Professional Services Transformation - Currently the smallest sector (200 jobs), professional services offer the highest growth multiplier potential, potentially expanding to 600 positions by 2030 (300% growth). Location independent AI consulting, data analytics, and digital transformation services can serve all regional industries while requiring minimal physical infrastructure.

Challenges

Heavy dependence on agriculture (52.9% of total output from top 3 sectors) creates exposure to climate variability, international trade policy changes, and commodity price fluctuations. The region's economic resilience requires careful diversification strategies to maintain growth momentum.

Emerging sectors require robust digital connectivity that may be insufficient in rural areas. Investment in NBN partnerships and telecommunications infrastructure is critical for supporting knowledge-based industries and capacity for remote service delivery.

3.2 EMPLOYMENT SPECIALISATION & WORKFORCE TRENDS

Opportunities

Strategic Workforce Transition Programs – Research indicates 25.4% of jobs (2,119 positions) are at risk from AI automation, a new Strategy can proactively develop transition pathways targeting the research estimated 637 retail workers and 408 manufacturing workers facing displacement. Partnership with TAFE SA and universities can establish regional training centres capable of retraining 500+ workers annually in AI collaboration skills.

Skills Development in High-Demand Areas - The region's demonstrated workforce upskilling (549 people gained Certificate III or higher qualifications between 2016-2021) indicates capacity for continued

education advancement. Focus on human-AI collaboration, digital literacy, and specialised technical skills can prepare workers for emerging opportunities.

Location Quotient Strengths - Agriculture (3.6), Arts and Recreation (1.9), and Manufacturing (1.3) location quotients demonstrate comparative advantages that can anchor future workforce development strategies. These specialisations provide a foundation for value-added services and innovation clusters.

Challenges

Aging Workforce Demographics - The median age of 43 years and persistent skill shortages in key sectors pose barriers to workforce sustainability. Attracting younger workers while supporting older worker transition requires comprehensive age-inclusive strategies.

Qualification Gaps - With 43.3% of resident workers holding no qualifications (compared to 32.1% statewide), focused investment in education and training infrastructure is required. The fact that an estimated 77% of new AI-related jobs require advanced qualifications heightens this challenge.

Commuting Patterns - 70.1% of workers use private vehicles for commuting, indicating potential labour market constraints and environmental impacts. Public transport improvements and flexible work arrangements could address these issues.

3.3 SUPPLY CHAIN & INDUSTRY DEPENDENCIES

Opportunities

Agricultural Value Chain Integration - Murray Bridge's \$252M agricultural output and significant livestock slaughtering capacity (\$61.1M) creates opportunities for vertical integration and value-added processing. Smart manufacturing technologies can enhance efficiency while maintaining the region's export competitiveness.

Strategic Transport Location - The region's position on major freight routes and proximity to Adelaide provides natural advantages for logistics and supply chain services. Investment in smart transportation systems and automated logistics could create 150+ new jobs while supporting existing industries.

Regional Collaboration Networks - Membership of the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Tourism Alliance and National Growth Council Alliance demonstrates capacity for strategic partnerships and added benefits. These networks can facilitate supply chain coordination, external funding attraction and shared infrastructure investments.

Challenges

Single Industry Dependence - Concentration in agriculture and related processing creates supply chain vulnerabilities during disruptions. Diversification strategies will maintain existing strengths while building resilience across multiple sectors.

International Trade Exposure - With significant export activity (\$273.4M in agriculture exports, \$262.4M in manufacturing exports), the region faces ongoing risks from changing trade policies and international market fluctuations. Supply chain resilience requires both domestic and international diversification. Supporting industry by government-to-government arrangements provide the foundation to protect disruption and accelerate export growth.

3.4 INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT

Opportunities

As part of planning for the region's economic growth, consideration is given to the existing foundation of infrastructure in place to support key industries and the significant work Council has already considered in its Future City Program as informed by the Structure Plan. Council is already working proactively with developers and State Government to design and cost infrastructure required for growth through the Basic Infrastructure Scheme (BIS) and Community Infrastructure Scheme version 2 (CIM2).

Industrial Land Development - The Strategic Land Review and Growth Aspirations document identify significant employment land opportunities. Industrial growth areas can accommodate manufacturing expansion, logistics facilities, and technology companies while maintaining agricultural land protection.

Renewable Energy Integration - Significant private investment in renewable energy sectors aligns with South Australia's net-zero emission goals while creating new economic opportunities. Solar-powered agricultural systems and energy-efficient manufacturing can reduce costs while attracting environmentally conscious businesses.

Challenges

Major investments require coordination between federal, state, and local government funding sources. The scale of required investment may exceed local capacity and require innovative financing mechanisms.

Growth in manufacturing and technology sectors may strain existing electricity, water, and telecommunications infrastructure. Proactive capacity planning is essential for supporting economic expansion.

Median house prices rising from \$240,000 (2018) to \$400,000 (2023) may constrain workforce attraction despite strong rental yields. Balanced housing development supporting both existing residents and new workers is important. The increased supply of housing at developments such as Gifford Hill will also assist to alleviate this challenge.

3.5 POLICY & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

The policy and regulatory landscape across South Australia provide a foundation for industry growth and economic diversification. At the local level, the Council's Strategic Plan directs the prioritisation of business development and supporting workforce capacity-building. These efforts will be supported by the current strategic approach to land divisions to enable housing supply, aimed at improving supply for workforce to ensure the region can retain and attract workers.

Opportunities

The Rural City of Murray Bridge's commitment to considering wellbeing economic indicators aligns with contemporary policy trends. Measuring inclusive growth through income distribution improvements and SEIFA score enhancements can attract policy support and funding.

Proactive development of AI transition programs and policies could position Murray Bridge as a regional leader in technological adaptation. Early warning systems and worker transition programs can serve as models for other regional centres.

Structure plans and code amendments supporting mixed-use development and employment lands provide a regulatory foundation for growth and confidence to investors. Streamlined approval processes can attract investment while maintaining community character.

Challenges

Economic development spanning multiple jurisdictions and sectors requires coordination across federal, state, and local regulatory frameworks. Inconsistent policies or approval processes could delay critical investments.

Rapid economic transformation may create social tensions, particularly regarding housing affordability and employment disruption. Community engagement and inclusive planning processes are essential for maintaining social license.

3.6 ALIGNMENT WITH BROADER TRENDS

The region is well-aligned with broader external economic trends, leveraging its established strengths and emerging sectors to drive sustainable growth.

Opportunities

Regional Innovation Ecosystem - Murray Bridge can position itself as a hub for regional innovation, building on agricultural expertise while embracing digital transformation. The convergence of traditional industries with AI and automation creates unique competitive advantages.

Climate Adaptation Leadership - The region's agricultural base and renewable energy potential position it well for climate adaptation initiatives. Smart farming technologies, water management systems, and sustainable manufacturing can attract climate-focused investment.

Inclusive Growth Model - With 5.6% First Nations population and 13% overseas-born residents, Murray Bridge can develop inclusive economic models that benefit all community segments. Cultural tourism, multicultural business development, and reconciliation-focused initiatives create both economic and social value.

Challenges

Technology Adoption Speed - The pace of AI and automation advancement may outstrip local adaptation capacity. Access to training and upskilling, continuous monitoring and flexible strategy adjustment will be required to maintain competitive positioning.

Interregional Competition - Other regional centres are pursuing similar diversification strategies. Murray Bridge must clearly differentiate its value proposition while avoiding duplication of effort with other regions.

Social Equity Pressures - Economic growth must address existing inequalities reflected in SEIFA scores, where Murray Bridge and Surrounds rank in the third decile. Ensuring growth benefits reach disadvantaged areas requires targeted policy interventions.

The strategic integration of these opportunities and challenges provides a roadmap for sustainable, inclusive economic development that leverages Murray Bridge's existing strengths while building capacity for future prosperity. Success requires coordinated action across all five themes, with particular attention to workforce transition, infrastructure development, and community engagement.

National Growth Council Alliance, RCMB should be able to leverage state and federal partnerships to secure further major infrastructure funding and catalyse regional development.

Council is positioned as a key convenor and advocate, connecting industry stakeholders, supporting clusters and precincts, and facilitating ongoing infrastructure and community investments. The Council's economic development program actively works to build local capacity and workforce skills, supporting upskilling of residents in established and emerging industries.

Future economic growth opportunities include diversification into advanced food production and value-added manufacturing, further expansion of local training and education via partnership hubs, and the development of targeted investment attraction strategies to draw in new businesses, particularly building on established industries, renewables and digital sectors.

4.1 COUNCIL PROJECTS UNDERWAY & PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

Council is advancing several interrelated major projects to unlock future economic opportunities, attract investment and support the existing significant private sector investment in the region. Ongoing strategic land and property reviews are identifying the Urban renewal and expansion efforts are being managed under the Future City Program with projects such as the Community Infrastructure Model 1 and 2 and the Basic Infrastructure Scheme which is being developed over proposed residential land in Murray Bridge West is ensuring that the future social and physical infrastructure a growing community needs is accommodated. These projects along with other planned strategic work will enhance the amenity and livability of Murray Bridge for residents, visitors, and investors. The Tourism and Events team is now positioned in the Economic Development & Growth Division reflecting the value of the visitor economy.

The Outer Towns Project will focus on the role other townships in the Local Government Area play with Myponga being first, followed by Callington. This work will include an evaluation of the industries they support including grape and fruit production and associated added values such as processing.

Facilitating, supporting and encouraging private sector investment into the region to accelerate local economic development and growth opportunities is an important function of Council. Several large-scale projects and significant private sector investments are underway instilling investor (and community) confidence in the future of Murray Bridge and can be further leveraged for local community benefit.

The following analysis outlines current major investments since 2020 aligned with the strategic growth areas developed in the structure planning process and identified in the RCMB Investment Opportunities publication.

4.1.1 GOLDEN NORTH INVESTMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

In July 2025, Golden North announced its relocation from Laura to the former Beston Foods factory site on Maurice Road, Murray Bridge, marking one of the most significant food industry investments in the region. The investment value is estimated to be more than \$50 million (undisclosed amount from SA Government support plus private investment). Approx 80 staff (approximately 50 fte roles) are transitioning from the existing Laura facility with production transition expected to be complete by mid-2026.

Golden North's move to Murray Bridge represents the return of large-scale ice cream manufacturing to the region after a 40-year absence, repositioning Murray Bridge's previous reputation as "South Australia's ice cream capital". The proximity to dairy suppliers in the Murraylands and Fleurieu Peninsula, freight access via the freeway to eastern markets, and close proximity to Adelaide were cited as key factors in the decision to relocate. The relocation will enable Golden North to expand beyond ice cream into other dairy products using 100% South Australian milk, supporting local dairy farmers and positioning the brand for national and international growth.

This investment aligns with Murray Bridge's strategic positioning in food processing and manufacturing, utilising existing industrial infrastructure while supporting the region's agricultural supply chain network. The move reinforces the success of the work undertaken by Council to date in attracting major food industry players alongside Thomas Foods International, Costa Group, and other agricultural processors.

The Golden North relocation adds to the momentum with over \$1 billion in private sector investment captured in Murray Bridge, further validating the region's transformation from a traditional rural service centre to a diversified food processing and manufacturing hub positioned for sustained growth.

This addition strengthens the private sector confidence in Murray Bridge's strategic employment zones and reinforces the region's competitive advantages in food processing, agricultural innovation, and strategic transport connectivity.

Source: [murraybridge+2](#), [glamadelaide+1](#)

4.1.1 PALLAMANA/MYPOLONGA

Approximately 7 km North of Murray Bridge is the home of Thomas Foods International. The surrounding area comprises 2 000 ha of land zoned Rural, supporting the economic prosperity of South Australia primarily through the production, processing, storage and distribution of primary produce, forestry and the generation of energy from renewable sources. The area is accessed via current and proposed heavy vehicle route north – south with access via Monarto South Freeway interchange & Swanport Freeway interchange. To support future expansion and encourage other allied industries, Council is proposing to rezone this area in the future to Strategic Employment land.

Other current businesses and activities within the zone include Grains & Cereals, Hay Production, Fruit Growing and Solar Farms. The zone is well serviced by SA Power Networks high & low voltage supply, SA Water and SEAGAS, dependent on specific location.

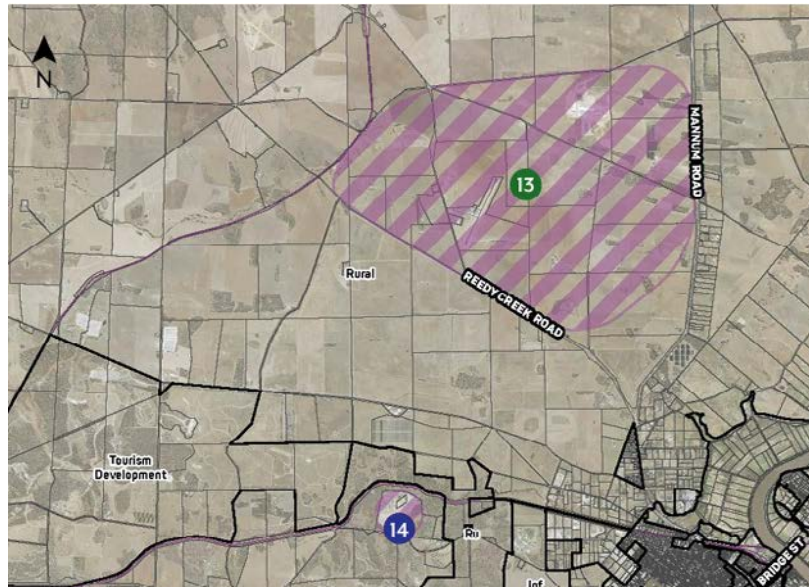


Figure 2. Pallamana

Thomas Foods International - \$300+ Million Reconstruction

Thomas Foods International represents the largest single private investment in the RCMB over the past five years. Following the devastating fire that destroyed their Murray Bridge facility in January 2018, the company committed to rebuilding "bigger, better, stronger". Construction commenced in December 2020, with the new state-of-the-art facility 10km north of Murray Bridge, becoming operational in May 2023. It is significantly described as "the single largest investment by the company in its 30-year history". Key investment details include:

- Capacity: Initial 600 head of cattle per day (Stage 1), expanding to 1,200 head beef and 15,000 head small stock per day when complete
- Employment: 350 staff in Stage 1, scaling to 2,000+ jobs at full capacity

The facility achieved a \$60 million export deal with Chinese company Shanghai Paradise Garden in 2024, with potential to grow export values further pending accreditation.

Source: [foodanddrinkbusiness+2](#), [indailyso](#), [murraybridge](#)

4.1.2 FLAGSTAFF PARK

The Flagstaff Park area is approximately 700 ha of land 5 km south of the Murray Bridge township. Zoned 'Rural Intensive Enterprise' it accommodates multi-purpose intensive agricultural production, processing facilities and supporting ancillary industries. Current businesses within the zone include Big River Pork, Ingham's Feed Mill, and poultry farming. Recently Council have received interest from businesses within the Defence and Armament sectors to locate here. Heavy Vehicle Access is via Swanport Freeway interchange is 3.7km away.

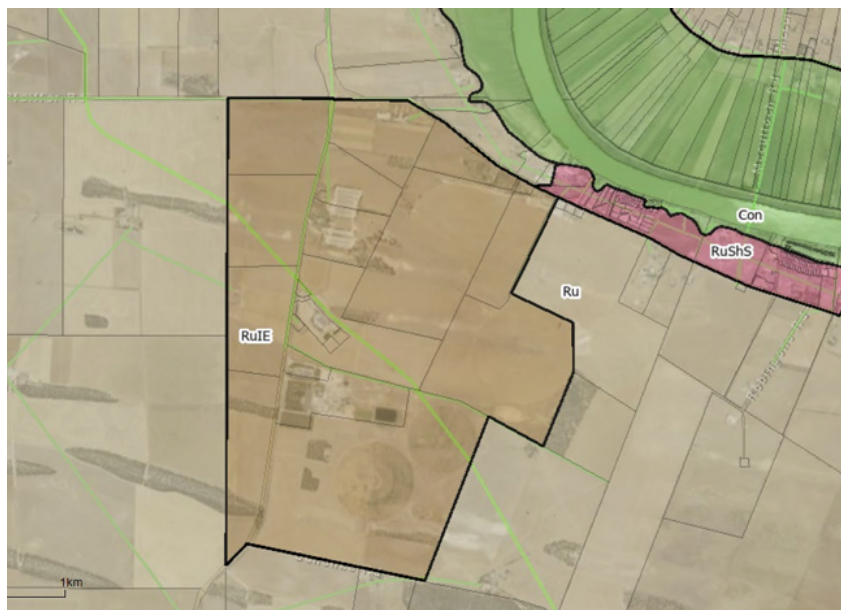


Figure 3. Flagstaff Park

Inghams Enterprises - \$279 Million South Australian Expansion

Inghams, Australia's largest integrated poultry producer, completed a major expansion program centred on its Murray Bridge facilities between 2016 and 2019 with the feedmill opening in February 2019 and labelled the 'most advanced feedmill of its kind in Australia'. Investment components include:

- New greenfield feedmill: Part of \$279M statewide investment
- Weekly feed production capacity: 11,000 tonnes
- Employment creation: 650 construction jobs, 850 supply chain jobs

Source: [graincentral+1](#)

Big River Pork - \$14 Million Expansion

Big River Pork, one of Australia's largest pork processors, completed a significant expansion at its Murray Bridge facility in 2017 and 2019 to meet long term supply agreements. Investment details include:

- Employment: 140 new full-time equivalent jobs (expanding workforce from 190 to 330)
- Government support: \$900,000 grant from Economic Investment Fund and Regional Development Fund
- Economic impact: \$79 million boost to state gross product over 10 years with potential for future expansion.

Source: [foodmag+1](#)

4.1.3 MONARTO SOUTH STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT ZONE

The Monarto South employment precinct is located 10 km Northwest of Murray Bridge and comprises 400ha of strategic employment land. The zone has excellent access to markets via rail and Heavy vehicle access via Monarto South Freeway interchange and a Proposed North – South Freight Corridor. The Strategic Employment zoning allows a range of industrial, logistical, warehousing, storage, research and training land uses together with compatible business activities. Current businesses and activities within the zone include Australian Portable Camps, Ingham's Hatchery, Timber Processing, Food Processing and Storage, Transport, Manufacturing, the Monarto Innovation Precinct and Grain Storage. Services in the Zone include SA Power Networks (high & low voltage) supply and SA Water.



Figure 4. Monarto South Strategic Employment Zone

Balco Australia

Balco Australia supply feed stock internationally. An expansion to build a new processing and storage facility on a 157-hectare greenfield site in Monarto is their fourth hay processing plant, increasing capacity by 100,000 tonnes and creating over 20 new jobs. The company has moved its headquarters to Adelaide to centralise operations as part of its strategic growth plans. At a recent event hosted by RCMB in July, an international visiting investment delegation Balco announced plans to establish a green energy-supported, advanced industrial ecosystem at the site including a rail spur to the existing rail network for enhanced logistics.

Source: <https://balco.au/exploring-future-opportunities-with-dezhou-delegation/>

Australian Portable Camps (APC)

Australian Portable Camps is a nation leading producer of complete camp solutions based on a modular construction and is vertically integrated: manufacturing, engineering, fabrication, roofing, carpentry, plumbing, wastewater, utilities and logistics. Their business model is built on innovation and their one-stop-shop concept which offers turnkey projects for large scale off grid sites.

The APC facility sits on 65 hectares and has 72,000 m² of undercover production lines already operating with a planned expansion of 15,000 m² more undercover facility space.

On-site housing for workers has been proposed offering camp-style accommodation for staff, including migrant workers to help with local workforce housing shortages.

The worker accommodation plan includes staff transport into Murray Bridge, communal amenities and managing concerns regarding noise, lighting, fencing, and stormwater.

Costa Group (Adelaide Mushrooms) - \$90 Million Production Expansion

The Costa Group is also located nearby, but not within, the Monarto South Strategic Employment Zone. Costa Group acquired Adelaide Mushrooms in 2013, invested \$90 million (\$60 million expansion plus \$30 million initial facility) to double production capacity at its Monarto facility in 2017 making it the largest and most technically advanced mushroom production facility in Australia. Investment highlights include:

- Government support: \$1.8 million from South Australian Government
- Production capacity: Doubled from 120 tonnes to 240 tonnes per week
- Employment: 200 new jobs created

Source: [costagroup+1](#)

4.1.4 TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Monarto Safari Park - \$40 Million Wild Africa Expansion

Private investor Gerry Ryan OAM is leading a transformational expansion of Monarto Safari Park in partnership with Zoos SA to create the largest safari experience outside of Africa. Key facts include:

- Government investment in visitor centre: \$16.7 million (\$11.25M federal, \$4.55M state, plus RCMB funded slip lanes)
- 80-room luxury resort, 25 glamping sites, new visitor information centre
- Employment: 223 FTE positions during construction, 90 FTE ongoing operations
- Visitor centre completed February 2022, resort completion in 2025.



Figure 5. Artist Impression Monarto Safari Park

SA Water Infrastructure Support

SA Water invested significantly in network expansion to support private sector growth, particularly the Monarto Safari Park expansion. Infrastructure investment details include:

- Water main installation: 7kms of new water main
- Pump station upgrades: White Hill pump station upgrade plus new Monarto booster station
- Purpose: Support Monarto Safari Park Wild Africa expansion and local agricultural operations

Source: [murraybridge+2](#), [sawater](#)

4.2 HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Murray Bridge economy requires a growing workforce and customer base to support a thriving business environment. The workforce requires accommodation. Strong growth is reflected in land division and construction approvals with the following either under assessment, approved or underway:

- 100 new allotments at Newbridge
- 200 new allotments at Narooma
- 150+ new allotments at Hindmarsh Road
- 90 new allotments at Ridge Road
- 70 allotments at Ellendale Avenue
- 229 dwellings in Living Choice lifestyle village

Residential Growth Areas Code Amendment is currently with the Minister for approval and seeks to release 89 ha of land for residential development. The Murray Bridge Structure Plan identifies the location of potential future land use precincts needed to support the growing region. The plan identifies key growth options and will form a fundamental link to the State Government's Greater Adelaide Regional Plan including providing up to an additional 22,500 dwellings. Planning and Land Use Services (PLUS) provide a land supply dashboard that is updated quarterly and reports on land supply and development activity within selected greenfield and strategic monitoring areas across Greater Adelaide including an interactive tool for Murray Bridge.

Available here <https://plus.geodata.sa.gov.au/landsupply/index.html>

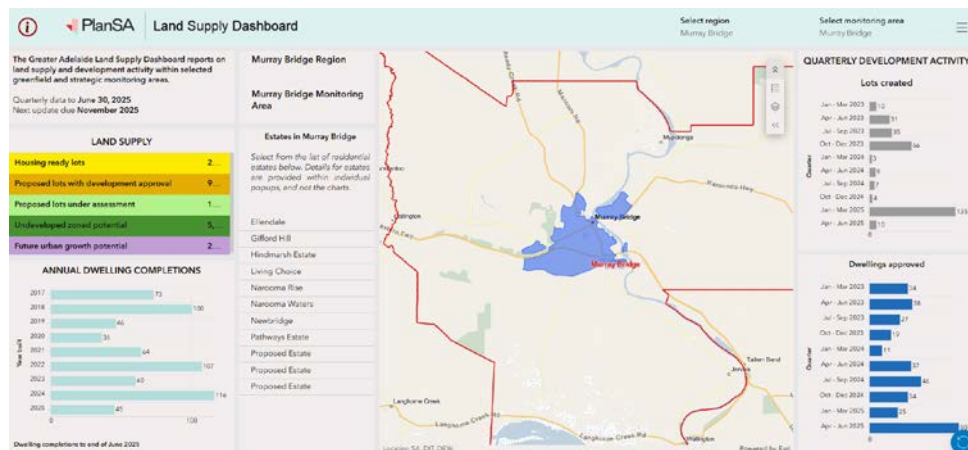


Figure 6. PLUS Land Supply Dashboard example

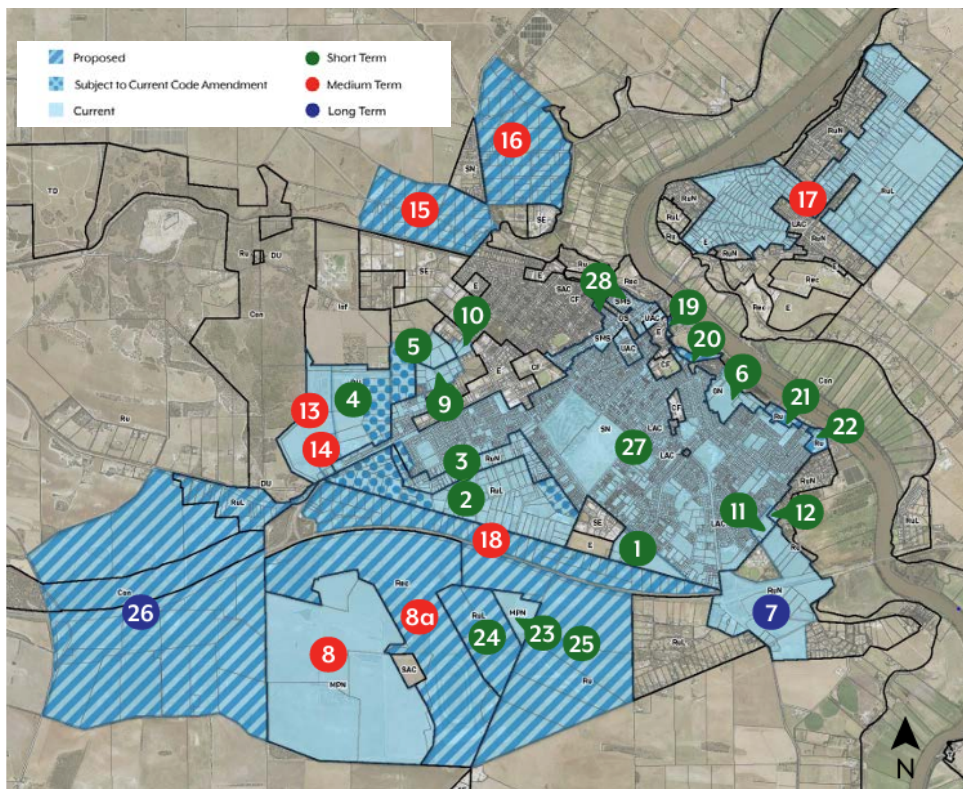


Figure 7. Residential Growth Areas

Gifford Hill Precinct (Costa Property Group & Grange Development) - \$7.5 Billion

Approximately 7 km southwest of the Murray Bridge CBD the Gifford Hill precinct represents the largest single residential development in South Australian history proposing to deliver 17,100 new homes for 44,000 new residents by 2065.



Figure 8. Aerial view of Gifford Hill Precinct (image courtesy Grange Development and Cost Group)

Development information includes:

- Land area: 1,860 hectares (Costa/Grange acquired 909 hectares representing 81.4% of developable land)
- Infrastructure: Potentially seven schools, new town centre, six neighbourhood activity centres
- Employment: 12,450 ongoing positions upon completion
- Timeline: First stage (1,400 homes) to market in late 2026



*Figure 9. Artist Impression Gifford Hill town centre
(image courtesy Grange Development and Cost Group)*

Source: [murraybridge+2](https://murraybridge+2.com.au/)

Living Choice - \$100 Million Retirement Community

Living Choice are developing a major retirement community. Project details include:

- 229 residential units for over-55s
- Facilities will include a community centre, bocce courts, pickleball courts, and country club
- Location: Former Murray Bridge racecourse site (Maurice Road)
- Timeline: Development approval sought 2024, construction anticipated 2026 pending final approval.

Source: [murraybridge+2](#)

4.3 INVESTMENT ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC GROWTH AREAS

The private sector investments strongly align with the Council's three strategic employment zones as detailed in the RCMB Investment Opportunities Prospectus.

The Inghams feedmill and Big River Pork expansion demonstrates the success in attracting major food processing investments, leveraging proximity to agricultural supply chains and freight access via the South Eastern Freeway. Thomas Foods International's massive reconstruction validates this area's positioning for large-scale meat processing, supported by the proposed 2,000+ hectares of strategic employment land and established heavy vehicle routes. Costa Group's mushroom facility and the broader Monarto Safari Park expansion demonstrate the zone's capacity to support both advanced agricultural processing and tourism-related investments, capitalising on strategic transport links.

The documented investments total over \$1 billion in committed private sector capital between 2020-2025, with the Gifford Hill development representing an additional \$7.5 billion commitment over the next 40 years. This investment momentum is supported by:

- Infrastructure Readiness - Established power, water, gas, and transport infrastructure in strategic zones
- Government Support - Coordinated federal, state, and local government backing for major projects
- Supply Chain Advantages - Proximity to Adelaide markets while maintaining rural land costs and access to key freight routes for rail and road to/from the Eastern States
- Workforce Availability - Regional workforce supplemented by Adelaide commuter accessibility

The convergence of agricultural processing (Thomas Foods, Inghams, Big River Pork), advanced horticulture (Costa Mushrooms), tourism infrastructure (Monarto Safari Park), and large-scale residential development (Gifford Hill, Living Choice) demonstrate Murray Bridge's transformation from a traditional rural service centre to a diversified regional economic hub positioned for sustained growth.

4.4 COUNCIL'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC GROWTH

Recognising Rural City of Murray Bridge's significant works plan, growth and finite resources, it is important to prioritise efforts in areas that will have the biggest impact and produce the best return on investment for the community and economic return.

Council's sphere of influence and its ability to 'move the dial' depends on the role it plays.

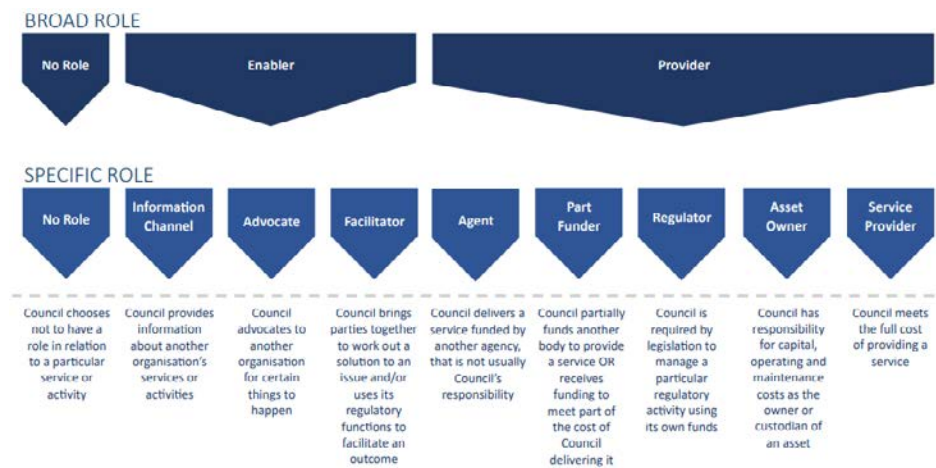


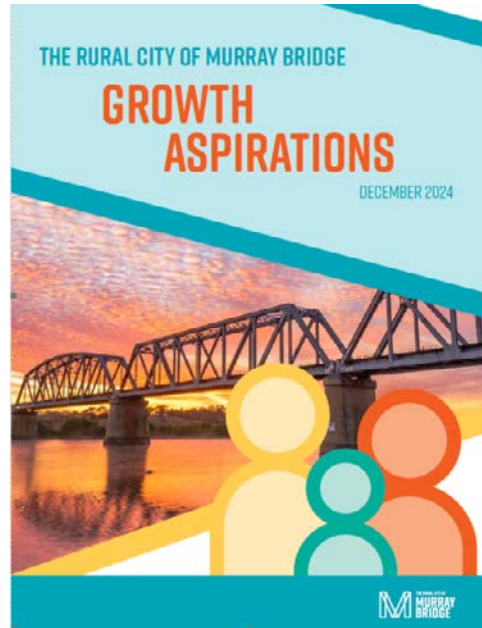
Figure 10. Spectrum of Role of Local Government.

4.4.1 COUNCIL DEFINED GROWTH ASPIRATIONS

The Economic Development & Growth Strategy aims to tie together projects and activities currently underway, and identify gaps based on the RCMB's economic profile and external environmental trends to create a clear framework for implementation.

Rural City of Murray Bridge defined the following 10 priority Growth Aspirations in December 2024:

1. Freight
2. Public Transport Inter and Intra-City
3. Structure Plan and Code Amendments
4. Industry Investment & Attraction
5. Growth Infrastructure/Investment Plan
6. Open Space, Sport
7. Public Housing Up-Lift and Worker Affordable Housing Options
8. Health & Wellbeing
9. Education and Training Options
10. Managing Climate & Environment



Examples of relevant work underway and planned activities to minimise potential threats and risks that could negatively impact Council's growth aspirations are now highlighted under 3 Key Focus Areas as 9 'key moves'.

5. FOCUS AREAS – KEY MOVES

A draft refreshed economic development framework identifies three interconnected focus areas to best support the Council’s Growth Aspirations.

Focus Area 1 ‘Sustainable Wellbeing’ brings together efforts in housing, health, education, and climate resilience and puts the wellbeing economy lens front and centre of the framework.

Focus Area 2 ‘Investment and Infrastructure’ includes the foundational activities associated with land use planning, targeted investment attraction, and major upgrades to strategic infrastructure.

Focus Area 3 ‘Inclusive Growth’ overlays Focus Area 2 and supports the expansion of tourism and events, local business development, and the ongoing attraction of new investment and innovative enterprises, to further underpin ‘Sustainable Wellbeing’ of the Rural City of Murray Bridge community.

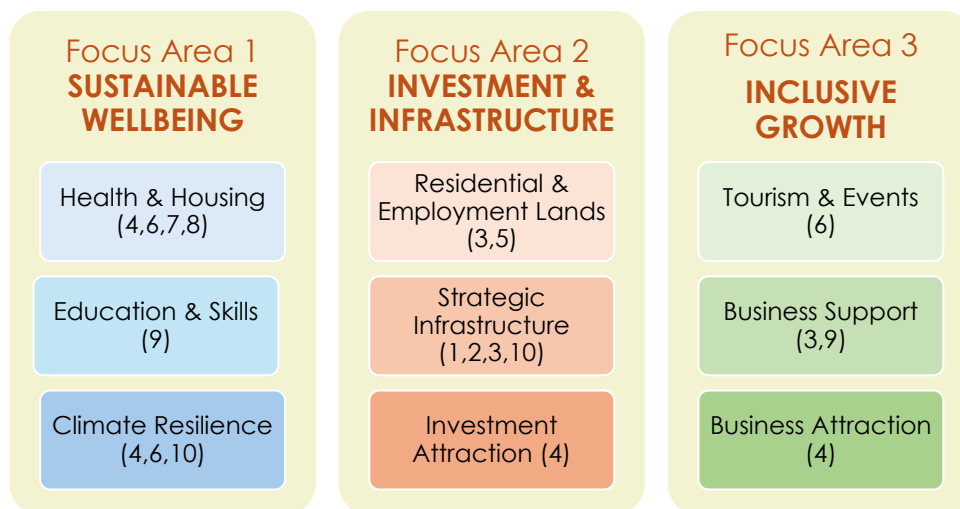


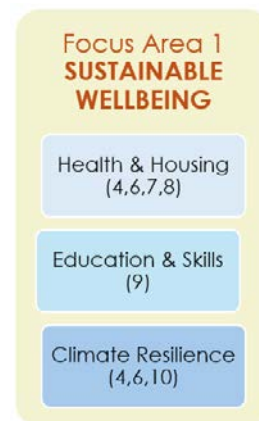
Figure 11. Draft Areas of Focus (numbers indicate relevant priority of Growth Aspiration).

5.1 SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING – FOCUS AREA 1

Council has emphasised the importance of community wellbeing outcomes from a revised economic development strategy and the fact that a healthy economy supports improved community living standards and health. Focus Area 1 groups relevant activities to ensure alignment with more traditional economic drivers as outlined in focus areas 2 and 3.

5.1.1 HEALTH & HOUSING

In alignment with strategic objectives in the current Economic Development Strategy, particularly objective 7.7, the Rural City of Murray Bridge is advancing a range of initiatives under the 'Health and Housing' key move. Ongoing activities include the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan to strengthen relationships with the Ngarrindjeri community, and the Community Infrastructure Model, which supports the provision of essential services and amenities. The Strategic Land Review ensures thoughtful planning for future growth, while the Future City program is shaping urban development to meet the needs of a modern and inclusive community.



Looking forward:

Several proposed activities will further enhance wellbeing across the region. These include the development of a Regional Public Health Plan and a comprehensive Community Wellbeing Plan, both aimed at improving the health and quality of life for all residents.

An Active Aging Strategy is also proposed, alongside the development of a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP), to ensure accessibility and participation for all members of the community. Progressing the Residential Areas code amendment and the enabling of the Gifford Hill precinct will contribute to meeting future housing and lifestyle needs. This work will be informed by an Open Space Strategy to ensure future community needs are met.

5.1.2 EDUCATION & TRAINING

Doubling down support and efforts in Education and training in the new Strategy will build on the following relevant current economic development strategy objectives including 5.1, 7.6, 7.9, 9.1 to 9.7, and 11.6.

The aim is to build a robust and adaptable workforce. Current efforts focus on improving the availability of skilled workers for key industry sectors through targeted local training and development pathways. Existing infrastructure is being leveraged to help the community establish new businesses and to upskill individuals in response to evolving workforce demands.

Looking forward:

The council proposes to continue facilitating place-based programs that enhance local skill capabilities, ensuring opportunities remain accessible and relevant. The Murray River Study Hub and Murraylands Skills Centre will play a pivotal role in broadening educational and vocational offerings. Upskilling the workforce in the use of ai will be an important part of future programs.

The ongoing provision of contemporary co-working facilities will support entrepreneurship and small business growth, while the development of a concierge service framework for businesses is planned to help guide emerging enterprises through the various stages of setup and growth.

5.1.3 CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Through the development of the Council Strategic Plan 2024-34 and Growth Aspirations document the community emphasised managing the climate and environment, including the fragile riverbank from collapse and erosion, protecting and increasing tree canopy cover and sustainable heat, power and water management are important for long term sustainability. This is equally important for sustainable economic growth. As the largest contributor to the local economy, the agriculture sector is susceptible to negative impacts resulting from climate variability therefore, it has been included in the economic development framework as a key move.

Currently the Council is proactively addressing environmental challenges through initiatives such as a Climate Emergency Action Plan and the establishment of a Climate Change Risk Working Group, both designed to build local capacity to respond to climate-related risks. Council's Engineering Design Guidelines and intent to develop an Open Space Strategy demonstrate its commitment to climate ready housing and residential development, providing guidelines for developers regarding water sensitive urban design, water reuse and tree canopy considerations.

Further efforts include ongoing greening activities to enhance natural environments, flood management measures, initiatives for sustainable river water use, and improvements in energy efficiency through actions such as LED lighting upgrades.

Looking forward:

Council is proposing the development of a Climate Audit Action Plan, which, once funded, will enable a more comprehensive assessment of local vulnerabilities and inform targeted climate adaptation strategies to bolster regional sustainability and long-term economic security.

The Open Space Strategy will consider environmental benefits of open space and the role they play in climate resilience.

Targeted climate related business attraction such as renewable energy and related technology sectors will works towards positioning the region as a leader in the green economy.

5.2 INVESTMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE – FOCUS AREA 2

Appropriate land use, enabling infrastructure and external investment are the foundation of a strong economy.

5.2.1 RESIDENTIAL & EMPLOYMENT LANDS

The Rural City of Murray Bridge is actively managing its residential and employment land zoning to ensure the region is well positioned for sustainable growth and investment.

Ongoing activities include conducting a Strategic Land Review to assess and optimise land use, maintaining membership in the National Growth Council Alliance to align local priorities with broader regional and national development agendas, and advancing the Future City Program to support urban renewal and development.

Focus Area 2 INVESTMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Residential &
Employment Lands
(3,5)

Strategic
Infrastructure
(1,2,3,10)

Investment
Attraction (4)

Looking forward:

Based on the work undertaken to prepare the district for further growth, Council proposes to create a dedicated Investment Attraction Strategy, which will help bring targeted development to key precincts, strengthen the local economy, and secure ongoing prosperity for the community. The Strategy will highlight Council's commitment to planning for sustainable growth as demonstrated in the Future City Program.

5.2.2 STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Strategic infrastructure development is closely aligned with the Rural City of Murray Bridge's broader strategic objectives and will deliver on the 2020 – 2032 Economic Development Strategy objectives 1.3, 4.1, 4.2, 6.5, 6.7, 7.8, 8.3, and 12.1.

The Council is actively progressing this agenda through the ongoing implementation of its Community Infrastructure Model (CIM1 and CIM2), which plans for vital services and facilities for residents and businesses, and through the Future City Program, which drives innovation in urban planning and development.

Working in partnership with the State Government, Council is investigating a framework for securing developer contributions toward essential infrastructure. Council will continue to work with the Government and private sector to ensure that investment is made into future infrastructure needs in accordance with the PDI Act. Regular strategic land reviews play a key role in ensuring infrastructure projects are responsive to the evolving needs of the growing region.

Looking forward:

The Council proposes to further strengthen this foundation by implementing the next phase of social and infrastructure planning and delivery through the CIM2 initiative, supporting both economic development and community wellbeing into the future.

5.2.3 INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Attracting Investment is required to deliver the Rural City of Murray Bridge's growth agenda, aligning with the current economic development strategy objectives 1.3, 4.1, 4.2, 6.5, 6.7, 7.8, 8.3, and 12.1.

The Council is currently advancing this priority by ensuring the environment is investment ready through several key initiatives such as appropriate land use and code amendments, Community Infrastructure (services and amenities) is appropriately planned, a Future City Program that drives progressive urban development, and ongoing strategic land reviews ensuring the region remains accessible to new business and population needs.

Looking forward:

A dedicated Investment Attraction Strategy will be developed to further enhance the region's ability to showcase the benefits and target and secure new investment, stimulate economic activity, and support long-term prosperity.

Given the scale of opportunities an international perspective needs to be considered and leverage new relationships established.

5.3 INCLUSIVE GROWTH – FOCUS AREA 3

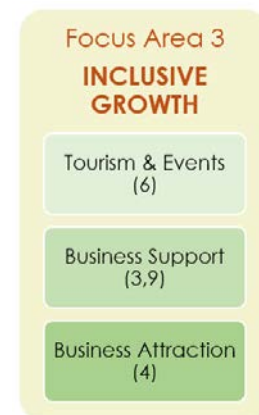
A strong relationship exists between tourism, small business and economic growth as not only do visitors spend in regions, but a visit to a new place may also raise awareness of the lifestyle offering and be the catalyst to drive future residential growth, if employment is available. Increased visitation attracts opportunistic businesses who are generally small to medium enterprises (SMEs). The Tourism sector is made up of the Retail and Accommodation Services industry sectors.

5.3.1 TOURISM & EVENTS

All levels of Government play a role in tourism. At the Federal level, Tourism Australia competes internationally to attract visitors to Australia and ensures the policy settings are optimised to achieve this. State Government, through the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) proactively promotes South Australia as a destination in national and international markets. SATC plays a key role in dispersal to regions to ensure additional bed nights are maximised. SATC coordinates the State-wide regional visitor strategy with priorities identified. The Murray River Lakes Coorong Alliance (MRLCA) is the region's Registered Tourism Organisation (RTO) and promotes the broader region of 5 local government areas, undertaking activities such as Destination Management Plan development and regional branding activities.

Local Government can play a key role at the local level to maximise the value of visitation to the local economy due to its relationships with operators, local knowledge, granular marketing (i.e. clustering experiences) and planning / regulatory controls. In addition, the RCMB operates a certified Visitor Information Centre (VIC). When working effectively VICs can maximise visitor expenditure by providing accurate information. Tourism and events play a significant role in driving inclusive growth in the Rural City of Murray Bridge, aligning with the Council's 2020-2032 Economic Development Strategy objectives, including 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 10.1, 10.2, and 10.3.

Current initiatives include a review of visitor information servicing to improve the experiences of both residents and visitors, and ongoing partnering with the MRLCA to strengthen regional tourism promotion and collaboration. The Council is actively involved in providing sponsorship to attract events, delivering a diverse program of major events for the region, and seeking co-investment opportunities to expand the scale and impact of these activities.



Looking forward:

Priorities include implementing recommendations from the Visitor Information Centre review and expanding to focus on visitor information servicing in general, and working collectively to promote local attractions, showcasing the region's unique offerings.

Build on competitive advantages such as the dark sky reserve and support businesses leveraging and further product development.

Additionally, the Council will advocate for new events to be brought to the region, further diversifying tourism products and experiences, and ensuring the continued vibrancy and inclusivity of the local economy.

5.3.2 BUSINESS SUPPORT

Business support is a core focus for the Rural City of Murray Bridge, with activities closely aligned to the 2020-2032 Economic Development Strategy objectives, including 5.1, 7.6, 7.9, 9.1 through 9.7, and 11.6.

Current initiatives are concentrated on improving the availability of a skilled workforce for key industry sectors, achieved through a range of local training and development pathways. The council also aims to make the most of existing infrastructure by supporting the community to establish new businesses and providing upskilling opportunities to meet growing workforce demand.

Looking forward:

Building on the current activities, planning and resourcing targeted actions will further strengthen the region's business ecosystem.

Plans include the continued facilitation of place-based programs designed to boost local skill capability, further development of the Murray River Study Hub and Murraylands Skills Centre as central resources for vocational training and education, and the ongoing provision of contemporary co-working facilities to nurture entrepreneurship and innovation.

Given the impact ai is having on all business models and industry sectors, it is deemed critical to remain competitive that an awareness of ai capabilities is needed. Relevant training / upskilling modules will be a key component of future training delivered.

The introduction of a concierge service framework will help guide both embryonic, new and established businesses through the process of accessing support, navigating regulatory requirements, and achieving sustainable growth.

5.3.3 BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Having a wide range of goods and services for the community improves lifestyle experience and standard of living. It also alleviates the need to leave the region and reduces retail leakage. Along with attracting investment, a focus on business attraction should be a strategic priority, aligning with key objectives from the 2020-2032 Economic Development Strategy items 1.1, 1.2, 6.3, and 10.4.

Current efforts are centred on creating an environment conducive to business growth, such as facilitating contemporary co-working spaces that support collaboration and innovation, implementing the Community Infrastructure Model to ensure essential services are available, and conducting regular strategic land reviews to identify and prepare locations suitable for new enterprises.

The council is actively supporting place-based education and training programs to cultivate a skilled local workforce and meet the needs of current and prospective businesses.

Looking forward:

The development of a dedicated investment attraction strategy including targeted businesses, will further reinforce the region's appeal and capacity to welcome new businesses, drive economic diversification, and foster sustainable growth.

Progressing a concierge style case management approach will make it easy for business and ensure processes are streamlined to be effective and timely.

6. STAKEHOLDER INPUT

External and internal stakeholder feedback has been sought, and will be documented, to assist in shaping section 5 'looking forward' sections of this paper and evolve to be the new 2026-30 Economic Development & Growth Strategy.

Government

Regional Development Australia
Department of Environment and Water
Department of State Development - Small and Family Business
Landscape Board
Primary Industries and Regions SA
Renewal SA
PLUS
South Australia Tourism Commission
SA Health
Education Department

Industry Representative Organisations

Ag Innovation Research
Business MB
South Australian Business Chamber
Grain Producers SA
Tourism Industry Council of SA
Murray River Lakes Coorong Tourism Alliance

Community Organisations

Associations
Sporting Clubs
Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority
Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation

Key Businesses

7. CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Contemporary economic development models increasingly prioritise sustainable growth, social equity, and community wellbeing, signalling a shift away from traditional profit-driven frameworks toward approaches that balance prosperity with responsible stewardship of people and planet.

The concepts of Community Wealth Building, Regenerative Economic Development, and ‘Doughnut’ Economics each offer practical pathways for growing regional councils to foster economic opportunities while addressing critical challenges associated with social, environmental, and economic resilience.

Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) focuses on retaining wealth within communities, promoting plural ownership, ethical local finance, fair employment, progressive procurement, and the purposeful use of land and assets for community benefit. CWB’s principles empower local people and enterprises, reduce inequality, and support long-term prosperity by prioritising collective wellbeing over short-term profits. Institutions such as the Economic Development Association Scotland have produced practical guidance on CWB strategies for cities and regions.

Regenerative Economic Development

Regenerative economic development goes further than sustainability by actively restoring natural, social, and economic systems. Its principles include ecosystem restoration, the circular economy, systems thinking, equity, and localisation. This model not only minimises harm but also enables enduring prosperity and resilience, aligning economic activity with community and ecological health.

Doughnut Economics

The ‘Doughnut’ Economics model reframes economic success as existing within the space between society’s minimum needs and the planet’s ecological limits. The inner ring, the social foundation ensures no one falls into deprivation. The outer ring, the ecological ceiling prevents environmental overshoot. Operating within this “safe and just space” is essential for the wellbeing of both current and future generations. Doughnut Economics is increasingly adopted by regions, businesses, and policymakers who seek to balance growth with sustainability and fairness.

Importance of the Wellbeing Economy

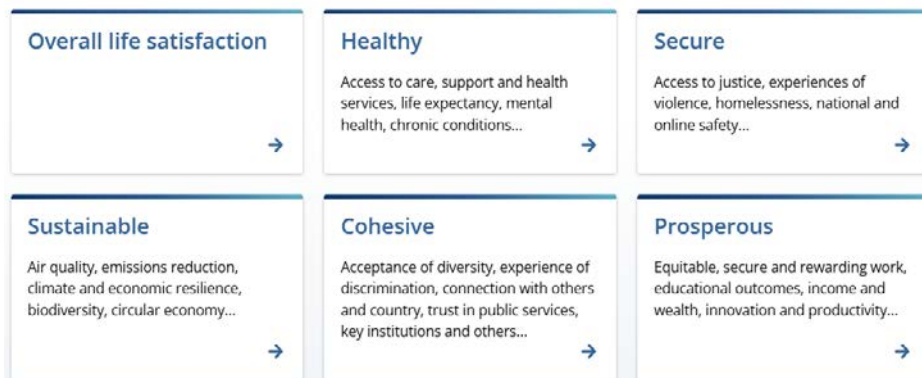
Across these models, the theme of a Wellbeing Economy is central as it positions human and ecological wellbeing as the primary objective of economic development. This approach is crucial for growing regional councils facing contemporary challenges and opportunities, ensuring that policy and practice promote a thriving, inclusive, and resilient community for the long term.

8. MEASURES – WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

To measure the impact of the focus areas and key moves it is important to agree on a range of indicators and metrics that measure the impact in a particular activity and its contribution to the overall objective.

Traditional economic development measures typically measure growth in terms of value, gross regional product, income, development value as well as employment, and education levels. As mentioned in section 7, achieving growth for growth's sake can be unsustainable and damaging in the long term as it does not take a holistic approach.

The Australian Federal Government has developed a framework under the '[Measuring what Matters](#)' policy comprising 5 themes with 50 indicators. Communities and Councils can select the measures that track outcomes of various initiatives they choose to invest in. Click below to view the indicators.



It is suggested a range of measures be agreed on for each focus area (and for some of the key moves) and a relevant blend of traditional and wellbeing metrics be considered.

The final agreed metrics will be displayed in an implementation / action plan with an intended target.

9. NEXT STEPS

Based on the extensive economic profiling undertaken, an external environmental scan and future trend forecasts, a number of opportunities (and risks) are proposed and shared to test with key stakeholders including local industry leaders, the business sector and government leaders including the RCMB leadership team.

This feedback will be considered and inform the final recommended areas to focus efforts as well as indicative actions to resource and implement.

This will result in amending the Opportunities & Challenges Paper to become the Economic Development & Growth Strategy for the period 2024-2029 reflecting all feedback received, as well as applying subject matter expertise on a contemporary economic development approach.

10. REFERENCES

1. RCMB Strategic Plan 2024 - 2034
2. RCMB Growth Aspirations – December 2024
3. RCMB Investment Opportunities Prospectus
4. RCMB Economic Development Strategy 2020 - 2032
5. RCMB Economic Profile June 2025



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