

21.06 Factors influencing the future planning of Baw Baw Shire

Planning for the future of the Shire is influenced by many factors. It is expected that major factors will include:

- The role of the area and the expansion of its economy within the context of Victoria and Australia.
- The location of the Shire in relation to other major population centres and the influence of those centres.
- Regional transport links with population and employment centres in the form of a high quality highway system, efficient railway links and direct access to Melbourne's ports.
- The high quality of the natural resource base and the reliance on the natural environment for economic sustainability.
- The high quality agricultural land located within the Shire and the region.
- The continuing growth of tourism and the tourism potential in the Shire with attractions such as Walhalla, and the Baw Baw National Park.
- The range of employment opportunities and the quality of the resources within the Shire and the region in agriculture, horticulture, service industries, administration, and the region's education and health facilities.
- The lifestyle enjoyed by residents in the rural and urban areas with access to community services, proximity to recreational areas (ski resorts and the coast) and a rural aspect.
- The Corporate Plan and other strategies and policy directions adopted by Council;

The long term strategic planning view for the Shire recognises the following attributes:

- Dairying is the strength of the economy of the Shire and this will be further reinforced by the \$150 million investment in the establishment of the Bonlac plant at Darnum.
- The service industry sector and its links with agriculture provide a solid and diversified economic future for the Shire. The Shire acts as a centre for agricultural production and research.
- The maintenance of a high quality natural resource base is critical to the long term sustainability of the economy and the environment.
- Warragul and Drouin are the largest population centres within the Shire and are facing increasing competition from Melbourne and the Latrobe Valley in providing services to residents, their future development is based on their capacity to complement each other.
- The smaller towns such as Trafalgar, Yarragon, Neerim South and Erica provide important local service roles for rural residents and increasingly tourism.
- The Shire's proximity to National and State Parks ensures its significance in providing tourism and recreation opportunities in the future.
- The presentation and appearance of the towns and the countryside are valued by the residents and visitors to the Shire.
- The enhancement of heritage buildings and places is of significant value to tourism and economic development.