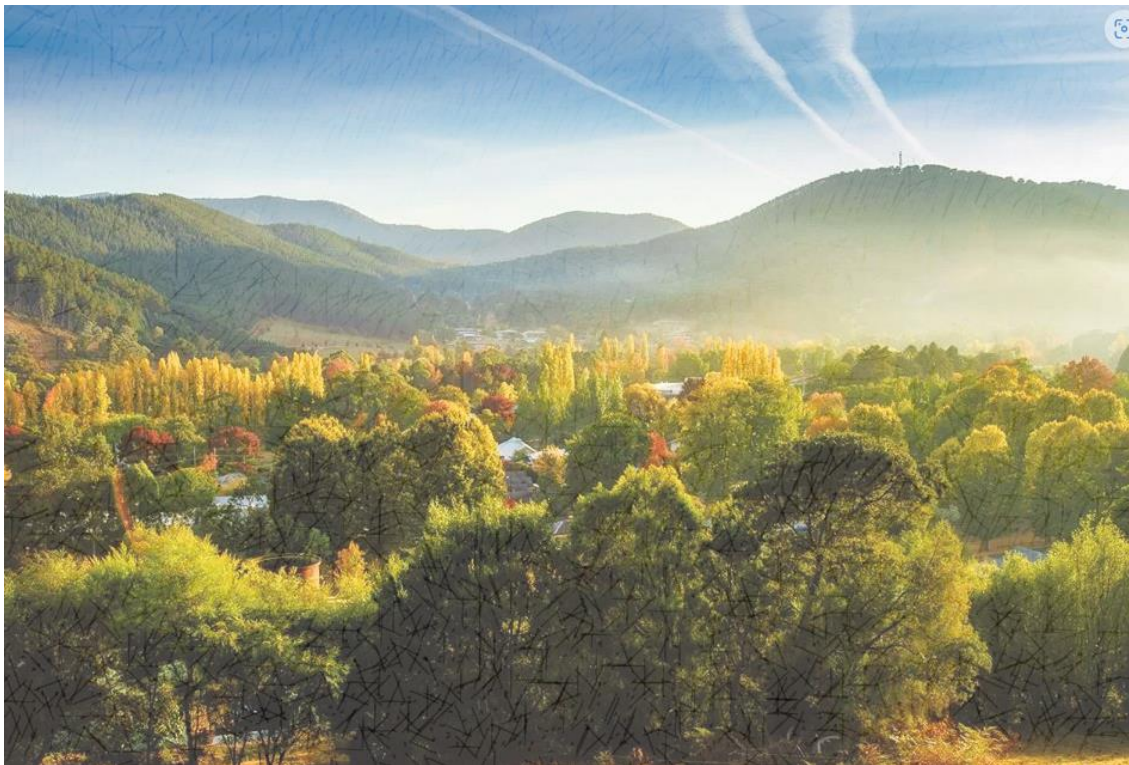


A Vision for Bright



December 2024

Executive Summary

Vision

Nestled in the spectacular Victorian Alps, our strong connected community offers residents and visitors the chance to gather, relax and enjoy adventures in the natural environment.

Themes

	What this theme means	Outcome we seek
Community	How Bright and District residents and visitors live, work, and play in the region, sharing common interests, social connection and a sense of belonging.	People are drawn to the area and the strong sense of community, and don't want to or need to leave – regardless of their stage of life and circumstances.
Tourism & economy	The industries that contribute to the economic vitality and job creation in Bright and District including recreation, accommodation, hospitality, agriculture childcare and worker accommodation.	An agile, self-supporting, sustainable year-round economy that makes the most of local resources and can adapt to challenges and fluctuations over time.
Town character	The distinctive qualities, features, and personality of Bright, Wandiligong, Harrietville, Eurobin and Porepunkah that shape their identity and sense of place.	Liveable, active settlements, each with a unique character and distinct sense of place, separated by green spaces.
Housing	The availability, types, and conditions of housing within Bright and District for residents and visitors, long and short term.	Diverse housing choices that enable residents and key workers to access the type of housing that meets their needs, over the different stages of their lives.
Local environment	The natural surroundings and ecosystems of Bright and District, including how those will change in the long term with climate change, flood and fire and the impacts this will have on the community and economy.	Renowned for the exceptional natural environment which has been protected and enhanced, the area is resilient and properly prepared for natural events like flood and bushfire, and the impacts of climate change.
Movement & infrastructure	The systems and infrastructure that allow residents and visitors to live and move within the town, including transport (roads, public transport, walkable and cyclable spaces), internet and mobile infrastructure, water and sewer.	Safe and easy walking and biking is the preferred way to move around. Despite being remote, the area is well connected to the wider world via freight, public transport and internet. Infrastructure is in place to support thriving communities and a vibrant visitor economy

Decision making

When making decisions about the future of Bright and District, we will keep the following principles in mind:

- Build on what we have.
- Be brave and bold and embrace change.
- Stay community and locally focused.
- Plan for a fluctuating population (tourism economy).
- Plan with the next natural disaster in mind (flood or fire).
- Support future proofing activities considering the impacts of climate change.
- Learn from others.

We'll do this by:

- Supporting the development of shovel ready projects to take advantage of funding opportunities.
- Taking a partnership approach and leveraging funding and resources.
- Embracing emerging technologies and innovative approaches.
- Sharing leadership with government, businesses and the community.
- Working collectively to achieve what individuals can't.

Action plan 2025 – 2029

These are the actions that BDCC will progress over the next four years to progress the vision for Bright and District.

	Project	Scope
1	Sustainable insurance scheme.	Work with business, government and insurance companies to develop a sustainable insurance scheme for Bright and District businesses considering commercial viability of members given rising insurance costs associated with climate change.
2	Winter festival.	Work with community groups and businesses and Council and lead a Winter Festival to increase number and length of visitor stays over the quieter months between Easter and September.
3	Short courses / education.	Work with the surrounding neighbourhood houses to deliver a range of short courses / education to meet the needs of member organisations, such as first aid, responsible serving of alcohol etc.
4	Investment strategy / prospectus.	Develop an investment strategy to support existing businesses to value add, and encourage new businesses to establish in Bright and

		District, in partnership with Council, Regional Development Victoria and Tourism North East.
5	Key worker housing.	Take a facilitating role the delivery of key worker housing in Bright and District.
6	Media strategy.	Develop a marketing strategy that focuses on Bright and District.
7	Business concierge and advocate.	Partner with Council to deliver a 'business concierge' service to support the establishment of new businesses in Bright and District.
8	Advocacy document.	Develop an advocacy document that covers the above initiatives, and includes BDCC's position on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transport (including public transport and freight). ▪ Community education, especially to encourage young people to stay in the area. ▪ Housing on availability of suitable housing for everyone. ▪ Development of a freight hub. ▪ Childcare provision and it's impact on key worker employment. ▪ Aged care and the urgent need to increase beds and services. ▪ Health services, and the minimum proposition supported by the community.

BDCC will also continue leading and supporting the following established initiatives.

- Autumn Festival.
- Make It, Bake It, Grow It Market
- Spring Twilight Tastings.
- Bright co-working.
- Telecommunications advocacy.

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1.0 Introduction

Setting the scene

Bright and District, which includes the townships of Bright, Porepunkah, Harrietville, Eurobin and Wandiligong, and the surrounding land, including smaller settlements and rural localities, agricultural, forestry and National and State parks, has been a popular place to live and visit for decades.

Set in the foothills of the Victorian Alps, the area is located within a truly unique environmental setting and provides easy access to a wide range of outdoor and adventure based activities. Tourism and agriculture are the mainstays of the economy, and the population – both permanent and visitor – is growing at a relatively fast rate compared to other similar places in Victoria.

The risk profile for the upper Ovens continues to grow as the understanding of the risks associate with bushfire and flooding improves, and considering the impacts of climate change, which will considerably constrain growth.

BDCC wishes to set out a clear vision to help guide the changes that will come over the next thirty years, and position to the association to proactively lead change rather than reactively respond to it so that our settlements and surrounding areas can thrive in a sustainable and safe way.

There are varying views across the community about what sort of places we should be creating and BDCC should play a leadership role in setting out this Vision.

The project

Bright and District Chamber of Commerce (BDCC) has undergone a strategic planning project to develop a 30-year Vision for Bright and District.

The purpose of the strategic project is to develop a clear, shared vision for Bright and District that reflects the aspirations of BDCC and its members. The vision:

- Articulates the priorities BDCC has for Bright and District over the short (5-year), medium (15-year) and long term (30-year) horizons.
- Supports BDCC to proactively address the key challenges facing Bright and District including environmental risks such as bushfire and climate change, housing availability and affordability and changes in the tourism economy.
- Enables BDCC to ‘speak as one voice’ in leading and advocating for the BDCC community
- Positions BDCC to input into Alpine Shire Council Plan and strategic planning being undertaken for Porepunkah, Bright, Wandiligong and rural areas (including Eurobin and Harrietville).

This report sets out Vision for Bright and the methodology, research and consultation that was undertaken to inform it. It includes a list of actions that the BDCC will pursue over the next four years to achieve the Vision for Bright.

Methodology

Schemology was engaged to manage the project and prepared the Vision for BDCC. The Regional Development Company was engaged to deliver the workshops during May and August, and peer review the development of the Vision.

The project was carried out between April and December 2024, in line with the key stages outlined in the table below.

Amanda Hoare from BDCC coordinated the project with the consultants and delivered communications process with members.

	Stage	Tasks
April 2024	Project inception	Meeting with BDCC Executive to discuss scope.
May 2024	Draft Background Report	Evidence based report outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ About the area ▪ Drivers of change ▪ Demographics ▪ Housing ▪ Climate change and risk ▪ Environment ▪ Economy ▪ Tourism ▪ Infrastructure and facilities. To inform development of the vision.
May 2024	Workshop One	Workshop held with exec team, Alpine Health and Resilient Alpine Youth Squad to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify of values and challenges. ▪ Formulate of principles. ▪ Formulate of vision and themes.
July 2024	Progress Report	Summary of the themes and statements discussed Workshop One, with a first draft of the Vision.
August 2024	Workshop Two:	Workshop held with exec team and Resilient Alpine Youth Squad to refine the progress report.
October 2024	Draft Directions Paper	Document for distribution to members to review. Check on high level vision and directions, themes

Stage		Tasks
		and principles. Available from AGM.
October & November 2024	Consultation with members	2 workshops in late October. Survey (9 members responded). Written and verbal submissions. Develop of Action Plan.
December 2024	Final Report	Final report including background, summary of consultation, vision, principles, themes and actions. Will form basis of future decision making and advocacy.

Engagement and consultation

The BDCC Executive prepared a draft Vision for consideration and refinement by the wider membership rather than opening the consultation process with members from the start. This process produced a robust, evidence-based draft document that was then tested with members through the open consultation process in October and November.

The initial workshops with the BDCC Executive also included representatives from Alpine Health, Alpine Shire Council and the Resilient Alpine Youth Squad. These groups were asked to attend as the BDCC Executive recognised that it was important to have representation from young people, the health sector, which is particularly responsible for caring for older residents and general population health, and Council in their economic development role for the Alpine community.

The Draft Directions Paper was ‘launched’ at the BDCC AGM in October 2024, and distributed to members, along with the Background Report and a link to a survey to enable feedback.

Two workshops were held in late October 2024 to provide members with the opportunity to come and discuss feedback, and help formulate the priority actions for 2025 – 2029 to deliver the vision. The first workshops (4.00 – 6.30pm) was attended by 12 members and Council’s Economic Developer Coordinator. The second workshops (7.30 – 9.00pm) was attended by 2 members, including a representative of Bendigo Bank Board.

Ten members filled in the on line survey. Responses were all supportive of the general direction of the Vision for Bright.

As a result of the consultation with members during October and November 2024, the Vision for Bright was broadened to include greater attention to sustainability and insurance, and more nuance around the housing issues in Bright and District.

The workshops also provided the opportunity to align the BDCC Vision with the pillars contained in the Bendigo Bank Strategic Plan, and identify opportunities to work collaboratively.

The role of BDCC

The BDCC executive represents members which comprise business in Bright and District. It plays a broader role in bringing the voice of the local community to government. The BDCC executive also has the capacity to be change makers. For everything we do, we need to be clear on our role and what type of action we are taking. Recognising this, the BDCC executive had identified the potential roles it can play, and the type of action it can undertake.

Roles:

Advocate: Provide research and data around key issues and represent the needs of interest of our community and the wider community to Government and the private sector.

Promoter: Provide or assist organisations or members to access grants or incentives to encourage positive outcomes for infrastructure, quality built form and use of land etc.

Enabler: Provide supportive infrastructure and services directly.

Partner: Work closely with related organisations, government agencies, developers and decision makers.

Provider: Active involvement as investor, developer, landlord or service provider. (e.g. Bright co-working).

Actions:

Proactivity: Taking action by causing change rather than reacting to it.

Mitigation: Putting in place measures to avoid the severity or seriousness of something.

Adaptation: Changing or adjusting to respond to something that is happening.

Recovery: Regaining control over something that has happened to return to a normal state

2.0 What we are planning for

Bright and District includes the settlements of Bright, Wandiligong, Porepunkah, Eurobin, Harrierville, Freeburgh, Smoko and surrounding rural areas.

Population (Bright and District)

These figures are from the 2021 ABS Census data.

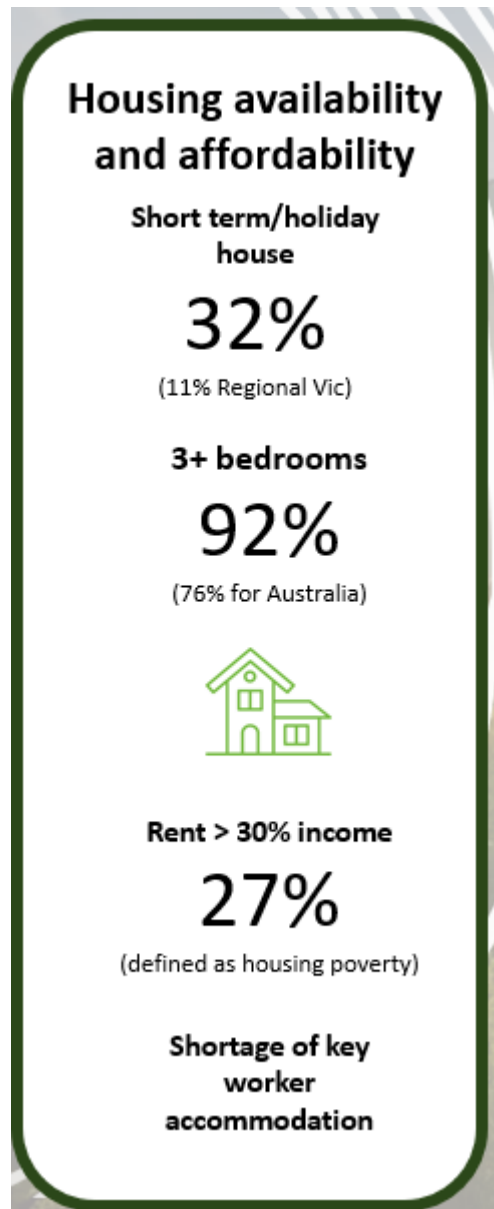
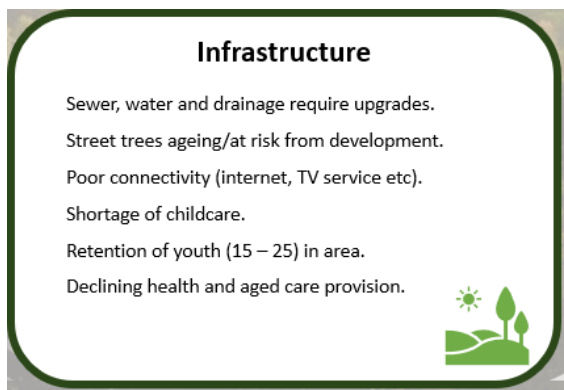
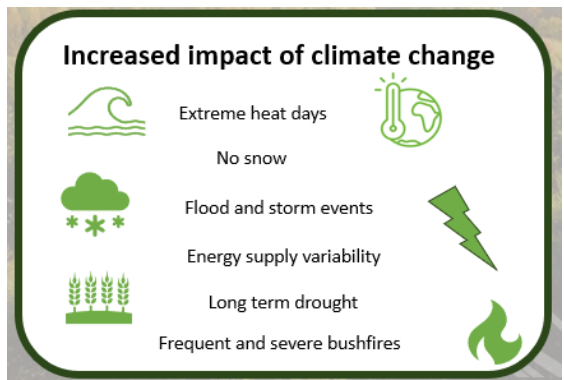
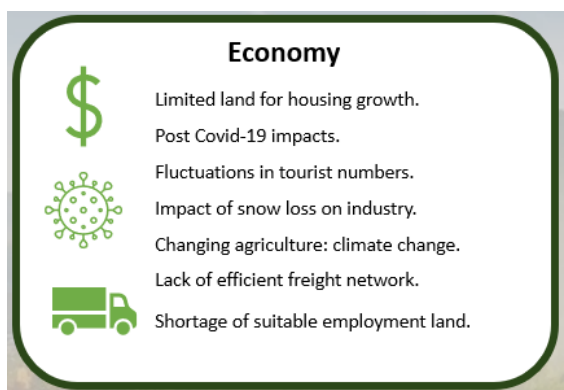
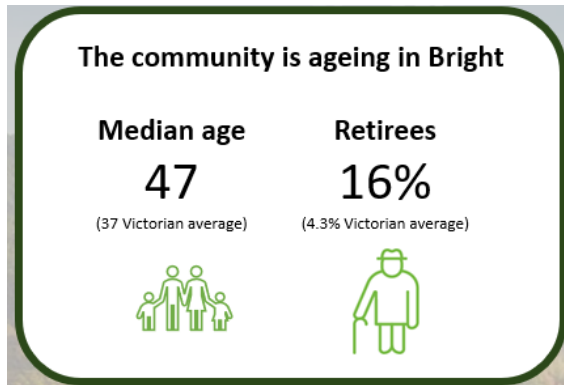
4,166 Total population		
47 Median age Bright and District	37 Median age for Victoria	
2,416 Total dwellings		0.9% Average annual population growth 2011 – 2020
89% Separate houses	32% Properties used as short term accommodation / holiday houses.	1.3% Average annual population growth rate 2020 – 2021 (Covid-19)

Economy (Alpine Shire)

These figures are from the Alpine Land Development Strategy, (Alpine Shire Council, 2024)

4,473 Total jobs 2021	61% Sole traders
	37% Small businesses
	1,568 Businesses (2018 data)
Largest employment sectors	853,063 Visitors in 2019
18% Accommodation and food services	6% p.a. Visitation growth 2010 – 2019
12% Retail trade	
11% Health care and social assistance	75% Of visitors stay overnight
11% Agriculture, forestry and fishing	
10% Manufacturing	

Macro challenges



3.0 A Vision for Bright

Vision

The BDCC vision for Bright and District is:

Nestled in the spectacular Victorian Alps, our strong connected community offers residents and visitors the chance to gather, relax and enjoy adventures in the natural environment.

Themes

The BDCC vision is supported by six themes.

Community

This theme encompasses how Bright and District residents and visitors live, work, and play in the region, sharing common interests, social connection and a sense of belonging.

Statement of issues:

Bright and District is connected by strong communities and there is a rich and varied range of activities to participate in within the area. The median age of the community is 47 significantly higher than the Victorian average which is 37. 28 per cent of the population are aged over 65.

The population has been growing slowly over the two decades from 2,815 in 2001 to 4,166 in 2021. Over the next two decades the population will continue to increase but the rate of growth will slow (largely because there is limited land available for growth, and household sizes are decreasing).

Bright has a much higher number of couple family without children than the state average (54 percent compared to 38%), which is to be expected given the high number of retirees.

Bright and District is serviced by Alpine Health which has a small hospital, nursing home and some aged care accommodation. Alpine Children's services provides childcare and kindergarten services. The Health and Children's services are under a great deal of pressure and don't have adequate capacity to meet demand. This impacts on the ability of younger families to have both parents working, and the ability of older people to age in place.

There are a lot of community facilities and sporting clubs, generally consolidated around Pioneer Park in Bright, and at the ovals in Harrietville, Wandiligong and Porepunkah. A lot of the community infrastructure is ageing and will require renewal or upgrade in the next ten years.

The outcome we are seeking:

People are drawn to the area and the strong sense of community, and don't want to or need to leave – regardless of their stage of life and circumstances.

Tourism & economy

This theme encompasses industries that contribute to the economic vitality and job creation in Bright and District including recreation, accommodation, hospitality, agriculture childcare and worker accommodation.

Statement of issues:

The economy of Bright and its surrounding areas is driven by accommodation and food services, retail trade, and healthcare and social services

Other key industries in the area include forestry and agriculture, including sheep, grains, beef and dairy cattle and horticulture (fruit, nuts, hops).

Tourism and hospitality are the mainstays of the Bright and District economy. The visitor economy is diverse and includes many nature and outdoor based activities, food and beverage, sightseeing, events and seasonal activities associated with autumn leaves and snow based activities. The area is a year round destination and is transitioning from a seasonal destination that saw peaks and troughs throughout the year to a more steady tourist economy, although there is still a way to go to level out visitation. There is about 20,000 beds available for accommodation in Bright and District from caravan parks through to luxury accommodation.

Tourism in the area has changed significantly over the last fifteen years, but there is not a clear and cohesive message about the tourism offer that is available and will be supported by investment in infrastructure. This has made it difficult for the community to articulate what investment is desired to continue to support the sustainable growth of the visitor economy.

Value adding businesses to support the agriculture sector are emerging and developing creating additional jobs and keeping more money in the local economy. BDCC has identified that more support in the form of suitable land, regulatory settings and business concierge services would assist in developing value adding businesses.

The wider Alpine Shire supports 5,493 jobs and has an annual economic output of \$1.85 billion. Unemployment is very low at 2.6%, compared with 3.0% in regional Victoria and 4.0% in regional Australia.

The outcome we are seeking:

An agile, self-supporting, year-round economy that makes the most of local resources and can adapt to challenges and fluctuations over time.

Town character

This theme encompasses the distinctive qualities, features, and personality of Bright, Wandiligong, Harrietville, Eurobin and Porepunkah that shape their identity and sense of place.

Key issues:

Bright and District provides a unique alpine experience in a beautiful part of Australia. The area is home to 4,100 permanent residents and tens of thousands of visitors through all seasons of the year who visit for the beautiful holiday setting, outdoor lifestyle, access to the Australian Alps and food and wine experiences.

The look and feel of each settlement is changing and will continue to change over time. At present there is little guidance about what the community values in terms of the look and feel of each settlement and how change should be managed. For example:

- There is no urban design framework to guide development in Bright which is likely to see higher rise development in the commercial core over the coming years and has the challenge of managing a fluctuating population throughout the year. The valued characteristics of Bright have not been adequately defined or protected (for example, street trees, significant views, development of the commercial core, active transport linkages between activities).
- The planning controls for Wandiligong are dated and not detailed enough to guide consistent development, and do not encourage economic development opportunities (such as 5 Acres and Nightingales).
- Planning hasn't yet commenced to guide the growth of Porepunkah, including the substantial amount of infill growth current constrained by inadequate drainage and the location of commercial and community activities.
- The preferred neighborhood character (look and feel) of each settlement has not been identified.

Council has committed to a program of strategic planning to address the above issues, and BDCC will actively participate in associated community engagement processes for these projects.

The outcome we are seeking:

Liveable, active settlements, each with a unique character and distinct sense of place, separated by green spaces.

Housing

This theme encompasses the availability, types, and conditions of housing within Bright and District for residents and visitors, long and short term.

Statement of issues:

The availability of suitable housing has been a significant challenge in Bright and surrounds over many years. This has become more acute in the last five years as housing prices have dramatically

risen, an increasing number of dwellings are used as short-term rentals and holiday houses, and there has been a tendency for larger houses (three or more bedrooms) which has limited the diversity of housing that is available. Housing key workers (predominantly to support the tourism industry, but also for agriculture) has been a challenge for decades in the area, but it now an acute problem that is significantly affecting the viability of businesses which in turn affects the tourism economy.

Significant growth will not occur in Bright and district because of the constraints imposed by bushfire risk, flooding potential and the significant amount of crown land surrounding settlements (national parks, state parks and timber plantations). The smaller settlements (Wandiligong, Smoke, Harrierville, Eurobin, Freeburg) are also constrained as there is no reticulated sewerage system in place.

Limited growth to the north of Station Street in Porepunkah may occur, other settlements will not expand outside their existing footprint.

Increases in dwelling numbers in Bright and surrounds will primarily be through infill development in Porepunkah much of which is constrained by drainage issues, and higher density development in the centre of Bright (the existing commercial core and the immediately surrounding residential areas). Due to environmental risks, only very limited growth is unlikely at the fringes of Bright or in Wandiligong (through subdivision of existing lots in Bright or building on vacant lots in Wandiligong).

The outcome we are seeking:

Diverse housing choices that enable residents and key workers to access the type of housing that meets their needs, over the different stages of their lives.

Local environment

This theme encompasses the natural surroundings and ecosystems of Bright and District, including how those will change in the long term with climate change, flood and fire and the impacts this will have on the community and economy.

Statement of issues:

Bright and its surrounding towns are nestled in the picturesque Ovens Valley along the Ovens River and Morses Creek, bordered by fertile farmland, national and state parks, and forested crown land. It is characterised by stunning landscapes, unique ecosystems, and a vibrant community that thrives on its natural environment. Bright has a temperate climate and enjoys four distinct seasons.

The towns feature a mix of deciduous European trees that line the streets and parks, providing shade in summer and a stunning display in autumn. Native eucalypts and wattles are interspersed throughout the towns and line the rivers and creeks, contributing to its biodiversity.

The nearby alpine environments are unique, hosting snow gums and wildflowers not found elsewhere in Australia. Introduced species such as foxes, deer, wild dogs, horses and blackberries and other weeds, along with human activity and climate change, threaten the local ecosystems and native wildlife.

Climate change is a significant threat to the health, wellbeing, and liveability of the natural environment, people and communities in Bright and District. The challenges will directly affect many sectors of the local economy, including agriculture and tourism. For Bright and District, we can expect increased fire danger, higher number of extreme heat days, long term drought, variability (and failure) of energy systems (i.e. power outages) and a high likelihood and severity of flooding

The outcome we are seeking:

Renowned for the exceptional natural environment which has been protected and enhanced, the area is resilient and properly prepared for natural events like flood and bushfire, and the impacts of climate change.

Movement & infrastructure

This theme encompasses the systems and infrastructure that allow residents and visitors to live and move within the town, including transport (roads, public transport, walkable and cyclable spaces), internet and mobile infrastructure, water and sewer.

Statement of issues:

Growth in Bright and District is constrained by infrastructure. Infrastructure Australia identified a series of infrastructure gaps in the Hume Region that affect Bright and District related to water and sewer, housing, broadband and mobile connectivity and transport.

North East Water is having challenges keeping up with demand for reticulated services in Bright and Porepunkah, and major infrastructure is planned to increase the capacity of the sewerage system to support these towns. This is unlikely to be delivered in the short term, and is probably at least 5 years away.

There is poor network coverage and broadband speed reliability generally, and during periods of peak visitation, broadband speed and access becomes even worse. During electricity blackouts (i.e. from storm events), there have been periods of no mobile access for significant portion of residents in Bright and District for several hours. Digital connectivity is required to support further population growth in Bright and District and meet the expectations of visitors.

There is no public transport service within Bright and District and residents and tourists rely on private cars and active transport (cycling and walking). Public transport connections to the wider Victorian network (Wangaratta Station). There is no direct public transport from Bright to Albury.

There is no freight hub within Alpine Shire and an opportunity to improve freight within the reasons, to provide more frequent services and reduce costs to businesses.

The outcome we are seeking:

Safe and easy walking and biking is the preferred way to move around. Despite being remote, the area is well connected to the wider world via freight, public transport and internet. Infrastructure is in place to support thriving communities and a vibrant visitor economy.

4.0 Decision making principles

DECISION MAKING	
Principles	<p>When making decisions about the future of Bright and District, we will keep the following principles in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on what we have. ▪ Be brave and bold and embrace change. ▪ Stay community and locally focused. ▪ Plan for a fluctuating population (tourism economy). ▪ Plan with the next natural disaster in mind (flood or fire). ▪ Support future proofing activities considering the impacts of climate change. ▪ Learn from others.
Ways of working	<p>We'll do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting the development of shovel ready projects to take advantage of funding opportunities. ▪ Taking a partnership approach and leveraging funding and resources. ▪ Embracing emerging technologies and innovative approaches. ▪ Sharing leadership with government, businesses and the community. ▪ Working collectively to achieve what individuals can't.

5.0 Action plan 2025 – 2029

These are the priority actions that have been identified. The BDCC Executive will program these initiatives over the next four years as part of its annual planning process.

The action plan was developed through discussions with Executive Members between April 2024 and November 2024, and workshops with members in October 2024.

ACTION PLAN			Role
1	Sustainable insurance scheme.	Work with business, government and insurance companies to develop a sustainable insurance scheme for Bright and District businesses considering commercial viability of members given rising insurance costs associated with climate change.	Enabler
2	Winter festival.	Work with community groups and businesses and Council and lead a Winter Festival to increase number and length of visitor stays over the quieter months between Easter and September.	Provider
3	Short courses / education.	Work with the surrounding neighbourhood houses to deliver a range of short courses / education to meet the needs of member organisations, such as first aid, responsible serving of alcohol etc.	Provider
4	Investment strategy/prospectus.	Develop an investment strategy to support existing businesses to value add, and encourage new businesses to establish in Bright and District, in partnership with Council, Regional Development Victoria and Tourism North East.	Promoter
5	Key worker housing.	Take a leading role in facilitating the delivery of key worker housing in Bright and District.	Enabler / partner
6	Media strategy.	Develop a marketing strategy that focuses on Bright and District.	Provider
7	Business concierge and advocate.	Partner with Council to deliver a 'business concierge' service to support the establishment of new businesses in Bright and District.	Partner
8	Advocacy document	Develop an advocacy document that covers the above initiatives, and includes BDCC's position on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transport (including public transport and freight). ▪ Community education, especially to encourage young people to stay in the area. ▪ Housing on availability of suitable housing for everyone. ▪ Development of a freight hub. ▪ Childcare provision and its impact on key worker employment. ▪ Aged care and the urgent need to increase beds and services. ▪ Health services, and the minimum proposition supported by the community. 	Advocate

6.0 Ongoing activities

BDCC will continue leading and supporting the following established initiatives.

- Autumn Festival.
- Make It, Bake It, Grow It Market
- Spring Twilight Tastings.
- Bright co-working.
- Telecommunications advocacy.

7.0 Monitoring and review

The BDCC Executive will review the vision on an annual basis, adjusting priority actions as required.

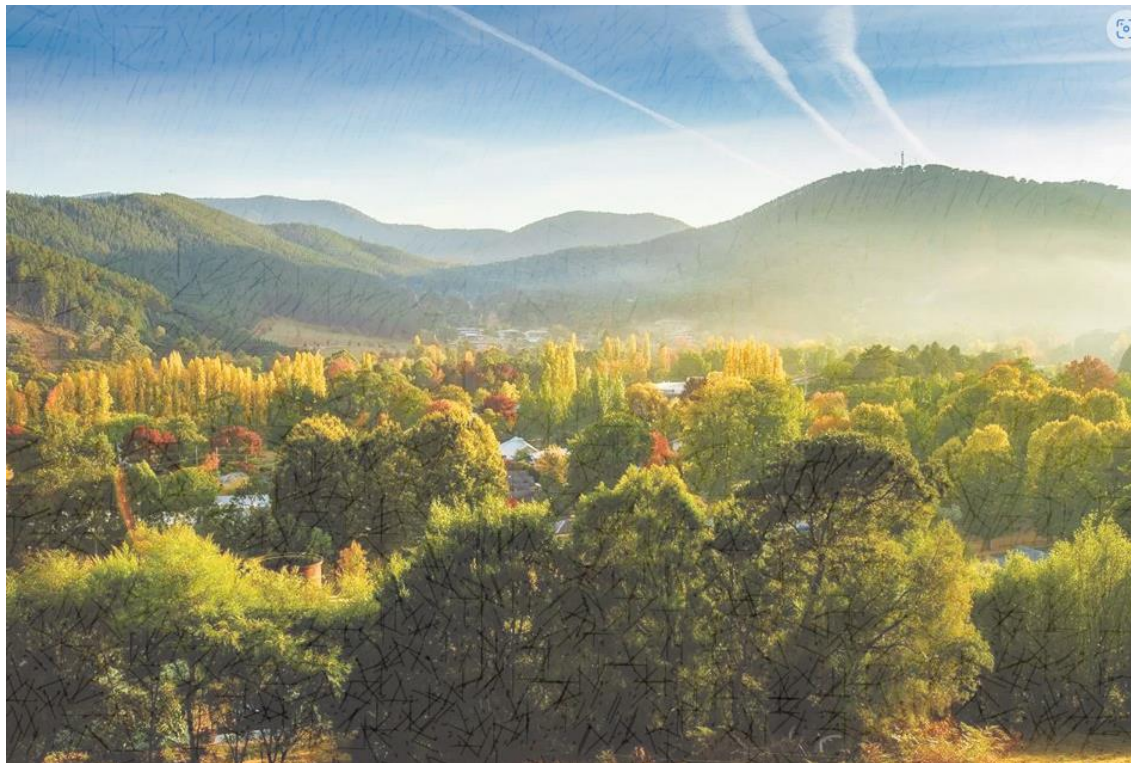
APPENDIX ONE

BACKGROUND PAPER

A Vision for Bright

8 October 2024

Consultation version



The project

Bright and District Chamber of Commerce (BDCC) is undertaking a strategic planning project to develop a 30-year vision for Bright and District.

Bright and District includes the townships of Bright, Porepunkah, Harrietville and Wandiligong, and the surrounding land, including smaller settlements and rural localities, agricultural, forestry and National and State parks. Bright and District sits within the Alpine Shire municipality.

The purpose of the strategic project is to develop a clear, shared vision for Bright and District that reflects the aspirations of BDCC and its members. The vision will:

- Articulate the priorities BDCC has for Bright and District over the short (5-year), medium (15-year) and long term (30-year) horizons.
- Support BDCC to proactively address the key challenges facing Bright and District including environmental risks such as bushfire and climate change, housing availability and affordability and changes in the tourism economy.
- Enable BDCC to ‘speak as one voice’ in leading and advocating for the BDCC community
- Position BDCC to input into Alpine Shire Council strategic planning for Porepunkah, Bright and Wandiligong.

Purpose of this report

This document provides background information and evidence to inform the vision.

About Bright and District

Bright and District is in northeast Victoria, approximately a 3.5-hour drive from Melbourne, 1.25 hours from Albury – Wodonga and 1 hour from Wangaratta.

History

The land known as Bright and District was an important gathering place for First Nations and Traditional Owners and the land has several Traditional Owners, including the Dhudhuroa, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung, Waywurru and Yaitmathang, who gathered here to take part in ceremonies associated with the annual bogong moth migrations. Like everywhere in Australia, the

population was decimated by European arrivals. Some of the First Nations survivors from the Frontier Wars remained in the areas living on pastoral runs.

Explorers Hume and Hovell travelled to the area in 1824 and the first pastoralists settled in the area shortly afterwards. Alluvial gold was discovered in 1853 and this led to a gold rush to the area which saw the establishment of Morses Creek – now Bright – in 1856. The Buckland Riots in 1857 saw the murder and injury of hundreds of Chinese miners who were provided with a safe camp at the confluence of the Ovens River and Morses Creek.

1890 saw the arrival of trains to Bright and started the ongoing tourism boom to the area. Italians moved to the area soon afterwards to establish successful tobacco farms, the legacy of which is present in the kiln houses spotted across the landscape. After the 1939 bushfires, timber became an important commodity and pine forests were planted across the region. This led to the need for a good road network to transport timber, which in turn led to the opening of the alpine region, of which Bright forms a gateway.

Bright and District today

The region's largest industry is its tourism sector, which focuses on nature-based recreation and food and wine. Popular recreation includes snow sports, road and mountain biking, camping, rock climbing, fishing, bushwalking, 4-wheel-driving, rafting, sightseeing (notably the autumn leaves), and paragliding.

Agriculture (including beef, dairy and horticulture) and forestry (hardwood and softwood plantations) also play significant roles in the local economy. Additionally, the area has a mining legacy, and some land is still used for resource extraction.

These days, Bright and surrounds is a vibrant region and a popular holiday destination, with accommodation, food and beverage services providing many local employment opportunities. While the tobacco farming industry collapsed in 2006, agriculture and forestry continue to flourish, playing a big role in our lives and economy. The farming of hops, used in our local craft beers along with water from the Ovens River, has increased significantly in recent years and the soils and weather conditions have proved particularly good for wine making.

Bright boasts a rich cultural heritage with many locations and street names reflecting the town's European history and present-day residents. Numerous heritage sites are protected under the Alpine Planning Scheme, with Heritage Overlays and Significant Landscape Overlays in place for Wandiligong and the Buckland Valley.

Drivers of change

Bright and District has experienced significant changes in recent years. The key drivers include:

COVID-19 Pandemic

- The pandemic created global economic uncertainty, leading to shutdowns in many sectors and restrictions on movement.
- In Bright and District, key sectors including hospitality and tourism were affected by social distancing and stay-at-home orders. While many businesses in these sectors recovered from initial pandemic restrictions, they are now struggling with the broader economic slowdown caused by inflation from spending during pandemic years, and ensuing tightening monetary policy and reduced consumer spending.
- While national population growth stalled, there was a wave of population movement from cities to regional areas like Bright and District as more people began working from home. In 2018-2019, 9,900 people moved to Regional Victoria, which increased to 15,200 in 2020-21. This shift drove up property sales and prices and reduced the availability of rental properties due to higher demand.

Ageing population

- Australia's population is ageing, with an increasing proportion of people over 65.
- In Bright and District, the median age is 47, significantly higher than the Victorian average of 37.
- Retirees comprise 16% of the population (2021 data).
- There are more older residents (above 40), and fewer younger residents (below 15), compared with the rest of Regional Victoria.

Housing affordability and availability

- Housing affordability is an issue nation-wide, with many communities requiring more choice in housing type, tenure and cost.
- In Bright and District, there is increasing tension between short-term and holiday accommodation and the supply of long-term private rental housing and affordable housing for purchase.
- The increase in the cost and availability of residential accommodation particularly impacts key workers.
- Occupancy rates in the municipality are about 75% (2016 data), which is quite low but not evenly distributed. Tourism-focused towns like Bright and District have a higher proportion of properties operating as holiday rentals.

Climate change

- Climate change poses additional risks to Bright and District including increased fire danger, increased storm frequency and severity, increased flooding events, increased number of extreme heat days and prolonged drought.
- These events are expected to reduce the reliability of critical infrastructure and services in the district, including energy, telecommunications and emergency services.

- Climate change adaptation, disaster recovery and insurance costs are expected to increase.

Economy

- Global economic trends are continuing to move towards creative and population-driven sectors and away from traditional industries like manufacturing.
- Key agricultural industries in Bright and District are timber, horticulture (fruit, nuts, hops) and beef cattle.
- Tourism is a significant and growing industry in Australia, with a rise in both international and domestic overnight visits since 2013. Alpine Shire is the highest performing municipality in northeast Victoria for visitor numbers and expenditure.
- A new sector of professional services is growing in Bright and District, with newly attracted residents who can work remotely, either part-time or full-time from the area.

The source of the data in this section is the *Draft Alpine Land Development Strategy*, (SGS Economics and Planning, 2023) and the *Alpine Shire Affordable Housing Research and Analysis Paper*, (Alpine Shire Council, November 2022).

Administration

Bright and District is located within the Alpine Shire municipality. It is part of the Ovens Murray Regional Partnership, as defined by Regional Development Victoria, and part of the Hume Region for the Department of Transport and Planning. While the boundaries of these administrative regions don't match perfectly, there is considerable overlap. Various statutory authorities provide risk management and services to the area, including:

- Country Fire Authority (management of fire risk)
- North East Catchment Management Authority (flood mapping and environmental management of water catchments).
- AusNet (electricity)
- North East Water (urban water supply)
- Goulburn Ovens Water (rural water supply and maintenance of special water catchments)

The Taungrurong Land and Waters Council is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the part of Bright and District southwest of the Ovens River. The area northeast of the Ovens River does not have a RAP.

Demographics

- The broader Alpine Shire is expected to grow to about 16,000 people by 2041, an increase of approximately 2,700 people from 2021.
- Bright and District is about 5,000 people, representing about 40% of the total Alpine Shire population.

- The age profile is skewed to older ages, with the median age in Bright and District at 47, higher than the Victorian average of 37.
- Retirees made up 16 percent of the Bright and District population in 2021.

Bright and District Snapshot, 2021

	Bright	Porepunkah	Wandiligong	Combined
People	2,620	1,024	522	4,166
Male	49%	48%	50%	49%
Female	51%	52%	50%	51%
Median age	49	46	47	47
Families	697	289	143	1,129
for families with children	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.8
for all households	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.6
All private dwellings	1,681	453	283	2,417
Average number of people per household	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.4
Median weekly household income	\$1,352	\$1,576	\$1,615	\$1,514
Median monthly mortgage repayments	\$1,638	\$1,633	\$1,400	\$1,557
Median weekly rent (b)	\$300	\$383	\$275	\$319
Av number of motor vehicles per dwelling	1.8	2.3	2.1	2.1

Population over time

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021	2041*
Bright	2,081	2,111	2,163	2,406	2,620	
Porepunkah	469	589	952	941	1,024	
Wandiligong	265	280	296	453	522	
Bright and District total (5-year growth rate)	2,815	2,980	3,411	3,800	4,166	
		5.9%	14.5%	11.4%	9.6%	
Alpine total (5-year growth rate)	12,709	12,260	11,881 -	12,337	13,235	15,890
		-3.5%	3.1%	3.8%	7.3%	5.0%

Source: ABS data apart from the 2041 projection which was prepared by SGS Economics and Planning for the draft Alpine Land Development Strategy using their population forecasting model.

Age profile for Bright

Age	Number	Percentage	Rank
0-4	81	3	

5-19	391	16	
20 – 29	243	10	
20 – 54	1063	43	1
65+	699	28	2

Household composition for Bright

	Bright number	Bright %	Victorian %	Australian %
Couple family without children	367	54	38	39
Couple family with children	213	31	45	44
One parent family	87	13	15.2	15.9
Other family	7	1	1.7	1.6

Land use planning

Principles for land use planning

The draft Alpine Land Development Strategy (SGS Economics and Planning, 2023) sets out the following objectives for development in the Alpine Shire:

1. Avoid development in areas of environmental and landscape significance and at risk of natural hazards to preserve natural resources and protect human life.
2. Direct future population and housing development in accordance with the defined future roles of service towns, rural towns, small settlements and rural localities.
3. Prioritise the creation of compact towns and settlements to enable more efficient use of land and infrastructure.
4. Improve the diversity of housing to provide greater choice for residents throughout all stages of life.
5. Support diversification, prosperity, sustainability, and innovation on employment land.
6. Support new development that contributes to the unique local character of towns and settlements.
7. Deliver appropriate utility, transport, and community infrastructure when and where it is needed to support growth

Neighbourhood Character of Bright and District

The Draft Alpine Land Development Strategy contains neighbourhood character statement for the three largest settlements as follows.

Bright

- The General Residential Zone consists of mostly single detached dwellings, developed on residential blocks with a rectilinear subdivision pattern.
- Housing development is low scale with mostly pitched roof styles and a variety of timber and brick constructions varying between one and two storeys. Housing development is characterised by generous front and rear setbacks, except where dwellings are located on steep lots in the foothills, such as to the south of the town between Lewis Close and Hargreaves Street.
- Front fences on residential lots are generally low in height and permeable or otherwise absent.
- Vehicle crossings connected to driveways and on-site car parking is commonplace.
- Most streets are without footpaths.

Porepukah

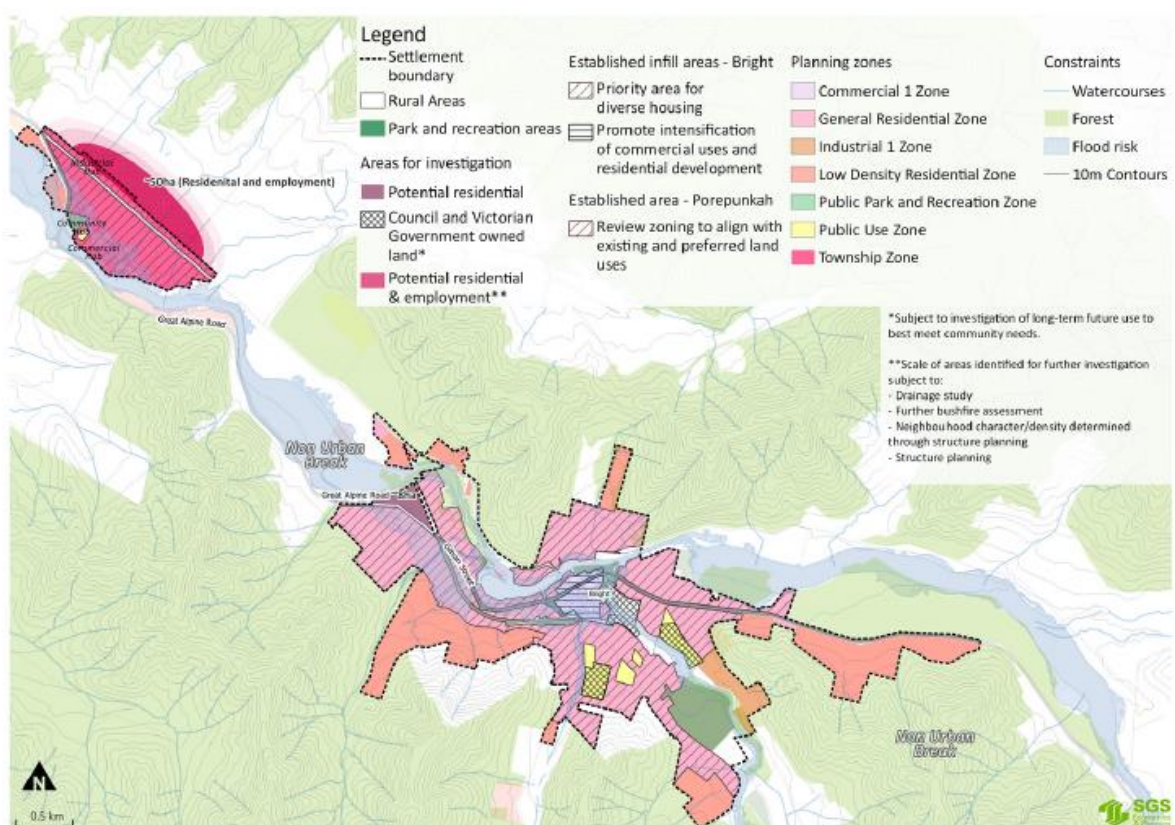
- The township sits in a wide valley surrounded by the Ovens River to the south-west and surrounding farmland, with scenic views of Mount Buffalo.
- The township is characterised by leafy green streets with established tree planting throughout.
- Residential development comprises mostly single storey dwellings and comes in a variety of housing styles including a mix of brick homes with tiled roofs and timber construction with tin roofs and vegetated setbacks.
- The Low Density Residential Zone on the town fringe to the north-west and south-east comprises larger lots with all lots interfacing the Ovens River on one side and the Great Alpine Road on the other side.

Wandiligong

- Wandiligong Valley is characterised by its narrow valley and Morses Creek.
- The surrounding steep hills contain pine plantations on the west and Crown Land to the east.
- The historic township of Wandiligong is situated along the valley, south of Bright.
- The Wandiligong Valley is covered by a Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO3) due to its cultural and historic heritage and the unique character of the built environment. Under the SLO3 classification, new developments must maintain the existing character and patterns in the landscape.

Planning Implications for Bright and District

The Draft Alpine Land Development Strategy proposes a high-level structure plan for Bright and Porepukah and notes the following constraints for each of the towns.



Bright

- Bright is heavily constrained by bushfire risk which means no further land will be made available for growth (no more rezonings).
- The current flooding risk for Bright is understated, and the next flood study is expected to indicate a far greater risk profile from flooding that the current data shows.
- Infill development within the commercial core of Bright and the immediately surrounding residential areas is likely to be supported. Infill growth in the fringe residential areas of Bright, within the settlement boundary, is not likely to be supported due to bushfire risk.

Porepunkah

- Porepunkah is heavily constrained by flooding and drainage issues, and this is a significant barrier to growth in the existing urban zoned land.
- If these issues can be resolved there will be opportunity for substantial infill development in Porepunkah, which could include residential and commercial development, including the designation of a more formal town centre.
- While not affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay which considers risk on an individual lot basis, Porepunkah is heavily constrained by landscape scale bushfire risk, and significant growth is not supported. However, there is some opportunity for growth to the north of Station Street which may improve Porepunkah’s resilience to fire (primarily through the creation of a

perimeter road), and this may be a suitable location for a mix of industrial uses (to expand the current industrial precinct) and residential development.

Wandiligong

- Wandiligong is a high-risk area, primarily due to bushfire risk. There is a one road in and one road out scenario in Wandiligong, and further growth is not supported by State policy.
- Wandiligong is also constrained by its restrictive zonings (Low Density Residential Zone and Farming Zone), heritage and significant landscape constraints, and it is unlikely that significant changes to these policy settings will be supported by the Victorian Government, particularly due to the high level of bushfire risk.

Harrietville

Harrietville has similar issues to Wandiligong. It is in a highly vulnerable bushfire risk area. It is constrained by the lack of sewerage, which limits the development capacity of each lot. Very limited growth is anticipated in Harrietville.

Housing

There are significant challenges facing housing in Bright and District.

Forecasted housing demand for the Alpine Shire in 2041 is 2,167 houses, which is relatively high compared with forecasted population growth of 2,734 people. This demand is driven by low average household sizes and low dwelling occupancy rates, related to the use of dwellings for short-term rental accommodation and holiday homes.

Significant issues affect current and forecasted housing in Bright and District including:

- Limited supply. Most housing stock is low density, and there are low rates of permanent occupancy and low rates of dwelling growth.
- Poor affordability. Bright and District has higher than average property prices. In addition, 27% of renter households have rent payments greater than 30% of household income. Bright and District housing prices are driving residents to other towns and municipalities. The increase in the cost and availability of residential accommodation particularly impacts key workers.
- Constraints on development. Physical, service and planning constraints are preventing increase in supply, including:
 - Environmental risks such as steep topography, bushfire and flooding, making development more costly or unachievable.
 - Existing infrastructure including sewer, water supply and draining all at capacity and requiring upgrades to support growth.
 - Co-location to existing amenities
 - Landowner preferences to retain larger blocks in urban areas, preventing higher-density and diversity of housing type.

- Lumpy demand. Bright and District attracts temporary and seasonal workers, resulting in increased demand for rental housing in peak tourism and farming seasons.
- Changing demographic profile. The Alpine Shire has an ageing population, requiring additional infrastructure, service planning, and housing diversity to accommodate downsizing and assisted living.
- Tension between short-term/holiday accommodation and long-term rental housing. Almost one third (32%) of homes in Bright and District are purchased as investments and used for short stay/holiday accommodation (2021 census). Bright occupancy is 68%, which is low compared with Alpine Shire (75%) and Regional Victoria (89%).

Bright Dwelling Structure ABS Census 2021

	Dwellings	Persons	Dwelling	Persons
Occupied private dwellings: total	1,007	2,198		
Separate house	858	1,946	85%	89%
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc.	116	186	12%	9%
Flat or apartment:	24	39	2%	2%
Other dwellings	4	7	0%	0%
Dwelling structure not stated	3	9	0%	0%
Unoccupied private dwellings	481	..		
Total private dwellings	1,489	2,198		
Non occupied private dwellings on census night	482		32%	

Bright Dwelling Structure by number of bedrooms ABS Census 2021

Occupied private dwellings (excl. visitor only and other non-classifiable households)	Bright	%Bright	%Victoria
None (includes studio apartments or bedsitters)	5	0.5%	0%
1 bedroom	36	3.6%	5%
2 bedrooms	189	18.8%	19%
3 bedrooms	488	48.6%	42%
4 or more bedrooms	263	26.2%	33%
Not stated	24	2.4%	1%
Average number of bedrooms per dwelling	3.1		
Average number of people per household	2,2		

Environment

Bright and its surrounding towns are nestled in the picturesque Ovens Valley, bordered by fertile farmland, national and state parks, and forested crown land. It is characterised by stunning landscapes, unique ecosystems, and a vibrant community that thrives on its natural environment.

Key features include:

- **National and State Parks:** The nearby Mt. Buffalo National Park and Alpine National Park, hosts peaks such as Mt. Feathertop (1922m), Mt. Hotham (1862m), and Mt. Buffalo (1723m).
- **Rolling hills and smaller mountains:** Surrounding the towns, these landscapes are used for cattle farming, horticulture, pine plantations, and native forests.
- **Ovens River:** Fed by freshwater marshes and meadows in the Victorian Alps, the Ovens River runs through Harrietville, Bright, and Porepunkah. It is joined by several creeks, including Morses Creek in Bright and Buckland River in Porepunkah.
- **Diverse vegetation:** The towns feature a mix of deciduous European trees that line the streets and parks, providing shade in summer and a stunning display in autumn. Native eucalypts and wattles are interspersed throughout the towns and line the rivers and creeks, contributing to its biodiversity.
- **Distinct seasons:** Bright enjoys a temperate climate with warm summers (mean daily maximum of 29.5°C in February) and cool winters (mean daily minimum of 1.5°C in July), often with snow on the nearby peaks.
- **Rich flora and fauna:** The nearby alpine environments are unique, hosting snow gums and wildflowers not found elsewhere in Australia. This region supports over 40 native mammal species, 200 bird species, 30 reptiles, 15 amphibians, and various fish and invertebrates. However, introduced species such as foxes, deer, wild dogs, and horses, along with human activity and climate change, threaten the local ecosystems and native wildlife.

Climate change and risk

Climate change is a significant threat to the health, wellbeing, and liveability of the natural environment, people and communities in Bright and District. The challenges will directly affect many sectors of the local economy, including agriculture and tourism.

For Australia, CSIRO forecast that:

- hot days will become more frequent and hotter (very high confidence)
- sea levels will rise (very high confidence)
- oceans will become more acidic (very high confidence)
- snow depths will decline (very high confidence)
- extreme rainfall events will become more intense (high confidence).
- time in drought is projected to increase over southern Australia (high confidence).

NECMA¹ predicts specifically for alpine valleys that:

- conditions will be hotter in 2030 and 2050 than current
- some areas will have higher rainfall
- heat stress days will increase in frequency
- heat waves will have higher chance of occurring earlier (i.e. in October)
- surface flows to streams and deep drainage will decrease by 20% by 2030
- extreme events such as heat waves and bushfires will be more likely

For Bright and District, these changing conditions expose residents, tourists and the local economy to:

- increased fire danger
- higher number of extreme heat days
- long term drought
- variability (and failure) of energy systems (i.e. power outages)
- high likelihood and severity of flooding

Infrastructure Australia identifies residential development in bushfire-prone areas as and natural disaster resilience as a key gap in regional infrastructure for the Hume region (2022).

General economy

The economy of Bright and its surrounding areas is driven by accommodation and food services, retail trade, and healthcare and social services.

Industries and employment

- The wider Alpine Shire supports 5,493 jobs and has an annual economic output of \$1.85 billion.
- Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make up 98% of businesses (with more than 20 employees) in the Alpine Shire.
- Retail trade is the second largest employer in the region, largely due to tourism spending.
- Other key industries in the area include forestry and agriculture, including sheep, grains, beef and dairy cattle and horticulture (fruit, nuts, hops).

The top three industries in the subset of Bright and District are:

- Accommodation and food services.

- Retail trade
- Health care and social assistance.

Unemployment is very low at 2.6%, compared with 3.0% in regional Victoria and 4.0% in regional Australia.

Industry	Managers and professionals	Technicians & trade workers	Community and personal workers	Clerical & Administrative workers	Sales workers	Machinery Operators & drivers and labourers	Other	Total	Percent
Accommodation & Food Services	88	30	51	9	11	54	4	242	21%
Retail Trade	30	9	0	0	61	14	0	116	10%
Health Care & Social Assistance	49	3	40	12	0	0	0	108	9%
Education & Training	80	3	10	3	0	4	0	96	8%
Construction	13	65	0	7	0	15	0	95	8%
Public Admin & Safety	35	4	23	17	0	4	0	84	7%
Prof, Scientific & Tech Services	61	5	0	13	0	0	4	80	7%
Manufacturing	17	12	10	3	10	7	0	60	5%
Administrative & Support Services	13	3	8	0	3	18	0	42	4%
Total number	480	167	143	87	106	36	20	1,150	
Percent	42%	15%	12%	8%	9%	3%	2%		

Bright - Top 9 industries of employment by occupation (ABS Census 2021)

The employment structure of Bright compared to Victoria and Australia shows there is a far higher proportion of people working in Accommodation and Café and Restaurant than the average for Victoria and Australia.

	Total number in Bright	Bright	Victoria	Australia
Accommodation	129	11.2	0.7	0.9
Cafes and restaurants	67	5.8	2.4	2.2
Hospitals	59	5.1	4.6	4.5
Local government administration	59	5.1	4.6	4.5
Supermarket and grocery stores	37	3.2	2.4	2.5

Selected industries: employed people over 15 years.

Local economic development

The Alpine Shire Council's Alpine Economic Development Strategy (2022) cites the following economic objectives:

- Achieve a More Productive and Sustainable Economic Base – “Leverage greater economic output and employment outcomes from industries of competitive advantage and balance economic outcomes with local community and environmental values to ensure sustainable economic development.”
- Develop a Resilient and Diversified Business Base – “Support the business community to generate industry resilience, diversity and achieve successful economic outcomes.”

Noting that across the State:

- The food processing industry has maintained strength in Victoria, in particular dairy and wine production.
- The continued diversification, innovation and productivity within the agricultural sector – through the production of raw materials – is linked to the growth of the manufacturing sub-sectors, including timber-related production and food and beverage processing.
- The Manufacturing industry sector makes the greatest contribution to economic output in the region, which at \$266.7m accounts for 14.5% of total output.

Availability of employment land

The draft Land Development Strategy indicates that there will be a demand for an additional 11,964 square meters of employment land (both industrial and commercial) in Bright and its surroundings between 2021 and 2041.

Further growth in Bright and Wandiligong is significantly constrained by bushfire risks, and Wandiligong also faces heritage-related restrictions. As a result, additional industrial floorspace will need to be accommodated in Porepunkah, which has limited capacity for growth to the north of Station Street.

The Commercial 1 zoned land in Bright, including the shopping centre, has the potential to support additional retail, office, and service uses through better utilisation of existing land. This includes

the transition of Woods Street from a predominantly residential street to a commercial street, in line with its zoning.

The tables below, taken from the Draft Alpine Land Development Strategy (SGS Economics and Planning, 2023), outline the floorspace requirements up to 2041.

TABLE 10: FLOORSPACE DEMAND BY INDUSTRY CATEGORY, TOWN, LOCAL CENTRE AND INDUSTRIAL SERVICE BLUCS, FROM 2021 TO 2041 (SQM)

	Local centre	Industrial/ services	Total
Myrtleford	+6,271	+6,871	+13,142
Bright-Porepunkah	+5,234	+6,730	+11,964
Mount Beauty-Tawonga South	+879	+8,278	+9,157
Other	+2,118	-2,123	-5
Total	+14,502	+19,756	+34,258

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2022

TABLE 11: NET EMPLOYMENT FLOORSPACE DEMAND VS CAPACITY, ALPINE SHIRE - 2041

Employment land type	Employment demand (sqm of floorspace)	Net capacity (sqm of floorspace)	Demand/ capacity gap (sqm of floorspace)
Industrial/service	19,756	6,194	-13,562
Local centres	14,502	6,096	-8,406
Total	34,258	12,290	-21,968

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2022

TABLE 12: NET EMPLOYMENT FLOORSPACE DEMAND VS CAPACITY, BY TOWN, 2041

		Employment demand (sqm of floorspace)	Net capacity (sqm of floorspace)	Demand/ capacity gap (sqm of floorspace)
Bright-Porepunkah	Industrial	6,700	0	-6,700
	Local centre	5,200	2,100	-3,100
	Subtotal	12,000	2,100	-9,800
Myrtleford	Industrial	6,900	4,300	-2,600
	Local centre	6,300	3,800	-2,500
	Subtotal	13,100	8,000	-5,100
Myrtleford North Industrial	Industrial	-	229,900	229,900
Mount Beauty-Tawonga South	Industrial	8,300	1,900	-6,300
	Local centre	900	200	-700
	Subtotal	9,200	2,100	-7,000
Other	All	10,100	157,100	147,000

Tourism economy

The tourism economy is important to Bright and District with the Alpine Shire attracting the highest visitation and visitor expenditure in the region. Tourism creates jobs and economic output in accommodation, food and beverage, retail, and services for health, transport and property. Rates paid by residential (holiday homes) and commercial property (accommodation, retail, food and

beverage) owners are a key source of income for the Council. Key activities enjoyed by tourists are listed below.

<p>Dining, wineries and produce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Variety of restaurants, cafes, and gastropubs ▪ Wineries and farmgate cellar doors including Gapsted, Feathertop, Ringer Reef, Mayford, Billy Button, Nightingales <p>Snow activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skiing and snow sports ▪ Tobogganing and snow play ▪ Sledding, and dogsledding ▪ Snowmobile tours ▪ Après-ski experiences <p>Cultural activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mt. Buffalo Indigenous art site ▪ Local Maker, Grower and Artisan Markets ▪ Festivals – Autumn Festival, Brighter Days Music Festival, Darker Days Music Festival, Wandiligong Nut Festival, Bluegrass Music Festival, Photography Festivals ▪ Markets and community events ▪ Local arts and galleries ▪ Boutique shops for unique shopping experiences 	<p>Outdoor activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Walking and cycling trails ▪ Mountain and road biking ▪ Bright river pool, waterslide and splash park ▪ Childrens playgrounds including by Ovens River ▪ Swimming spots ▪ Sightseeing ▪ Hiking ▪ Camping ▪ Fishing ▪ Kayaking ▪ Rock climbing ▪ Paragliding and hang-gliding ▪ Horse riding ▪ Golf ▪ Off-roading ▪ Scenic drives ▪ Scenic flights
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Preferred activities of visitors

	2018 %	2019 %	2022 %	2023 %
Eat out	67	65	72	57
Visit friends and relatives	25			29
Bushwalking / outdoor activities	34	36	38	27
National Park	41	33	24	27
Sight seeing	41	35	30	26

Pubs and clubs		34	30	
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Purpose of trip

	2018	2021	2023
HIGH COUNTRY			
Percentage of visitors for regional Victoria			13.9%
Percentage of visitor nights for regional Victoria			14.3%
Purpose of visit			
Holiday	69.7%		63.8%
Visiting friends and relatives	23.8%		25.6%
Business	4.8%		7.9%
Ages			
35 – 44	19.7%		18.3%
25 – 34	17.4%		17.4%
45-54			17.3%
65 and over	22.2%		
Accommodation			
Rented house, apartment, flat or unit	12.6%		25.6%
Caravan Park or camping ground	24.4%		20.2%
Friends or relatives' property	18.1%		16.9%
Alpine Shire			2022
Spend for year in Alpine Shire	\$288million	\$189 million	\$463 million
Spend per year in High Country			\$1.8 billion
Spend per night per person in Alpine Shire	\$168		\$257
Spend per night		\$259	\$236

Infrastructure and facilities

Growth in Bright and District is constrained by infrastructure. Infrastructure Australia identified a series of infrastructure gaps in the Hume Region that affect Bright and District.

Water and sewer

- Bright and District areas zoned for urban use are connected to reticulated water.
- Bright and Porepunkah are connected to sewer services, but Wandiligong and Harrietville rely on individual septic systems.

- North East Water (NEW) has flagged capacity constraints and issues in sewerage and water infrastructure networks and will require clear direction on anticipated housing and urban land use and growth to upgrade and extend infrastructure.
- Better use of existing infrastructure can be achieved by consolidating townships and minimising outward growth where possible.

Housing

- The rising migration from metropolitan areas, owners shifting to investors (for holiday homes and short-stay rentals) and increased demand for seasonal and visitor accommodation is driving up demand, house prices and rental costs.

Broadband and mobile connectivity

- There is poor network coverage and broadband speed reliability.
- In 2021, local governments across the Hume region scored an average Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) score of 65, lower than the state average of 72.2.
- In periods of high visitation, broadband speed and access is lower.
- During electricity blackouts (i.e. from storm events), there have been periods of no mobile access for significant portion of residents in Bright and District for several hours.
- Poor network coverage and broadband speed reliability constrains productivity and innovation of local employees and businesses.
- Visitors expect reliable network coverage and speed.
- Digital connectivity is required to support further population growth in Bright and District.

Transport

- There is no public transport service within Bright and District and residents and tourists rely on private cars and active transport (cycling and walking).
- Public transport connections to the wider Victorian network are limited. Residents and visitors to Bright and District can travel between Bright and Wangaratta by bus daily, and train or coach from Melbourne or Sydney to Wangaratta. There is no direct public transport from Bright to Albury. An Alps link runs from Bright to Omeo via Mt Hotham and Dinner plain three times a week. Private coach options can be chartered throughout the year.
- Infrastructure Australia suggests that better access, efficiency and affordability of public transport connections between towns and tourist attractions could improve liveability for residents and improve tourism spend (as visitors can better link experiences across the region).
- The capacity and quality of some road and bridge infrastructure in Bright and District requires maintenance or improvement, including ageing bridge infrastructure.