City of Mount Gambier
BLUE LAKE CITY

Strategies for a prosperous & resilient

Mount Gambier

A FUTURES PAPER FOR CITY DEVELOPMENT

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Foreword

Message from the Mayor

Mount Gambier is the major centre for the Limestone Coast and services a regional population of over 60,000 people. A thriving, progressive community, residents enjoy a quality lifestyle with city facilities and services, many attractions, shopping and entertainment and is surrounded by volcanic craters, lakes, limestone and underground aquifers and productive agricultural land.

Famous for the 'Blue Lake', the City also boasts beautiful parks and gardens, caves and sinkholes. An interesting mix of galleries, museums and markets provide an insight into the culture and arts of the City.

The City Development Framework project which has involved the development of the 'Futures Paper', commenced to ensure we have a robust and planned approach to meet the current and future challenges facing our City. The project involved the development of overall strategies for development, incorporating economic, social, environment and community opportunities and aspirations. Further, it will ensure we maximise the potential of our natural resources and the community and the opportunities they present.

Events over the past few years, both global and locally have led us to ask:

- Is what we have done in the past going to sustain our community and economy into the future? and
- What do we need to do to change or introduce to ensure that our community and economy are sustainable into the future?

The Futures Paper looks forward and focuses on these key questions.

The Futures Paper has a primary focus on our City and its communities, while recognising that regional areas and beyond have a significant influence over our direction and opportunities.

Developing, nurturing and sustaining partnerships with our communities, business sector, tiers of government and their agencies, health, education and non government organisations is important and integral to developing and delivering future opportunities for the community. Council plays a lead but not a dominating role in developing and promoting the City Development Framework. It was envisaged and is intended to be a whole of community statement, a framework for Mount Gambier, in which Council's role is as much as a catalyst or partner as directly responsible for service delivery.

While the framework may appear straightforward the questions and issues surrounding the Futures Paper are not. Council recognises and acknowledges that the community and stakeholders will have differing views of issues such as desired population growth, future direction of industry, health and ageing and will respond accordingly. The Futures Papers will create the City's direction and provide focus for action. Council is now seeking feedback, comments and suggestions on the Futures Paper to assist in ensuring the aspirations of the community are identified and incorporated into the City Development Framework for the futures development and growth of the City of Mount Gambier.

Steve Perryman
Mayor of Mount Gambier

Executive Summary

The City of Mount Gambier in southeast South Australia, a region endowed with an amenable climate and abundant natural resources, has prospered over the last 170 years on the creativity, energy and drive of its community. These characteristics will determine the prosperity and resilience of the city into the future. The purpose of this Futures Paper for City Development, and the extensive consultations on which it is based, is to assist the citizens of Mount Gambier as they work across the community to achieve their collective future.

In this Paper we reflect on our current characteristics, set out our aspirations for the future and bring together strategies with example actions identified by participants that they believe will ensure a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier. This Paper has been developed through extensive consultations across the community. It is designed to serve as reference point for the whole community.

With a population of 26,000 and an additional 38,000 people living across the Limestone coast who come to 'the Mount' for retail shopping, education and training, employment and sport, recreation and culture activities, the City of Mount Gambier is the regional capital for southeast South Australia and south western Victoria.

We have organised the Futures Paper around four characteristics that are regarded as ensuring a city's resilience over time: having highly trained and well educated people; being well located within a region; having a diversified economy; and, an excellent climate, abundant natural resources and a rich heritage.

When we assess our city against these characteristics we find it has relatively slow population growth, distinctive socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, a highly trained but gendered workforce (manufacturing versus retail and human services), excellent facilities and local services and challenges accessing specialist health services. Good schools and tertiary education access but low employment growth with relatively few opportunities for young people leaving school or graduating from tertiary education.

Mount Gambier is blessed with abundant natural resources with forestry and associated manufacturing a mainstay of the regional economy. Along with agriculture, health and education services ours is a desirable city in which to live, work and play.

Notwithstanding these factors there are challenges and opportunities for the community in meeting its aspirations, which this Futures Paper addresses. It was through discussions about the way we are measured by other governments and comparing these measures with what we value as a community that led to a set of shared aspirations from people participating in the consultations and discussions.

In this Paper there are overlapping and complementary aspirations. This is to be expected. That the aspirations catalogued under the four characteristics of a resilient city should intersect is not surprising. It confirms the interconnected nature of the City's future. It needs to be seen as a whole system with component parts working together supporting community efforts for a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier.

Aspirations for our people were led by the importance of being healthy and happy in one's life. Being part of a community helping others. Having a work life balance such that one can both achieve at their occupation or profession and have a quality of life with family and friends.

Being part of a healthy environment, a location which sustains us well, and attracts others is an important aspiration. Concerns for the quality of the natural environment are strong, especially our water table, from which we draw from for domestic and agricultural purposes. The quality of life afforded the citizens of Mount Gambier and the region is well recognised and something we wish to preserve.

A diverse economy that is sustainable over time is seen as paramount to being a resilient city. Employment should be available for the great majority of citizens in the city and its region. Balancing lifestyle with job satisfaction is seen as an important challenge for the future.

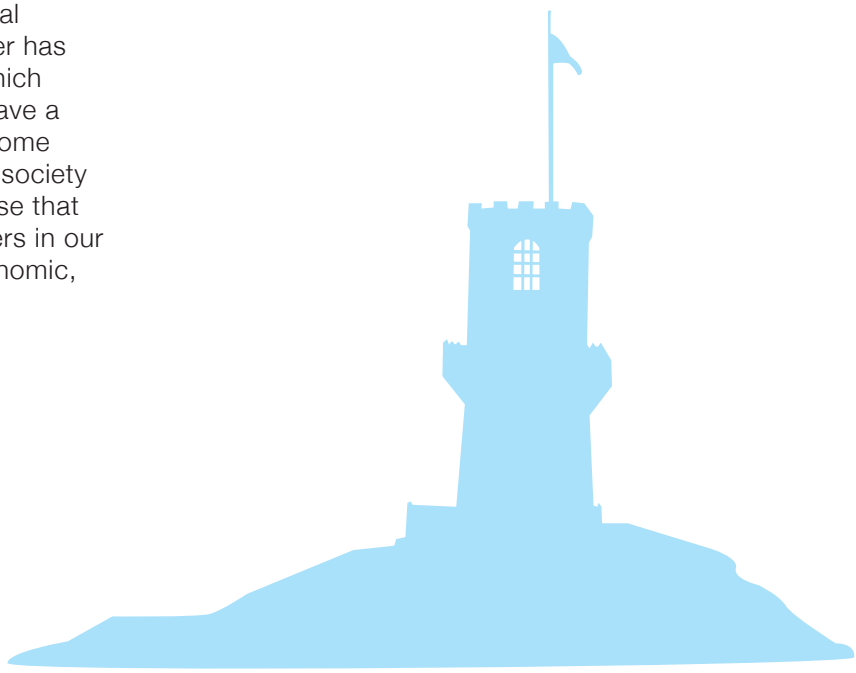
In terms of our climate, natural resources and heritage the community recognises the importance of a sustainable lifestyle managing our water and energy use with minimal environmental impact. Mount Gambier has a rich cultural history and heritage which is essential to preserve if we are to have a sense of ourselves, where we have come from and where we are heading as a society into the future. To do this we recognise that social awareness of the plight of others in our community and their inclusion in economic, social and civic affairs is essential.

We recommend this draft Futures Paper to the citizens of Mount Gambier and ask them to consider how their plans and aspirations correspond to these aspirations. As we have mentioned the four factors reflecting a resilient city are not discrete. They overlap and intersect in interesting ways.

We ask that you review this draft with your family and friends, work and community groups to identify how your plans fit with these aspirations. Of course not all will be relevant, a function of your interests, the groups you represent, the work you do and community groups you are a part of.

Please let us know how they fit with what is set out in this draft as we include examples of the work that is being done by individuals and the community contributing to a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier.

By sharing this information with all members of the community we hope that it encourages innovation and cooperation across the city and the region. When this happens we are far more likely to succeed as a community in what we aspire to than not. This is what leads to a prosperous and resilient future for Mount Gambier.



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Overview: This Futures Paper

This 'Futures Paper' has been drafted after extensive consultation with the Mount Gambier City Council and its community on what matters for future city development. Their aspirations for Mount Gambier community provide a 'framework' for the whole community to consider. The paper's purpose is to outline strategies for action at the individual, organisation and community level that will enable the community to achieve their collective aspirations. It is only by working together that the community can achieve a prosperous and resilient future.

The paper provides a rationale for considering city development before analysing such development in terms of four characteristics: developing and supporting our people; building on the advantages of our location; sustaining our diverse economy; and, valuing our climate, natural resources and heritage. During the consultation process we asked people from across the Mount Gambier community to tell us their aspirations in terms of these characteristics. We subsequently asked them what they thought were ways in which individuals, organisations and institutions across the city could help realise these aspirations. It is these strategies and actions that give direction for city development.

Like all regional cities across Australia Mount Gambier is impacted by social, economic and technological change. The way in which it responds to these changes will determine its prosperity and resilience over time. This Futures Paper reflects an extensive community consultation and conversation with citizens, organisations and institutions about what they can do to help realise the future to which the community aspires.

The Mount Gambier City Council has facilitated this community wide conversation designed to identify the aspirations of its citizens and identifying how they can be realised. This Futures Paper attempts to capture the outcomes of this conversation in order to support individuals and organisations who wish to play their part in creating a prosperous and resilient future for the city.

The importance of ensuring a prosperous Mount Gambier was reflected in all our consultations. Unless the city has a platform of economic success it will be very difficult to realise aspirations related to health, wellbeing, community connectedness and economic prosperity.

Thinking about the future

Assuming the future is a risky business: consider the 20,000 icemakers in Chicago a hundred years ago who, overnight, lost their jobs with the development of refrigeration. Extrapolating the past into the future is fraught with danger; sometimes referred to as 'rear view mirror planning.' Social and technological change presents us with interesting surprises. As one part of the market changes another part thrives in the opportunities it creates. Our main streets reflect this 'creative destruction'. In many of Australia's country towns we see empty shops vacated by businesses not able to adapt to change. Equally there are others that have adopted new technologies reflecting customer needs, such as on-line accommodation bookings and retailing. The digital camera replacing the film camera is a good example of this creative destruction. Modern wireless technology will impact employment in the poles and wires business as much as it is having an impact in the growth of jobs in the 'App' development industry. The city development framework outlined in this paper will see the community of Mount Gambier better prepared to adapt to unknown and uncertain futures driven by social and technological change.

The CSIRO has identified six interlinked megatrends: 'a significant shift in environmental, economic and social conditions that will play out over the coming decades.'[1] It is with this context in mind that we project into the future and consider how to prepare our community for uncertain futures; some challenging while others create new opportunities.

The trends they encapsulate are: doing more with less in a world of finite natural resources; the decline in the world's natural habitats, plant and animal species; the growing influence of Asian markets on Australian society; our ageing population; the connectivity of the virtual world; and, the rising demand for experiences over products and the importance of social relationships. These trends offer opportunities for Mount Gambier. Being prepared is the challenge for those who participated in the development of strategies outlined in this Futures Paper.

We argue that the challenge for communities across Australia, and the world, is not to be driven primarily by the past but to be attracted to a future they desire. Recognising this challenge we do three things in this futures paper:

- We briefly consider the consequences of extrapolating the future from the past;
- We identify the aspirations of Mount Gambier citizens; and,
- Identify what strategies and action is required to achieve these futures.

[1]Hajkowicz SA, Cook H, Littleboy A. 2012. *Our Future World: Global megatrends that will change the way we live. The 2012 Revision*. CSIRO, Australia.

The recent report 'The evolution of Australian towns' (2014) by the Federal Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics[2] (BITRE) shows that over the last century there have been 'strong long-term settlement pattern trends [with] increasing centralisation of population and activity, a decline in rural inland cities and growth in coastal locations'. They highlight factors such as geography (location), history, industry, the provision of goods and services, amenity and investment (or lack of) which have interacted and reinforced one another creating very powerful forces for change. These factors are echoed in the history and challenges of Mount Gambier.

A well-regarded European study[3] on what makes some regions more successful than others went further than the BITRE report highlighting those 'intangible' factors associated with successful regional development. They explained differential economic performance as a function of intangibles such as institutions, networks, community and quality of life. These were more significant in explaining economic performance than the tangible factors in the production function: land, labour, capital technology and economic structure.

When both tangible and intangible factors are working together regional cities and towns are more likely to prosper and be resilient to external shocks than would otherwise be the case. In this Futures Paper we see how the people of Mount Gambier recognise these intangibles, their aspirations related to the way the community works together to achieve desired outcomes.

Even within a very short time frame it is difficult to imagine what the future holds for Australian towns and communities. In 2005 Victorian researchers revisited six small towns across that state, each of which had been studied closely in the mid 1980s, to find out what had changed in these towns and how the community had responded. Common amongst all six towns was that none had predicted what the future held for them. Some had responded to change while others were in decline. The research team concluded that the sustainability of small towns was a function of the characteristics of the way people in these places worked together to define the nature of their community, regardless of the external changes imposed on them[4].

Understanding why some places survive and why others are in decline will help the Mount Gambier community decide what it needs to do to assure a prosperous and resilient future. It might be as simple as engaging the community in a myriad of ways such that there is implicit support when individuals are impacted: like losing their job, becoming unwell, needing family support, or are ageing in place. It will also involve a united and concerted approach to convince other levels of government to invest in appropriate infrastructure or to encourage businesses to relocate to Mount Gambier to take advantage of the bountiful natural and human resources that exist in southeast South Australia.

[2]Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) (2014) *The evolution of Australian towns*, Report 136, Canberra ACT

[3]Bryden, J. and K. Hart (eds) (2004) *A New Approach to Rural Development in Europe – Germany, Greece, Scotland and Sweden*, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press

[4]Martin, J. with J. Henshall (2007) 'The Study of small towns in Victoria revisited' in Department of Sustainability and Environment, Towns in Time 2001 analysis, DSE, Melbourne

The place names of south-east South Australia and western Victoria record European settlement here over two hundred years ago. It was the bountiful resources that attracted these settlers[5]. From the rich soils and plentiful water to whaling and fisheries these resources continue to support the Mount Gambier region today. With Australia's largest softwood plantations the region is home to a diverse manufacturing industry from paper making to sawn timber and woodchipping. Prior to European settlement Indigenous Australian's lived throughout the region.

The Boandik nation inhabited the Mount Gambier region for tens of thousands of years before Europeans came onto their land. The region provided sufficient resources to sustain their communities, a factor reflected in the sustainability of the Mount Gambier region today. The Boandik forebears witnessed the dramatic geological events that gave rise to what is the Blue Lake and associated volcanic features, the geological focal point of south-eastern South Australia. Archaeological findings confirm the very long history the Boandik people have had with this region. Today the city of Mount Gambier is at the heart of south-eastern South Australia. The city is the regional centre for communities across the Limestone Coast. It has a rich heritage, unique geophysical features, a plentiful natural environment and is home to around 26,000 people serving another 38,000 in the wider region who regard Mount Gambier as part of their community of interest. The city and its region has developed over the last 170 years into a leading resource-based economy with a diverse tourism, agricultural and grazing industry as well as Australia's leading softwood plantations and associated manufacturing. It is a centre for education, health services, retail, the service sector and government administration. Ensuring Mount Gambier's continuing central role in this region is the basis for the consultation that has led to the development of this Futures Paper.

[5]O'Connor, P. and J. Mayell (1997) *A Most Suitable Place, Mount Gambier: from Crater and Cave*, Mount Gambier, Mount Gambier City Council.

Our Guiding Framework for City Development

The purpose of this Futures Paper is to provide a framework for the long-term development of the city of Mount Gambier. It is a development process that is designed to engage the whole community, not just the city council who are leading this initiative. This process of consultation has been guided by the 'resilient cities framework' proposed by Mario Polése. He has shown that cities that continue to reinvent themselves in the face of social, economic and technological change have the following characteristics[7]:

OUR PEOPLE: they are home to a highly skilled and educated population.

OUR LOCATION: their central location, at the heart of a rich market, and/or well positioned for trade with expanding markets is a catalyst for ongoing development.

OUR DIVERSE ECONOMY: they have a diversified economy with a significant proportion of high-order services, largely untainted by the legacy of rustbelt-type industries.

OUR CLIMATE: they are endowed with natural resources and have a rich heritage: they boast a climate and/or natural setting superior to most other cities in the nation.

Polése distinguishes between resilience reflected in a city's ability to *survive* shocks versus its ability to *change* in the face of outside shocks. He suggests those places that endure over time in the face of external shocks such as wars and economic depression reflect the four characteristics set out above, and which provide the framework for us to think about the future of the city of Mount Gambier.

Regional researchers differentiate between exogenous and endogenous factors impacting regions and towns. Exogenous are those factors external to the place: they can be government policies, economic impacts (eg the Global Financial Crisis) or the tourist preferences for one place over another. Endogenous factors are of the type identified by Polése. Our focus is on endogenous factors based on the principle that the people of Mount Gambier, working together, will have as much influence, if not more, in creating the futures they aspire to than if they left it to chance and outside interventions.

[6]Mario Polèse (2010) 'The resilient city: on the determinants of successful urban economies', Working paper, no 2010-03, University of Montreal. Forthcoming as 'The Resilient City' in R. Paddison and T Hutton (eds), ***Cities and Economic Change***, Sage Publications, London.

[7]These characteristics are consistent with the Australian Government's criteria for regional economic development: human capital; sustainable (economic, environmental and social) communities and population growth; access to international, national and regional markets; and comparative advantage and business competitiveness (included at Attachment 3).

Assessing the City's Development

A key question in determining the current state of development and where Mount Gambier could focus its effort is how do each of these four city development characteristics for the city compare with other regional cities across Australia? For this purpose we have used the [In]Sight Regional Competitiveness index prepared by the Regional Australia Institute which provides a ranking of measures, such as 'welfare dependence', compared to all the other 565 local government areas[8].

As part of the workshops conducted in our consultations we compared Mount Gambier with Whyalla, the next largest regional city in South Australia and Warrnambool in south-west Victoria, a place that Mount Gambier is familiar with for the purposes of creating discussion and developing an understanding of what measures actually meant, their validity and importance for Mount Gambier city development. It became apparent during these discussions that the differences between these two cities and Mount Gambier did not really help when framing our aspirations for the future and thinking about how best to achieve these futures. Therefore, in this paper we focus primarily on the characteristics of Mount Gambier.

There is also the longitudinal question; how has the city developed over time? What are the measures that tell us how Mount Gambier has progressed in terms of social, economic and environmental characteristics? Population growth and change, economic diversification and environmental condition are examples of such characteristics. There are many more such measures[9]. A key consideration is choosing the measures that matter. That is, what are those measures more relevant to city development which have currency both with the local community and policy makers from elsewhere?

[8]http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/research-policy/insight/

[9]Mount Gambier City Council provides an extensive set of information on the city over the last few census periods and is freely available at http://profile.id.com.au/mount-gambier/highlights.

What are the measures used by policy makers from elsewhere?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) and the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) [In]Sight regional competitiveness index allow us to compare characteristics of Mount Gambier over time (as mentioned above we did this with Whyalla and Warrnambool, two regional cities that the community compares themselves with). These comparisons are found in Attachment 1. The variation with different Census collector districts in Mount Gambier reveal that there is significant variation in socio-economic advantage/disadvantage ranging from 719 in Mount Gambier East to 1,017 in Mount Gambier North East.

The measurement of changes occurring in Mount Gambier over time and how they impact city development is seen as more helpful in monitoring city development progress. We have used the profile.iD analyses prepared for the City of Mount Gambier (and available on the Council website) as the basis for monitoring broad changes across the Mount Gambier community. A summary of these comparisons over time are found in Attachment 2.

These measures reveal that Mount Gambier has a relatively stable population, albeit an ageing one. Household tenure, family incomes and family composition and labour force participation have remained relatively stable. Unemployment has remained around 7% and labour force participation a little over 60% since 2001. Youth unemployment (15-24years) is estimated to be 17%. Employment in manufacturing has steadily declined, offset by modest increases in retail trade employment and in the health and related sectors. The labour force is also gendered along these lines with significantly more men employed in manufacturing and more women employed in retail. This is also reflected in non-school qualifications with more men holding vocational certificates and more women holding higher education qualifications. Travel to work by private car remains the dominant mode. A measure of modern times is the significant increase in Internet connections across the city.

Importantly Mount Gambier is the economic hub for the region with the annual economy in the order of $6.8billion (RAI [In]Sight), more than twice that of Whyalla and twenty five percent higher than Warrnambool. Clearly Mount Gambier is the regional centre of SE South Australia and western Victoria with a role, function and responsibility driving the development agenda in this corner of Australia.

What are the measures that matter to us?

In our consultations across the Mount Gambier community we asked participants to reflect on the measures used by policy makers (State and Federal Governments) to assess the state of the Mount Gambier community (SEIFA and RAI [In]Sight) related to each of the four Polése characteristics and to suggest measures that they thought more applicable to understanding city development. These measures are reflected in the aspirations outlined below in this Futures Paper, many of which overlap and are interrelated. The challenge for policy makers and program managers is to satisfy these aspirations by engaging the community in an ongoing dialogue about what is acceptable and affordable.

In addition to the four workshops with invitations to a wide cross section of the community, we also met with individuals and community groups to discuss with them measures that they felt mattered and their aspirations for the Mount Gambier community[10].

[10]Over 600 people participated in the consultations representing a cross section of the community.

Community aspirations for the future of Mount Gambier

Against each of the four Polése characteristics we asked participants to tell us their aspirations for Mount Gambier at three levels: me/myself; family and friends; and, for the community. We did this to encourage discussion about what is important to people living in Mount Gambier. What we found was that there was a broad consensus about the values, systems and processes that make up a prosperous and resilient community. In the four sections that follow we have attempted to order these aspiration and to assign those strategies suggested from subsequent consultations.

These responses were then categorised, summarised and discussed in a second round of workshops with participants from the first round of workshops (as well as a few individuals who joined in the second round discussions).

From this second round review of aspirations we further refined these lists and incorporated additional information provided from the wider consultation process. City Council staff, from all administrative and operational sections, also participated as part of in-house workshops to discuss outcomes and performance measures across the diverse functions of council.

Strategies for change and development: who does what, where and when?

At the second round workshops participants were keen to suggest ways in which individuals, groups, organisations, business and governments could work together to address wider community aspirations. They were asked to identify strategies outlining who does what, where and when. We were overwhelmed with specific examples from across the community. As you would expect there is much going on already. What we have done in this Futures Paper is generalise and categorise strategies in our efforts to ensure as many as possible suggestions are included. They are by there very nature high-level statements in which individuals and organisations can look to as they consider their contribution to the future development of the city. Where people have named specific programs or actions we have looked into them to understand the inherent strategy within. We do not champion one program over another rather we have looked to identify what is common between them. It will be up to individuals across the community to show leadership in negotiating and determining priorities.

This Futures Paper is based on the consultation process as outlined above. While we have attempted to be true to participant comments, suggestions and strategies as much as possible, we have also attempted to integrate comments focussed on the same outcome or aspiration.

1. Developing and Supporting Our People

Resilient cities - those places that survive and prosper through economic and social change - are characterised by having a high proportion of highly skilled and educated people. Importantly it is being both skilled and educated that matters. In addition to being technically competent having a wider view and understanding of the world around us fosters a search for creativity and innovation that takes us beyond where we live and work. This journey can be through arts and cultural activity, in sport and in the way we work as community to create the place we desire. Out of this creative environment comes economic and commercial innovation, which helps sustain us and our place in the world.

In addition to the importance of being well trained in their vocation and having a broader more well educated view is the communities role in supporting each other through the various stages of life, especially youth, the aged and new settlers.

Our Current Circumstances

With a population around 26,000 Mount Gambier is the second largest city in South Australia. In comparative terms with other Australian cities it is a medium sized regional city, which serves a larger region of some 36,000, known as the Limestone Coast. As a mature city the population is ageing (60+ years) while the proportion of children (0-11yrs) is higher than regional South Australia. In recent years new migrants have arrived from Myanmar and The Congo making an important contribution to steady population growth in the city.

Approximately 36% of people (15+yrs) have a tertiary qualification – vocational and university - compared to 34% across regional South Australia. The high level of vocational skills in the Mount Gambier community account for this difference.

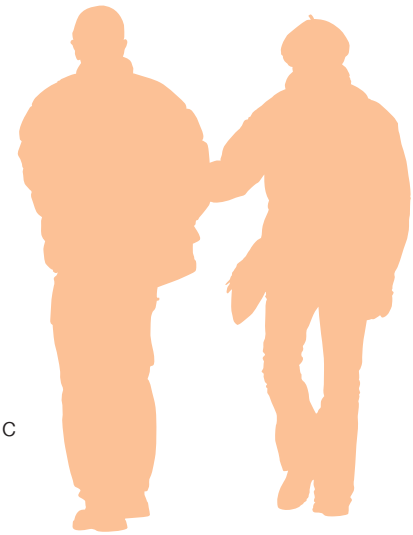
As we have already mentioned the SEIFA index for the City of Mt Gambier, divided into seven sub-districts, varies from 710 in Mount Gambier (East) to 1,017 in Mount Gambier (North East). This represents a significant variation in economic disadvantage in the city.

Socio-economic information on Mount Gambier presents a picture of the challenges facing the community if nothing is done to respond to current circumstances. These relate to the health of citizens, early childhood performance, primary school performance, early school leavers, unemployment (especially youth), welfare dependence and economic prosperity. For adults with at least one of the four health risk factors of smoking, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity and obesity, 63.2% of Mount Gambier residents are affected. Out of 565 local governments across Australia this places us well down the ladder at 359.

Regarding early childhood performance Mount Gambier is ranked at 165 (19.2% of children developmentally vulnerable). The performance of children across Mount Gambier's primary schools ranks 334 across Australia with 26.1% of children in the top two bands for reading, writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation and numeracy.

For a city looking to build economic prosperity based on creativity and innovation we face significant challenges. More students are leaving school than in most other parts of Australia (65.4%, ranked 434) before completing year 12. A prosperous and resilient city has a highly skilled and well-educated population. Reducing the rate of early school leavers in Mount Gambier schools will assist in achieving this outcome. Youth unemployment reflects our lowly ranked year 12 completions with a rate of 15.3% (ranked 473).

In Mount Gambier welfare dependence ranks 362 across Australia with 20.8% of people using Government support as their main source of income.



Meeting the Challenges We Face

When asked to identify the factors they see contributing to a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier participants identified good health, well-being and safety, followed by education and training, community connectedness and employment as being essential. The idea of well-being across the community pervaded discussions. Striking a balance between health related services and activities, well being, safety and a sense of community were often stated. These factors reflect community-wide perception about Mount Gambier and what it is to live, work and play here.

Participants suggested many ways to improve student retention to year 12 and subsequent opportunities for education and training. The importance of early childhood education as part of a life-long learning strategy was also widely recognised. There was general recognition that much more could be done to make these connections creating opportunities for life-long learning across the community.

Community connectedness through volunteering, participation in sporting and other organised activities were seen as high priorities for the community. Developing programs that encouraged people from across the community: geographically, by age, education, cultural background, occupation and so on to meet, learn, celebrate and build a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier were high priorities.

Finally, but not least related to this characteristic of a highly skilled and well educated community was the recognition of the central role employment plays in enabling the city to be prosperous and resilient to change. Levels of employment including youth and the older worker looking to retrain are seen as important outcomes. The challenge of obtaining meaningful employment was identified: people using all of their skills, being able to reach their potential and personal motivation.

Aspirations and Strategies for Developing and Supporting Our People

Through our consultations participants were asked to identify aspirations for themselves, friends and family and for the community at large. The recurring themes were; having good health and happiness, being part of a community where people support each other – being connected is a phrase often used, striking a good work/life balance – which includes having financially secure employment. Corresponding to these individual and community aspirations is to live in a community that is connected and inclusive, seen as a desirable and sustainable place. Also where we have access to good health services, quality education in a community that is helping and caring.

What follows is a range of suggestions from across the community as to how these aspirations can be realised.

1.1 HEALTH, WELLBEING AND HAPPINESS

When asked their aspirations for developing and supporting our people the most commonly cited outcome was health and happiness. Comments such as 'have a happy, healthy family' and 'to be happy, healthy and enjoy my work and lifestyle' were typical of the many views supporting this aspiration. Being in good health, an active member of the community and having financial security and the opportunity to develop were seen to be associated with the general issue of good health.

Wellbeing is where one has good health and is 'connectedness and contributing to their communities in a positive way'. 'To be happy and healthy' especially 'in their relationships' also contributes to this feeling. Not just for the 'adults to be successful in their business' but also for children to be 'successful and happy at school.' To be 'active and enjoy life' are strongly held aspirations. 'Education and employment opportunities' along with an 'interest in caring for our world' are factors seen to support wellbeing and happiness.

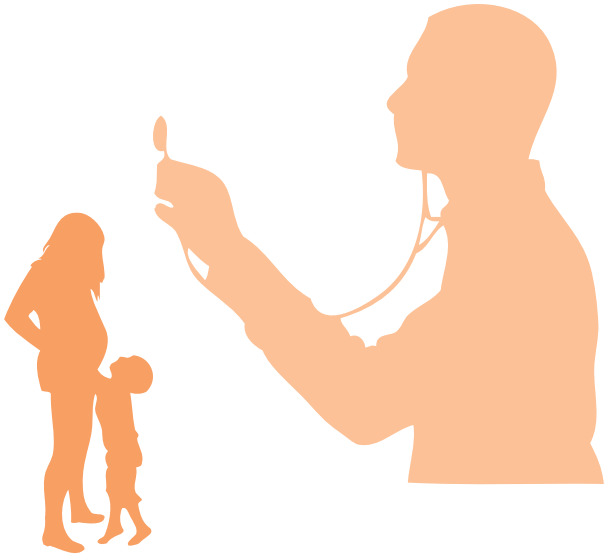
When considering community level aspirations 'access to reliable, prompt health services – preferably primary health' is mentioned often. Participants recognised that it is essential to 'maintain good health and friendships and join organisations to meet other people'. Health is defined broadly: 'health and happiness, connectedness, socially inclusive and engagement, prosperous, equality and equity' all contribute to this outcome.

KEY STRATEGY:

Ensure health, wellbeing and happiness with a focus on actions that involve citizens, engaging the broad range of stakeholders with a focus on the physical and mental well being of the community.

Example Actions

- Continue to demonstrate to State and Federal governments the benefits of local provision of health services (facilities, specialist services, local care and rehabilitation).
- Provide helpful information on where to obtain access to people for advice on health, education, doctors and hospital services.
- Hold regular information sessions on aspects of health and well being (including mental health and healthy living focussed on prevention).
- Create volunteer opportunities that are focussed and coordinated around community projects that involve members of the community and service clubs.
- Encourage state government departments to connect with their respective communities, especially clients.
- Continue support for Foodbank and Meal on Wheels type programs.
- Help keep families together with family oriented events.
- Bring the generations together with programs like 'surrogate grand parenting' by retirees for young families.
- Aim for ageing in one's own home as a community goal.



1.2 BEING PART OF THE COMMUNITY AND HELPING OTHERS

Being part of the community is good for individuals 'to help more in my community'. The idea of being 'fully integrated into the community, giving what I can (my time) and receiving what I need (health services)' was a common view. Being 'part of a well-balanced and creative community' one that 'support others and local events and businesses' reflects the economic and social benefits of helping others across the community.

KEY STRATEGY:

Create opportunities for all citizens to be involved in community life such that they both contribute to and benefit from such involvement.

Example Actions

- Through services (such as the Library) bringing people together, from new mothers and their babies to senior citizens.
- Encourage street parties and other events that bring people together so they get to know their neighbours.
- Facilitate community and business organisations working together helping youth with school, transition to work and the development of healthy living strategies.
- Create places for young people to feel welcomed where they can express their creative talents.

1.3 WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Being gainfully employed so one can live well was identified by many participants as an important outcome for them and their families. The 'work/life balance [should contribute to a] good quality of life'. Where there is a good work /life balance the community is 'constantly improving in leadership, in health, education and culture'. The widespread view of the importance of good health is also reflected here with comments such as having 'health and happiness, satisfaction in my career'.

Striking an appropriate work life balance is very much an individual responsibility which can be negotiated through working arrangements that reflect family responsibilities, such as with managing a young family or the need to support aged parents.

KEY STRATEGY:

Encourage work life balance across the community such that people feel empowered to attend to family matters when required while also respecting the needs of their employer.

Example Actions

- Establish a Mount Gambier City Futures Roundtable to bring together key organisations/stakeholders to discuss issues and share thoughts on how to support work/life balance initiatives.
- Arrange professional development programs for employees from across the community.
- Encourage individuals to consider work/ life balance implications of employment choices.
- As part of community celebrations acknowledge the contribution employers make to work/life balance.
- Encourage all organisations to actively promote volunteering by their employees.

1.4 FINANCIALLY SECURE EMPLOYMENT

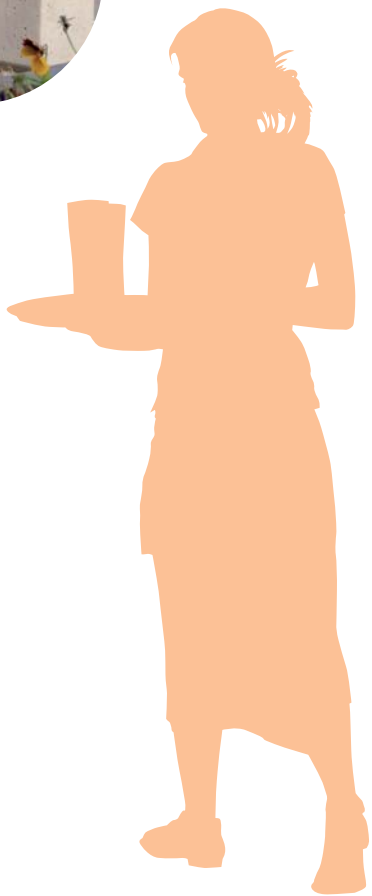
To achieve the wide-ranging aspirations outlined in this paper the great majority of the community must feel they are 'prosperous', and secure in their employment. 'Education and employment opportunities' go together. Once again the connection to personal health and well-being is seen as a function of secure employment and playing a role in the community.

KEY STRATEGY:

As a city adopt a regionally renewed focus to expand and diversify the economy, promote employment opportunities and forge closer links between education providers and industry to develop and ensure a well equipped and trained workforce.

Example Actions

- Highlight and award 'best practice' employers across the community.
- Encourage online micro-businesses to develop through local training and development programs.
- Establish a career development centre that enables people at all stages of their life to consider local career opportunities.
- Encourage and support the timber industry to take a bigger role in development.



1.5 CONNECTEDNESS

When asked about aspirations for family and friends we hear the recurring theme of 'being connected' in the community. Importantly, participants felt it is essential to feel 'safe and [be] connected. To feel secure' and find the community and its opportunities accessible. This requires a 'continuing engagement with the community, access to all the services [needed] at each stage of life'. For a 'sustainable future, [an] exciting life, [with] strong connections to the community' people felt the need to 'stay connected'.

Aspirations for the community reflect individual aspirations as well as those they hold for family and friends. Being a connected and inclusive community is paramount. Citizens having a 'sense of belonging and feeling empowered' based on 'connection and collaboration to drive innovation' summarise the broad view of participants. They recognise 'opportunities to be productive and contributing members' of 'the various work and community groups' helps facilitate these outcomes. 'To feel connected, supported, involved in their community' results in people feeling 'happy and want[ing] to live here'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Keep people connected, both physically and emotionally, through volunteering and the myriad of sporting, interest and other groups around the city.

Example Actions

- Encourage a wide range of opportunities for older citizens to volunteer across the community.
- Advocating and planning for public transport across the city and the region.
- Providing walking and cycling access across the city to encourage people to be out and about.
- Provide support caring for family members experiencing difficult times in their lives.
- Become a more active community creating visual safety in our streets and parks.
- Encourage more community involvement in events and volunteering.
- Council continues to support volunteer expo to create awareness, drum up numbers and celebrate (biennially).
- Work with the Police for more community consultation (their work is good but the community needs to work with them to make it more effective).
- Become involved in a productive way – be of service to oneself and others.
- Make national celebrations (Australia Day, Queen's Birthday weekends) days to welcome new arrivals.
- Welcome new refugees, communities, families to Mount Gambier with particular emphasis on non-English speaking groups.
- Schools and unis to provide adult education (English language) as part of learning about Australian culture.
- Hold an annual multicultural dinner.
- Ask local families to be a 'buddy family, for new arrivals.
- Careers development centre (individuals, schools, organisations, industry, council, government).
- Run an annual friendship/inclusion expo including a lunch/dinner to introduce new arrivals to the myriad of clubs/activities available.
- Take part in a variety of different development programs (YMCA SA, YP Taskforce).
- Promote our city's cultural diversity through mainstream activities (eg media work, sport, business, service clubs).
- When properties sold real estate agents provide a 'welcome pack' to new owners.
- Develop a volunteer welcome program for new arrivals where a volunteer is tasked to be a mentor to make introductions to clubs and community organisations.

1.6 DESIRABLE/SUSTAINABLE PLACE

For Mount Gambier to be a desirable and sustainable place it should 'respond to [the] diverse needs of different people'. The aim should be for the city 'to be a productive, happy place for all to live in – with no pockets of disadvantage'. As such it needs to 'develop and foster across diverse interests and activities including education, business and recreation'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Strive to make Mount Gambier a sustainable place in which all citizens are proud to call home.

Example Actions

- Develop a community-wide push for excellence in public education.
- Encourage employers to be to open opportunities to people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Create opportunities for young people to celebrate cultural and civic life.
- Invite different communities to participate in various groups activities.
- Include work experience for students of different cultures.
- Adopt 'place-making' principles in the development of housing strategies for all.
- Facilitate community mentors through gardening and men's shed type activities.
- Hold 'community stakeholder forums' across the city so residents can engage with service providers about how best this is done.

1.7 EDUCATION

A recurring aspiration throughout the consultations was the importance of whole-of-life education. The view that a 'well educated and healthy' community was essential for ongoing prosperity and resilience was agreed. This included education from early childhood throughout the lifes-span. As such this focus will help 'create a restorative city/community'. Opportunities for 'university education – [through the creation of an] education hub – [will provide] new courses, [with a] focus on technology growth areas'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Make life-long education and training a primary function in this community.

Example Actions

- Facilitate and promote learning (formal/informal) opportunities throughout life.
- Develop school to work integration programs.
- Develop a community-wide program to ensure a greater year 12 completion rate.
- Use the coming high speed Internet capabilities via the University of South Australia to facilitate the building of state-of-the art facilities.
- Celebrate the opportunities and achievements of tertiary students studying and working in Mount Gambier.
- Develop a 'whole of community' response via a Lifelong Learning Committee.
- 'University South Australia student accommodation to attract students from out of the region/international students.
- Within the secondary schools a closer relationship with the advising group for employment and further education.
- Encourage a culture of home based billeting of students coming to Mount Gambier for tertiary education.
- Create an education and research hub in the region that recognises, for example forestry, Mediterranean style agriculture and renewable energy.

1.8 HELPING/CARING

Participants also desire a place which is helping and caring, one which is 'welcoming and engaging – [with] social amenity, [reflecting the] natural and built environment, [one which is] culturally inclusive and valuing [of others]'. With new citizens the aspiration is that the community 'cares for and provides for its diverse people and communicates' effectively with them. Mount Gambier is 'a place where a helping hand is given, not a hand out'. Creating the opportunity for our young people to take responsibility for their development through coordinated programs.

KEY STRATEGY:

Recognise the basic human need to be affiliated and part of a community both as a helper and a recipient of community care.

Example Actions

- Local clubs follow up with participants on their success with inclusive programs.
- Sponsor youth development through sport.
- Encourage young adults to run for leadership positions across the community.
- Develop a central hub for young people to run programs in the arts; music, theatre and dance.

2. Building on the Advantages of Our Location

Resilient cities, those places that survive and prosper through economic and social change, are centrally located. They are places where people are attracted, historically because of their geography: on a river; on a safe harbour; adjacent to abundant natural resources, which is the case for Mount Gambier. In this section we first discuss measures that are used by others to assess our community and then discuss measures that we believe are meaningful. We then outline aspirations for ourselves, friends and family and the community before identifying strategies to achieve these aspirations.

Our Current Circumstances

The Regional Australia Institute's [In]Sight competitiveness index of Australian regions and local government areas provides several measures that reflect this idea of centrality of location. This index covers ten themes. Their 'Infrastructure and Essential Services' theme provides values and rankings (against 565 other local government areas).

Having value for money air services between Adelaide and Mount Gambier was raised in our discussions. Aviation infrastructure is a measure of the distance to and from a regions business centre to nearest airport with substantial paid passenger revenue. With Mount Gambier's dominant population relatively close to the airport this gives the city a ranking of four compared to other Australian regions. Access is good but air fare costs are seen as prohibitive for many residents.

Access to higher education (university) in Mount Gambier is 2.5% of the working age population which ranks the city 234 across Australia. Access to technical or further education (attending technical or further education institutions) is relatively high for Mount Gambier with a 3.9% of the working age population attending ranking the city 77 across Australia.

Access to hospital service is measured by the RAI as the number of people employed in hospitals in a region per resident population. The ranking for Mount Gambier is 216. The citizens of Mount Gambier were of the opinion - via their aspirations – that such access was poor. Possibly this is the case in many Australian communities regardless of their regional or metropolitan location. Measures for other heath services (allied, GP) were also based on percentage or workforce employed in these services and as such are considered by participants as a poor measure of actual access to a specific service.

Rail infrastructure ranks Mount Gambier at 486 (81.8kms to nearest railway station) out of Australia's 565 local government areas. These measures tell us nothing about the nature of the service: frequency, quality, and cost.

Meeting the Challenges We Face

When asked what are the measures related to our location that matter participants identified access to health services, the nature of transport infrastructure (air, rail and roads) and access to education, primarily tertiary and higher education.

Access to health services includes both facilities like hospitals and clinics as well as specialist and allied services. Several participants also mentioned the importance of access to mental health services. These were a uniformly common set of measures identified by participants.

Equally the response to measures that matter for transport relate to the relative isolation of Mount Gambier and the cost of - and for some - difficulty in making the long journey to Adelaide for services, such as primary health care, that they believe should be available in Mount Gambier.

The next most mentioned set of measures relate to access to education in Mount Gambier. Access for those from families who have not typically been engaged in tertiary education as well as access to a range of courses that will enable them to obtain employment locally and in the region.

Other measures that mattered to participants included employment opportunities, skill shortages, job satisfaction and income levels. Economic measures related to the level of prosperity and investment across the city while difficult to access were also regarded as helpful.

Measuring sustainability in terms of air quality, water use, environment quality and locally grown and locally consumed produce helps paint a picture of how resilient the city is and the overall health of the environment.

Aspirations and Strategies for Building on the Advantages of Our Location

As with the process outlined above after a discussion of how Mount Gambier is measured by others and a consideration of what participants thought was worth measuring they were asked to identify aspirations for themselves, friends and family and for the community at large. They were subsequently asked to identify strategies they thought would help meet these aspirations. Example actions are provided for the key strategy related to each aspiration.

The recurring themes related to location are; having good health, the environment, quality of life, access to facilities and services, community, education, connectedness, health services, assets/sports facilities, and sustainability.

2.1 HEALTH

As already stated, a heart felt position across the consultations for this Futures Paper were concerns about equity in access to health services. The belief is that to access the best available services people from the Limestone Coast region have to travel to Adelaide. So 'to have an excellent hospital and associated health services' is high on their priority. Corresponding to this is '[to be] Healthy and employed living in a prosperous bustling city where you can bring up a family with [accessible] medical facilities' and '[have] access to specific medical professionals [to avoid] leaving the area for treatments'.

KEY STRATEGY:

To lobby for appropriate health services to be delivered in Mount Gambier and when it is necessary to travel to Adelaide to ensure different travel options that meet the needs and capabilities of patients are available.

Example Actions

- Local governments and the State Government and hospitals attracting medical professionals to the region.
- Be open to the use of ICT to allow remote diagnosis and specialist treatment.
- Determine 'attractors' to encourage medical professionals to the region.
- Create a social calendar web site (based on Council's monthly What's On calendar).
- Council to facilitate welcome groups (such a the Young Professionals Network).

2.2 ENVIRONMENT

The quality of the natural environment that sustains the region's natural resource-based economy was recognised. The city should 'be able to balance changes that make Mount Gambier and the region more self sustaining.' The desire to 'live in a clean, healthy & safe environment, with choices about what I can do and what I can be involved in' was seen as important. Also, to 'reside in a place with a focus on nature, beauty, sustainability, innovation, creativity. A place where people can grow'.

KEY STRATEGY:
To ensure the ongoing quality of our environment is central in decision-making across the city.

Example Actions

- Hold an annual 'Clean up Mount Gambier Day'.
- Create a marketing campaign to promote the environmental virtues of the region.
- Develop sustainability goals for energy use across the city (eg X% renewable by 20??).
- Council to consider social and environmental impacts of planning and development.
- Encourage sustainable environmental practice through well designed and properly aligned housing.
- Community business leaders [to create] diversity of opportunity for employment.
- Council to continue to maintain parks and gardens [to a high standard].
- Continue to promote the city through Sustainable Communities/Tidy Towns awards.

2.3 QUALITY OF LIFE

The aspiration that Mount Gambier should be a community with a 'Work/life balance and a good quality of life' was strong. To be a 'vibrant, positive community' with strong 'connection to the location - asking the question; do I need to go anywhere else?'

KEY STRATEGY:
Emphasise work life balance in the choices we make as individuals and employers.

Example Actions

- Continue to develop world class sporting facilities.
- Work with local artists to promote/develop arts and cultural events.
- Promote the positives in our community.
- Develop education tourism resources that can be included in local education curriculum to encourage connection to place.
- Use our diverse local talent to create cultural events.
- Annually, appoint ambassadors and mentors for the City.
- Invite young adults who left Mount Gambier for study and work to return to speak to school children about their city and life beyond Mount Gambier.
- Build on the inclusive programs of the City Library.

2.4 ACCESS TO FACILITIES & SERVICES

Access to facilities and services is a central part of the location characteristic. This includes 'access to quality health, education services and have employment opportunities'. Being able to access all services means 'proximity to employment, health services, education'. Overall, 'excellence in services to attract people to our city' reflects this aspiration

KEY STRATEGY:

Continue to make Mount Gambier a great place to live and work through providing and advocating for appropriate services and facilities.

Example Actions

- Support learning groups for adults caring for children at home (stay at home parents).
- Social groups/lectures to explore the environment.
- Support people to live in their own homes longer.
- Work together to provide a year round heated swimming/therapy pool.
- Support Housing SA's 'Connecting People to Place' program.
- Develop affordable student accommodation for weekly and semester bookings.
- Encourage retailers to be open when major events are on.
- Community to lobby politicians at all levels of government to lock-in service levels [maintain existing service levels].
- Provide discount vouchers for people travelling through the region (available from the Lady Nelson as well as information centres in adjacent regions).

2.5 COMMUNITY

The central place of the family in the community is another recurring aspiration. For families to have 'access to activities – sport, health, social' provides 'an opportunity [for them] to develop family'. A city with 'a strong community ethos and [a] family friendly city' is a resilient city.

KEY STRATEGY:

Recognise the needs of families and cater for them as the core social foundation of our community.

Example Actions

- Affordable access to sporting groups and social clubs for young people.
- Encourage participation in community activities across the city.
- Council continue to fund the Junior Sports Grants program.
- Ensure new public precincts (Railway Lands and Hospital) are attractive, family-friendly places.
- Reinstate the annual women's tennis tournament and the Mount Gambier Gift.
- Encourage periodic pop-up markets (farmers, fairs, Service Club run boot sales) across public precincts in the city.

2.6 EDUCATION

'Access to high quality tertiary education for my kids' is seen as an important aspiration for families raising children in Mount Gambier. There is a strong desire to 'see more people realising educational goals and aspirations, affordably', locally.

KEY STRATEGY:

Cooperate across the education and training spectrum to find innovative and creative ways to engage everyone across their life span in meaningful and empowering learning experiences.

Example Actions

- Build cooperation with a diversity of tertiary education providers to ensure education and skills are developed for local careers.
- Encourage people to come to Mount Gambier to study.
- Use information technology to enhance the local learning experience.
- Continue to promote Mount Gambier as a learning city.
- Community to lobby for diverse educational opportunities.
- Create a research and development hub focussed on forestry and timber, temperate agriculture and renewable energy.
- Encourage local institutions and businesses to offer traineeships and graduate placement opportunities.

2.7 CONNECTEDNESS

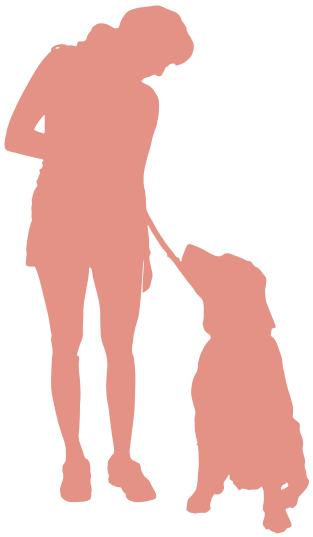
Being socially connected within the community to 'embrace differences/diversity' is a common aspiration. Also seeing 'young people volunteering (openly), giving to the community eg service clubs' will lead to a 'creative, inclusive sense of community'. The aspiration for 'a strong, connected, collaborative community committed to a sustainable future' sums up this view.

KEY STRATEGY:

Create opportunities for people from across our diverse community to meet, work and socialise together. Explore new ways of enabling people to move within the city and between adjacent regional centres.

Example Actions

- Create a sense of place for neighbourhoods and the city as a whole.
- Support service clubs working with the schools to promote volunteering for community service.
- Encourage Men's Sheds to collaborate with young people to create small scale infrastructure for youth.
- Invite young people to join service clubs.
- Investigate alternative transport options for exports: upgrade airport and express rail [Portland and/or Adelaide].
- Support friendly walking and cycling facilities and opportunities (getting to and from school, places to enjoy and exercise in).
- Organise more accessible community transfers for youth to get to different locations, appointments and work commitments.



2.8 HEALTH SERVICES

Once again health aspirations are identified, this time with a location theme for the whole community through 'access to required services': 'good access to medical, including mental health services'.

KEY STRATEGY:
Make living in Mount Gambier an advantage when it comes to accessing health services.

Example Actions

- Using high speed Internet for diagnostic services.
- Obtain diagnostic and rehabilitation equipment so people do not have to travel away for treatment (MRI machine and hydrotherapy pool).
- Encourage preventive health strategies through whole community use of sporting and recreation facilities.

2.9 ASSETS/SPORTS FACILITIES

Mount Gambier is seen by participants as a desirable place for travellers to stop over. Their aspiration is for 'Mount Gambier to become [the] gateway to Victoria'. For 'Mt Gambier to be [an] extension of [the] Great Ocean Road and encourage tourists to travel here enroute to Limestone Coast'. With its 'well maintained parks with good picnic and toilet facilities' this will encourage travellers to spend time here and in the region. It is important that the city remains 'a strong bustling community with assets to make it a highly liveable city'.

KEY STRATEGY:
Make Mount Gambier a destination for travellers, not just a place that they pass through.

Example Actions

- Promotion of our parks and open spaces [and playgrounds].
- Encourage shared use of facilities between clubs.
- Create active transport [walking and cycling].
- Establish a local tourism development board.
- Utilise local building products in housing development.
- Provide facilities in new parks (Railway lands) to enable opportunities for community events.
- Install free dump point in public [accessible] location [for caravaners travelling through who are not stopping overnight but who want to stop for a few hours].
- Develop backpacker accommodation in Mt Gambier.

2.10 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is an aspiration that pervades much of the discussions contributing to this Futures Paper. As a place to live it is seen as important 'to have suitable housing and industry so we can live healthy happy affordable lives'. Also, there needs to be an 'efficient and affordable public transport', including for people without cars who need to get to their place of education and training and employment. There was a desire for 'more simple living, less dependence on fossil fuels'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Consider access and energy use and sustainability in all development, project and planning decisions.

Example Actions

- Encourage buses to reduce car use.
- Make active transport (walking and cycling) more accessible.
- Review public transport routes to encourage greater patronage and reduce car traffic.
- Promote the 'park and stride' concept.
- Run an annual buy-local campaign with an updated catalogue of local service providers.
- Develop community wide investment options for household based renewable energy.
- Advocate for a local Renewable Energy Target (RET).
- Investigate community renewable energy projects (eg Transition Towns).

2.11 EDUCATION

Aspirations 'to be educated, innovative and prosperous' also relate to location, having access to relevant courses has been raised elsewhere. The desire for 'a continued growth in educational options and opportunities' was strong across our discussions.

KEY STRATEGY:

Influence education and training options such that students benefit both from local engagement with their learning while using the latest information technology to get a broad view.

Example Actions

- Tertiary offerings via high speed broadband.
- Develop an understanding of local student choices related to preferred universities and type of courses.
- Ensure tertiary courses offered are relevant to local employment needs.
- Schools be encouraged to create opportunities for student access to less popular subject choices.
- Access to more informal learning opportunities (non-credit, culture based such as travelling exhibitions, the Leonardo Da Vinci Exhibition).

3. Sustaining Our Diverse Economy

The third characteristic of a resilient city identified by Polése is that these places have diversified economies with high order services such as manufacturing based on local production (as with forestry products in South East South Australia). High order services also includes financial and other professional services.

Our Current Circumstances

The Mount Gambier economy is a relatively diversified economy with a ranking of 160 out of 565 across all Australian local government areas. Average hourly wage and salary income in Mount Gambier is $38.84 ranking the city 292.

The economy of Mount Gambier is characterised by an economy of small businesses with 80% employing less than 20 people. This is a relatively large proportion of the local economy with Mount Gambier ranked 487 out of 565 on this measure

The value of business turnover in Mount Gambier as assessed by the Regional Australia Institute is $6.8billion ranking the city 243 across Australian local governments. This highlights the City's place as the commercial centre of the south-eastern region of South Australia and western Victoria. This level of economic activity reflects both the high level of retail, manufacturing, education, health care and social services located in the city of Mount Gambier.

Interestingly the city ranks fourth for the presence of research organisations (as a proportion of all business organisations) and also has three universities with a presence in Mount Gambier: Flinders, the University of South Australia and Southern Cross University.

Local businesses have reasonable access to finance as there is a relatively high number of banks within the city (Mount Gambier ranks 22nd across Australian regions).

Meeting the Challenges We Face

When participants were asked, what are the measures related to our local economy that matter to us?, they overwhelmingly referred to the strength and diversity of the local economy and the capacity of people working across the city to adapt and change to meet new challenges and opportunities. Measures of diversification were mentioned often, also knowing how many businesses are able to grow and develop with the local region, regardless of whether they are a local service provider or involved in an export-oriented trade. The idea of value chains: from 'paddock to plate'; were also regarded as important measures related to the opportunity to value add produce grown in the region. This also applied to the forest industries well regarded by participants as an important mainstay for the local and regional economy.

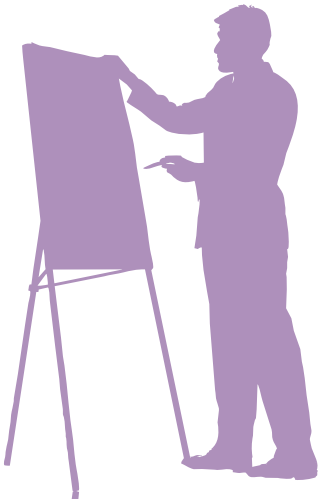
Another related measure was the promotion of the region's assets; as a place to invest but also as place producing clean, high quality goods.

In order to maintain and develop the local and regional economy participants recognised that having people prepared for the employment opportunities diversification and value adding brings was central to ongoing prosperity. The characteristics that reflect a prosperous and resilient city are overlapping and build on each other as does this one on economic diversification with the first characteristic considered in this paper: having an educated and well trained population. Measures that apply to relevant and timely education, training and development opportunities are just as important as measures that inform us about life long learning opportunities.

Aspirations and Strategies for Sustaining Our Diverse Economy

As with the process outlined above for the first two characteristics after a consideration of how Mount Gambier is measured by others and a consideration of what participants thought was worth measuring they were asked to identify aspirations for themselves, friends and family and for the community at large. They were subsequently asked to identify strategies they thought would help meet these aspirations. Example actions are also provided for each key strategy.

The recurring themes in this characteristic are a sustainable diverse economy, employment, lifestyle/job satisfaction, and for family and friends a diverse economy and opportunities, education and career opportunities, safety, sense of community. For the community as a whole, a sense of community, youth, partnerships, education and training opportunities.



3.1 SUSTAINABLE DIVERSE ECONOMY

If Mount Gambier is to prosper it requires 'long term sustainable, diverse industries that can offer opportunities for our people'. A key role for local, state and national organisations is to 'facilitate / support / drive the process to enable growth'. 'Having a balanced, sustainable, innovative industry base' is essential for a sustainable and resilient Mount Gambier.

The aspirations in this category were many, for example 'opportunity for employment, education, sporting facilities locally' go together to make the city an attractive place to live and work. The 'availability of rewarding work opportunities' and a ' community with a vibrant economy with diverse employment opportunities' are seen as desirable. Having 'choices in employment / education / lifestyle' is a recurring theme.

KEY STRATEGY:
The individual and collective business focus should be on value adding and diversifying the regional economy.

Example Actions

- Collaboration and innovation in the region: businesses overcoming what is inhibiting growth and profitability, being adaptable to develop their business and value add.
- Council and the Chamber of Commerce meeting quarterly to address strategies in this Paper.
- 'The Chamber of Commerce support Business Angels (retired business people) who mentor new business start-ups in Mount Gambier.
- An annual multi-cultural festival celebrating connections with other parts of the world.
- Work together to find ways to fund local innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities through the NBN in Mount Gambier.
- Create a microeconomy based on a community renewable energy investment fund.
- After release of the Futures Paper form focus groups to work on implementing strategies.
- Improve community understanding of changes impacting our local economy.
- Chamber of Commerce to lobby government to reduce red tape.
- Develop a welcome package to reduce red tape for new businesses.
- New migrants fluent in English be asked to act as community volunteers to teach conversational English in Mount Gambier.
- Ensure equal treatment of new arrivals: who want to work but feel they are not receiving opportunity to do so.
- Create training opportunities for new migrants.
- Help local businesses connect with events/conferences/tourism by advertising and showcasing local produce.

3.2 EMPLOYMENT

Participants recognised that having 'diverse education and employment opportunities' underpinned a diverse and evolving economy. Corresponding to this is a workforce where 'job satisfaction with work culture, diversity and wages' were apparent. The aspiration throughout life is to 'be employed for as long as I want – looking at a diverse workforce, catering for ageing workforce'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Think 'outside the box' in creating employment opportunities for all members of the community

Example Actions

- Empower a designated person to lobby local business for job opportunities.
- Offer time-limited volunteer work placements that translate into work experience on a resume.
- Provide retraining for the older worker.
- Create mentoring of young people by retirees.
- Make a combined effort across the community for more culturally relevant support system by government agencies.
- Create local training opportunities for young adults coming to study in our city.
- Provide assistance in finding work placements.
- Design transition arrangements for young people who lose jobs when they turn 18.
- Create community wide effort to keep young people here through employment opportunities.

3.3 LIFESTYLE/JOB SATISFACTION

A recurring theme in the aspirations identified in this Futures Paper is the importance of the relationship between the place where we live and the work we do. In the first two sections we have called it work life balance and quality of life. In this section we are considering our diverse economy and once again participants identify the importance of 'a vibrant place to live and work'. The importance of the community is well recognised as an important factor in attracting and retaining a professional workforce. Balancing 'financial security [with] access to sporting facilities [and] services' work together to make Mount Gambier a great place to live and work. There should be both 'opportunities for [meaningful] employment and personal development'.

KEY STRATEGY:

When recruiting people to work in Mount Gambier make the link between having a good job and living in a family friendly city with high quality facilities and services.

Example Actions

- When advertising job opportunities also include information on the facilities and services in Mount Gambier.
- Recognise the untapped potential of different skills set, unused resources.
- Build competence across the community with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) opportunities.
- Create a museum or historical hub to be managed by volunteers with a background and interest in local history.
- Council and local members of parliament lobby for citizenship tests to be administered in Mount Gambier.
- Create opportunities for new migrants to purchase staple foods not readily available.

3.4 EDUCATION AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The nexus between education and employment is also reflected in aspirations for family and friends with 'opportunities for career paths, ongoing learning and jobs'. Participants recognised that 'diversity of employment and educational opportunities' contribute to entrepreneurial economic development initiatives. If people are to stay and be part of the economic prosperity of the city 'employment options for satisfying and meaningful employment that provides a good income' will build the human capital of the city.

KEY STRATEGY:

As part of employment strategies across the city inform new employees of the wide range of educational programs and professional development opportunities available.

Example Actions

- Change employment conditions so that when young people reach 18 they can continue to work.
- Establish an allied health clinic where students can provide basic health assessments.
- Facilitate online education and training and professional development.

3.5 SAFETY

Having a safe working environment is seen as essential for 'prosperity and security'. Mount Gambier community should also be known as a 'safe place to live, [with a diversity of] opportunities'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Recognise, continue to support and celebrate safety at work and in the community.

Example Actions

- Work with established, globally oriented businesses to build workplace cultures of occupational health and safety (Kimberly Clark Australia).
- Re-establish Neighbourhood Watch in Mount Gambier.
- To maintain strong communication relationships between the police and the community and schools.

3.6 SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Aspirations such prosperity and community are related. For example; 'to be proud of our community and support one another commercially'. To be prosperous Mount Gambier should be 'a community with a positive attitude to what we have and do'. There must be 'a sense of community – good will – security – engagement'. If one feels good about their community they are more likely to feel good about their place of work, the business they run and the local investments they make.

KEY STRATEGY:

Use community gatherings, whether they be business, sport, cultural or annual events to acknowledge the strength of community that is Mount Gambier and discuss ways the sense of community can be strengthened for all.

Example Actions

- Welcome new comers: create events and localities that can host communities.
- Create a renewed interest in community service groups.
- Create opportunities to access local food and to utilise community markets.
- Look at how the community can improve it image after the release of this Futures Paper.
- Raise awareness of tertiary education opportunities.
- Chamber of Commerce to develop strategies for assisting business growth: retailing on line, better service, joint marketing, events and markets.
- Have business leaders provide career talks at schools to expose students to work opportunities.
- Council and market operators initiate periodic (monthly) city-centre pop-up markets.
- Develop a regional brand for local products that emphasis our clean, green, sustainable advantages.
- Mayor initiates and chairs a business leaders' round table, 'Geelong 21' model to get assistance of business community.

3.7 YOUTH

Enabling young adults to gain local employment was a widely held aspiration across the community. For example, 'for young people and newly arrived migrants to access work and be respected in their workplaces' reflects broad values of the community. As does 'retain our youth in Mount Gambier or encourage them to return'. In addition there were aspirations about young people having a range of local opportunities to develop and make the city home.

KEY STRATEGY:

Develop community wide programs that support our youth as they transition to adulthood.

Example Actions

- State and Local Government, community groups and families work together to keep youth busy with creative activities.
- Create life-long learning programs: accelerate current initiatives.
- Actively support the Blue Lake Partnership to bring school learning and community together.
- Work with University of South Australia and other providers as they market courses locally.
- Designate a 'graffiti canvas' area and encourage youth to display there artistic skills.
- Develop community-funded scholarships to enable students to study locally.
- Provide incentives for businesses to employ apprentices to address skill shortages.
- Remove over regulation of business to allow/encourage youth employment.

3.8 PARTNERSHIPS

Participants recognise that when 'all sections [of the community are] working together to achieve growth and support projects and ideas' everyone benefits. Having 'a strong partnership between industry and education sector to drive a diverse economy' also reflects many of aspirations already outlined. Partnerships and social networks are extensive across the community, based largely on history and tradition. The challenge is to create partnerships that champion those aspirations leading to prosperity and community resilience outlined in this Paper.

KEY STRATEGY:

Develop partnerships that are focussed on realising community aspirations related to building a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier.

Example Actions

- Lobby governments to enable regional joint ventures such that small, regional based companies can work together to tender for larger projects.
- Embrace new migrants recognising their skills by providing practical skill tests for them.
- Connect regional development agencies with new migrants to help find employment.
- Encourage industry collaboration within the region; ie RDA, Industry SA , industry associations state and national as well as tertiary education providers.
- Start a 'best practice collective', sharing common learnings (eg ICT), supporting industry collaboration.
- Focus on and develop an innovation skills programs (eg Southern Cross University 'forest works').

3.9 EDUCATION/TRAINING

The aspiration 'to be [an] educated [community] and transition into a diversified thriving economy, which has a focus on continuous improvement, growth and sustainability' reflects an appreciation of the evolving nature of our economy and the need to be leading change. Here education and training is connected to economic development outcomes. Having the right people in the right place at the right time to realise the benefits of investment in our economy.

KEY STRATEGY:

Develop and maintain a community-wide discussion that directly links secondary and tertiary education and training to current and developing business labour needs.

Example Actions

- Having local courses available directly linked to employment outcomes.
- Train locally so our youth avoid having to go the capital cities for this service.
- Work with educators such that young people are tuned into the needs of the local economy.
- Businesses engage with schools to give insight into business careers.

4. Our Climate, Natural Resources and Heritage

The fourth characteristic that Polése associates with resilient cities, those places that endure over time, is that they boast a climate and a superior natural setting that gives them an advantage over other places. Mount Gambier and its region is such a place. With good soils, abundant ground water and an annual climatic regime conducive to growth it is home to Australia's softwood plantations, broadacre farming of cattle and sheep, viticulture and, increasingly horticultural and agricultural production. At Carpenter Rocks on the coast south of Mount Gambier Australia's premier crayfishing industry has been exporting its catch over the last seventy years. We have highly valued natural resources that must be maintained while working for our city and region.

Our Current Circumstances

The Regional Australia Institute [In]Sight index identifies measures relating to a region's physical endowment 'in terms of both the access to natural resources and the physical attributes of the region such as climate, [as they] are hugely influential in determining a region's competitiveness'. Broad-acre grazing and agricultural production were the mainstay of European settlement when Stephen Henty first saw the Blue Lake in 1839 and established his grazing run nearby. Since then the region has developed significant rural industries including both soft and hardwood plantations, cattle and sheep, viticulture and wine making and more recently more intensive horticulture and agriculture. Using the natural resources in a sustainable manner is an ongoing challenge across the region.

The South Australian Department of Natural Resources notes that over the last two decades the level of the Blue Lake is dropping at the rate of around one metre a decade. Average daily temperatures in Mount Gambier have risen a little over 1 degree centigrade in the last fifty years. The UN's 2014 International Panel on Climate Change predicts that average daily temperatures will continue to rise leading to sea level rise as the oceans warm and fresh water currently locked in ice melts. While Mount Gambier is a land locked city it will be impacted by these global climate changes. The community's ability to adapt to these climatic changes will also be a measure of its continuing resilience[11].

As we have mentioned in the introduction to this paper Indigenous Australians have a long history with the Limestone Coast region. The Boandik oral history reflects the geological history of the creation of the volcanic activity that gave rise to these iconic features. Ensuring this oral history is passed on is an important measure for the city and the wider community. Understanding the role Indigenous Australian's played, over many thousand of years, in maintaining the ecological sustainability of the area is an important measure not typically recognised in measures of regional competitiveness.

[11]Beer A, Tually S, Kroehn M, Martin J, Gerritsen R, Taylor M, Graymore M, Law J (2013) *Australia's country towns 2050: What will a climate adapted settlement pattern look like?* National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast, 139 pp. ISBN: 978-1-925039-73-3

Meeting the Challenges We Face

When asked what measures matter to them in relation to climate, natural resources and heritage participants identified a broad range of measures reflecting the eclectic nature of this characteristic. They included water, natural and built environment, climate, food production, open spaces and economic development.

Mount Gambier's future is based on continuing access to abundant clean water and this was uppermost in the minds of people participating in the development of this paper. The quality of the water in the limestone aquifer, the Blue Lake and Valley Lakes were mentioned often. There was also recognition of rainfall variability in the region and that this needed to be monitored such that sustainable supplies are available in the aquifer over time. Making sure there is a sustainable water supply for both food production and for the natural environment is an important outcome recognised across the community.

Preserving the heritage, both natural and built environment is regarded as an important measure of the quality of life in Mount Gambier. This includes the archaeological as well as the geological history, unique on the Australian continent and a factor that makes Mount Gambier recognisable across the country. While they are important in their own right and preservation and conservation measures need to be monitored as these natural assets create interest and visitation to the region they are also an important economic asset.

Climate, in particular the weather, was also seen as an important measure. Knowing trends in rainfall and temperature change is essential for adaptation to extremes such as days over 40C and storms creating localised flooding. While it was considered Mount Gambier had a 'benevolent' climate compared to many other Australian cities it is important to be aware of changes and to adapt accordingly.

Participants recognised that a range of food staples were produced in the region; including vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy and eggs. Small farms (less than 50acres) contributed substantially to this output. Monitoring soil quality to ensure it is of the highest standard is seen as important. The notion of 'food miles' (how far food travels from the farm gate to plate) is also regarded as important indicative of how fresh it is and its overall quality.

Mount Gambier is blessed with open spaces, from the Blue Lake and Valley Lakes to the numerous parks and gardens and the variety of playing fields in the city. Measures to maintain and to monitor their use are seen as important. Are we as a community optimising their use for our overall health and wellbeing?

Interestingly participants identified the connection between environment and economy. One of the reasons for the city's economic success is its clean and green credentials. Making sure this remains the case into the future is important to measure and monitor.

Aspirations and Strategies for Our Climate, Natural Resources and Heritage

As with the process outlined above for the first three characteristics after a consideration of how Mount Gambier is measured by others and a consideration of what participants thought was worth measuring they were asked to identify aspirations for themselves, friends and family and for the community at large. They were subsequently asked to identify strategies they thought would help meet these aspirations. Examples are provided for each set of aspirations.

For individual aspirations sustainable lifestyle, cultural history and heritage, social awareness and inclusion. For their family and friends participants identified employment, education and social inclusion. For the community, pride in itself, environmental sustainability, community engagement and local production and consumption.

4.1 SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

The overarching aspirations here are summarised as 'access to quality education, employment, primary and specialist health services within a healthy, uncompromised natural environment'. The desire to 'live in an environmentally sustainable city or at least a city that aspires to be sustainable' was echoed across discussions. Also to 'live in a clean, tidy and well kept town that is attractive to visitors and locals' where one 'continue[s] to enjoy sustainable clean/green environment (air/water/soil etc.)'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Across the city and region champion sustainability as a goal in all of our endeavours.

Example Actions

- Share information and collaborate, on research opportunities on sustainability by all levels of government and business.
- Provide education through schools and at home on preserving natural resources and the sustainable use of resources.
- Be more self sufficient growing vegies, fruit, use of rainwater, and solar energy.
- Be less reliance on city-centred solutions.
- Encourage and celebrate community gardens.
- Find creative solutions to local and public transport (active: walking and cycling, and passive; buses, taxis and car pooling).
- Continue to enhance the urban amenity in the City that reflects both formal and informal open space areas for people of all ages.
- Educate and assist local businesses to operate more sustainably (water and energy conservation that assists their bottom line).
- Strive for environmental sustainability across all areas of services by Council progressively over a two-year period.

4.2 CULTURAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Participants recognised the value and importance of 'Boandik heritage and culture sharing'. The aspiration from this recognition is 'to continue to provide the locals and visitors with the information they are looking for regarding their past'. In terms of European cultural heritage 'to continue recording the history of our beautiful city'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Encourage cultural awareness, past, present, future.

Example Actions

- Collaborate, record and preserve information held by Local Government, Community Groups, Schools, State and Federal Governments, Heritage/History Groups, Film/Graphic and Arts Groups on our Indigenous and European cultural history through video, audio and written material.
- Make this information available through an iconic cultural centre for SE South Australia in Mount Gambier.
- Build annual events to celebrate national cultural icons (Sir Robert Helpmann).
- Improve awareness of Boandik history and culture.
- Showcase sites which have evident culture, publicising these areas more.
- Continue to assist with educational opportunities, learn from the past, engage with the present and enthuse young people for the future.
- Local Government continue to protect/preserve heritage buildings/community groups, events etc. (buildings through Development Plan, community groups/events through funding/sponsorship etc).
- Provide regular updates on websites of information regarding the cultural opportunities the city has to offer.
- Learn from Indigenous Australians how to utilise native flora and fauna.
- Hold annual cultural events.

4.3 SOCIAL AWARENESS AND INCLUSION

'To live in a culturally vibrant city, one that understands the past, recognises current culture, encourages future resilience and contributes to community valuing our natural resources' is an encompassing aspiration. More specifically 'to see [the] city grow from a good start to increased social inclusion'. Also, 'to live in a community with sufficient health services for its ageing population' reflects this widely held aspiration.

KEY STRATEGY:

Build social awareness and inclusion in society, business and cultural activities across the city.

Example Actions

- Promote healthy living with friends and family as part of our high quality of life.
- Be an active participant in local cultural groups (Eisteddford, Riddoch Gallery).
- Engage and self educate to encourage more regional sharing of knowledge, be proud of our characters and celebrate their contribution.
- Encourage integration of new migrants, from overseas and other parts of Australia.
- Become more aware of the social background of the community in which I live.
- Conduct research into the issue of our ageing community.

4.4 EMPLOYMENT

'To have secure employment for the generations to come' pervaded much of the discussion about the future in the preparation of this paper. Having 'employment opportunities' is seen as a basic aspiration. Aspirations for family and friends is that they 'have the ability to join a group with all the bonuses that come with that - in general - a healthy city to live in'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Build sustainable employment options that allow people to live fulfilling and comfortable lives.

Example Actions

- Encourage improvement, buoyancy and prosperity in our economy.
- Be proud of city's achievements and its resourceful agricultural region.
- Strive to encourage options and opportunities for all who seek employment (through a 'whole of the community approach' with business and education sectors leading the way).
- Assist people to live more economically.
- Concentrate on the development of long-term sustainable industries which capitalise on our strengths and opportunities.

4.5 EDUCATION

Participants were very aware of the need to 'become better educated on climate, natural resources and our heritage and culture'. They suggested 'facilities for education around all people from childcare to adult education' and the 'availability of Tertiary Education' generally.

KEY STRATEGY:
Educate the community in sustainable living options.

Example Actions

- Build awareness and knowledge about the natural environment in general and Mount Gambier in particular.
- Develop an Indigenous 'showcase art site' with managed visitation.
- Community wide collaboration to provide material for a museum of human history in Mount Gambier (through schools, Indigenous community, government agencies).
- Provide information for tourists and other travellers on the cultural heritage of the region.

4.6 SOCIAL INCLUSION

Participants throughout the consultation process stated that living in a 'safe and secure environment with responsibilities and opportunities for all' was an important aspiration.

KEY STRATEGY:
Work to include others in all aspects of community life.

Example Actions

- Provide welcome packs for new arrivals.
- Encourage citizens to a 'local host' for new arrivals in their first twelve months.
- Celebrate and join in on indigenous activities such as Closing the Gap day at Pangula Mannamurna.
- Build bridges between different community groups and demographics through cultural events (dinners, dances and children's theatre).

4.7 COMMUNITY PRIDE

An aspiration for the community was to have 'pride in heritage and culture'. To be a 'sustainable community, preserved for generations to come', and 'to be able to appreciate and value what we have – [to be] optimism/civic pride'. Being a 'better informed community regarding our climate, natural resources and heritage'

KEY STRATEGY:

Generate pride in our environment, culture and heritage by actively learning about and promoting it within and beyond our city.

Example Actions

- Market our clean green, sustainable credentials.
- Establish local sustainability goals and work towards achieving them together (eg Transition Towns).
- Market the urban rural character of our city.

4.8 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The 'Sustainable use of our natural resources by industry and community' is an aspiration across the community. Having a 'green city - open spaces, natural areas – [good] use of resources' and 'recognition and pride in our unique environment' were often stated. Ideally having 'all our natural resources maintained and supporting a superior quality of life by way of sustained food and water resources'.

KEY STRATEGY:

Educate, activate and inform locals and visitors about the wide range of environmentally sustainable actions across our city.

Example Actions

- Encourage all agencies to work together to explore links with NRM Plans.
- Educate the community on sustainable living through schools, Council, Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources, Zero Waste, Community Action for Sustainability, Permaculture Group.
- Prioritise what we need as households and as a community to reduce our environmental impact.
- Expand the active transport network, footpaths, bike lanes etc, especially install bike path along the rail corridor across the city.
- Ensure protocols from the City and State Government about information concerning energy production in the region are in place.
- Sustainable transport including a passenger rail service to Adelaide.
- Showcase Low Carbon Economy renewable energy and energy conservation.

4.9 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Encouraging greater 'usage of our open spaces/enjoy our natural heritage areas - crater lakes/caves', in order to 'get more people involved in 'living; and 'doing' in Mount Gambier and districts' and to 'encourage people to utilise our great sporting areas'

KEY STRATEGY:

Based on our natural assets (the lakes) and our built environment (sporting and cultural facilities) make active living opportunities as widely available as possible.

Example Actions

- Create and support annual events (Lakes run, "I can jump puddles") that encourage participation.
- Build contemporary tourist attractions (zip line in Valley Lake) with associated retail outlets (café).

4.10 LOCAL PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Being 'self reliant in water, foods and energy, renewable' is an aspiration shared by many participants. Also ensuring 'clean air/water/soil' with 'farming produce locally supplied' was highly valued.

KEY STRATEGY:

Work to find ways in which local produce can also be made available through the local economy

Example Actions

- Establish a monthly farmers market local farmers selling their produce.
- Champion seasonal produce available locally.
- Educate and inform about the concept of food miles.
- Investigate report over time local production and consumption of water, food, energy.
- Encourage the sourcing of local suppliers and encourage sales through our retail stores.
- Establish "The Mount Gambier Centre for Innovation in Sustainable Living" with the mission to strengthen community understanding and knowledge of climate, natural resources and heritage.
- Offer tertiary courses locally which focus on sustainable production and conservation of natural resources, culture and heritage.

In Summary

This penultimate draft of the Futures Paper for City Development for Mount Gambier summarises information about the state of the city across four broad categories: Developing and Supporting Our People; Building on the Advantages of Our Location; Sustaining Our Diverse Economy; and, Valuing Our Climate, Natural Resources and Heritage. It then sets out strategies and actions designed to build a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier. They are not presented as exclusive, rather a summary of the consultations and discussions to date. With this draft we now go out to all of the community for their information and suggestions

The information in this Futures Paper is based on extensive consultations across the community over the last few months. It documents participants' aspirations and actions they suggest that will help achieve these aspirations. We have attempted to articulate the strategy that encompasses their actions.

We are once again asking those who participated in the workshops and other consultations to champion the paper more broadly inviting all members of the community to provide us with information on how they believe they, their family and community and their organisation can contribute to creating and sustaining a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier.

We recognise that much is already happening and that people and organisations are contributing in many ways helping the community achieve the aspirations set out in this draft. We are asking you to discuss with your organisations how your current activities align with the strategies provided as examples to achieve the aspirations under which they are listed. Of course you will think of many more strategies and we would very much appreciate you telling us what they are.

As we have noted the future is challenging in that it is both predictable yet full of surprises. The path-dependency worldview suggests that out future is a function of our past. In simple terms: we do today what we did yesterday and tomorrow we do what we did today, and so on. Of course there are incremental changes: what are the latest fashions in music and clothing, for example. But they are predictable within a certain context: youth culture, for example? We are looking to make systemic change across our community such that we are better placed for uncertain futures. We are looking to take greater control in creating the futures we want, rather than just letting others decide for us.

As we have already highlighted at the outset there are megatrends, as CSIRO call them, that are emerging and, together, these trends will change the context within which individuals, families and communities function. Our view of the future is informed by our appreciation of the context within which our city prospers. A worldview is essential if we are to identify the impact of these external forces on us, our families and our community. Being able to detect the early warning signs, the clues as to what will be impacting us in the future, is as important as having appropriate infrastructure, diverse economy, good governance and well-connected institutions and business organisations to respond.

Many of the aspirations in this futures paper provides a hint as to how we can prepare ourselves to respond to external impacts as well as be well placed to manage their impact

on us for the best possible outcome across the community. These aspirations reflect the values and principles that create the foundation by which we will all share in a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier.

Across all four themes we see fundamental values and principles such as health and well-being, connectedness, partnerships, and the importance of economic development. The question for individuals, community and business leaders across the city is how are these values and principles reflected in the way they currently provide services and do business? This futures paper provides them the opportunity to identify how they can best respond to the aspirations of the broader Mount Gambier community.

In the same way that elite soldiers are prepared to encounter a range of situations they might find themselves in, so to with communities. Are we prepared as best as we can be to meet the challenges of the future and to create our own opportunities as they arise?

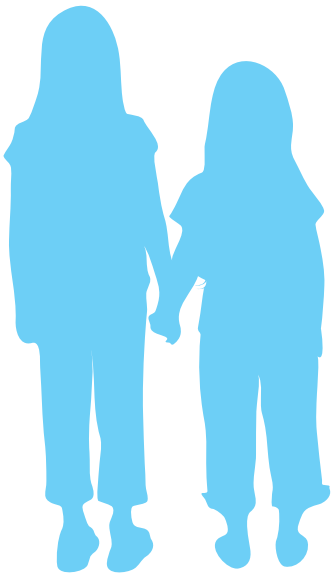
Mount Gambier has a rich history of entrepreneurs who have the led the way creating opportunities for many individuals and their families. These innovators will be the mainstay for the ongoing prosperity and resilience of the city. We need to celebrate their success and ensure they have a clear shot at their dreams.

The challenge for the community as a whole is to create an environment in which those who are prepared to take on the challenges of creating sustainable communities; places made up of well educated and highly trained people; well placed to capitalise on their location; are economically diverse and productive with engaged and caring community support; and, with minimal impact on our abundant natural resources have the opportunity to grow and develop into these roles. At its core this means the engagement and development of all citizens throughout their life cycle. From pre-school education through to seniors contributing in ways that allow their knowledge and experience to be shared with those who follow in their footsteps.

Professors Andrew Beer and Terry Clower (2013) from the University of Adelaide argue that 'effective [local] leadership is now more important for the success of places than in the past and that contemporary group dynamics are likely to raise its significance further'. This Futures Paper initiates a process within the City of Mount Gambier that facilitates local leadership and group dynamics to create the future citizens aspire to. It will require leadership, innovation and effort, coordinated and celebrated across the city if the community is to realise the future it desires.

We look forward to learning about the plans you and your organisation have for working with the Mount Gambier community to achieve its aspirations on the journey to creating a prosperous and resilient city.

Thank you.



Appendices

Attachment 1:

SEIFA COMPARISONS WITH OTHER REGIONAL CITIES AND URBAN CENTRES

SEIFA stands for Socio-economic Indexes for Areas and are created by combining information collected in the five yearly Census.

The SEIFA index is a product developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio economic advantage and disadvantage.

From the 2011 Census the SEIFA Index for Mount Gambier is as follows:

City of Mount Gambier	927
Within the city:	
Mount Gambier (East)	719
Mount Gambier (Central North)	843
Mount Gambier (West)	902
Mount Gambier (Central)	930
Mount Gambier (North West)	1,004
Mount Gambier (Lakes)	1,008
Mount Gambier (North East)	1,017
Regional SA	950
South Australia	983
Australia	1,002

Attachment 2:

A SUMMARY OF SELECTED INDICATORS REPORTING CHANGE OVER TIME IN MOUNT GAMBIER (detailed information on most of these and other measures and are available on the Mount Gambier City Council web site)

Population: City numbers have increased modestly since 2001 to 2011: 23,215 to 24,936. People identifying as Indigenous Australians has doubled during this period from 265 to 521. The population is ageing with from 2928 people 55+ in 2001 increasing to 3765 in 2011. This increasing proportion is expected to increase in line with the overall ageing of the Australian population.

Housing tenure and landlord type: Of those reporting in the Census most households are either owned outright or owned with a mortgage. Since 2001 the trend is to an increasing proportion of homes owned with a mortgage. We note that a significant number of households do not answer this question in the Census (roughly a third in the case of Mount Gambier residents).

Family incomes: Have remained relatively stable since 2001 with bracket creep consistent with the inflation in the Australian economy.

Family composition and labour force participation: Has remained relatively stable since 2001 reflecting the relative stability of the local labour market.

Labour force participation: Since 2001 have remained relatively stable with around 7% unemployment and labour force participation a little over 60% during this time.

Industry of employment: The number of people employed in manufacturing has been steadily declining since 2001 (2,156 to 1,672). The proportion of women in this industry has been much less than men and has declining further over this period (from 27% in 2001 to 19% in 2011). Employment in retail trade has increased marginally (10%) over this period (1,644) with roughly a third more women employed in this industry. Overall employment numbers across all industries has increased around 10% since 2001.

Educational institution attendance: Over the last decade student numbers in primary and secondary education have remained constant around 4,000 students. Enrolments in technical and further education have been steadily declining, now with around 20% fewer students enrolled. Conversely university and other tertiary institution numbers have increased by around 50% from 217 in 2001 to 410 in 2011.

Non-school qualification: Since 2001 the number of people with certificate level qualifications (4492) has increased by 35% whereas those with university degrees, post grad and advanced diplomas (2,700) has increased by 30%. Females account for significantly more people with higher education qualifications (around 25% over this period). Conversely males account for significantly more people with certificate level qualifications (around 45% more men than women over this period).

Travel to work: Is primarily as a car driver or passenger, which has remained the predominant method over the last decade.

Internet connection: Between 2006 and 2011 connections increased by 67% from 4637 to 6905.

Attachment 3:

THE KEY DETERMINANTS OF LONG-TERM REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Australian Government has provided guidelines for the long-term economic growth for Australia's regions. They are consistent with the characteristics of resilient cities identified by Mario Polèse used in our consultations for this Futures Paper. Our focus has been broader than economic growth however we recognise that these determinants will also contribute to a prosperous and resilient Mount Gambier. The guidelines assert that:

'The economic performance of a region is influenced by a range of factors. The Key Determinants of Long-term Regional Economic Growth set the foundation for the Regional Economic Development Framework, and provide a common lens through which to analyse a region and identify regional economic development priorities.

Human capital, particularly education and skills

Improvements in human capital can enhance the innovative and productive capacity of a workforce. Developing a highly skilled and educated workforce assists with building the resilience of a region. Individuals with greater education and skills can pursue a wider range of employment opportunities, adapt to new processes and technologies which improve productivity, and improve their standard of living.

Sustainable (economically, environmentally and socially) communities and population change

Population is one of the most important resources of a region. Population change can be a significant factor in the long term viability of the local community in terms of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Population change affects demand for regional infrastructure and services, and can influence the amenity or liveability of regions. Growth in a region's working age population can boost the labour force and expand the productive capacity of the region's economy.

Access to international, national and regional markets

Access to markets includes access to trading partners, clients and labour. Improving access to markets broadens trade, allows competitive industries to grow, and can increase the availability of goods and services.

Comparative advantage and business competiveness

Comparative advantage is an area of relative strength or specialisation. Efforts to develop regional economies are most successful when they focus on building on such strengths. Businesses can also use a region's comparative advantage to build a competitive advantage, which is also developed through the combination of factors such as knowledge, resources, skills and the ability to innovate.

Effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships (including through place-based approaches) and integrated regional planning

Coordinating cross-sectoral actions and government policies reduces the likelihood that policies are implemented in a fragmented manner and minimises duplication at different levels of government.

The key determinants facilitate coordination and cooperation between different levels of government by focusing development efforts. They also provide a foundation for regional planning and give a strategic and coordinated basis for considering activities and investments to support the long-term economic growth of regional Australia. This approach can help regional leaders to identify opportunities to align with government policies, implement regional actions that support existing policies and take advantage of regionally-focused programs.'

(Source: Framework for Regional Economic Development, Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (ISBN 978-1-922060-28-60))