

The Swan Hill Region Workforce Development Strategy

The Future State

Aug 2013

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About this document

The future state draws on a number of plans

The Future State: A vision for Swan Hill is the seventh publication, of the Swan Hill Region Workforce Development Strategy.

The Future State draws on work undertaken in the region that maps out the Swan Hill region’s direction and aspirations in terms of its population, industry and workforce.

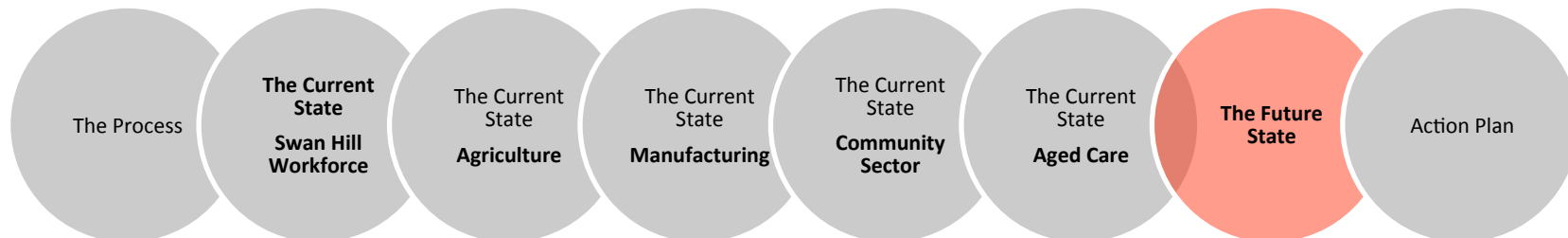
The following documents have been reviewed to understand the community’s vision for Swan Hill:

- Swan Hill Rural City Council, Swan Hill Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017
- Swan Hill Rural City Council, Robinvale Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017
- Swan Hill Rural City Council, Lake Boga Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017
- Committee for Swan Hill, April 2012 Workshop Summary
- Swan Hill Region Workforce Development Strategy
- Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network (MMLLEN)
- Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan (Northern Region)

Summarising and understanding the community’s vision for Swan Hill, i.e. the Future State, that has been articulated in these documents enables:

- a comparison between the desired Future State and Current State and the analysis of the gap between them
- the prioritisation of the risks to the Swan Hill workforce and the community’s vision.
- The prioritisation of the strategies that will form the action plan.

The documents also outlines the current state against the current state and describes the main risk for the Swan Hill workforce



Future State – a vision for Swan Hill

The future state draws on a number of plans

Each strategic document has identified a vision for Swan Hill that will support the economic development of the region.

Swan Hill Rural City Council, Swan Hill Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017

The Swan Hill Rural City Council has identified five strategic themes to support the economic growth and development of the region. They are:

1. Attracting new business investment
2. Supporting existing businesses to grow
3. Improving the image and marketing
4. Addressing infrastructure needs
5. Enhancing education and Skills Development

Swan Hill Rural City Council, Robinvale Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017

The local community has developed the following vision for Robinvale.

‘The Robinvale region economy will be strengthened and diversified to maintain sustainable growth over the next five years.’

Lake Boga Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017

The local community has developed the following vision for the Lake Boga.

‘Lake Boga will be a water recreation destination that attracts residents and visitors based on its natural beauty, with services and amenities to suit a growing population and a growing, loyal visitor base.’

Swan Hill Region Workforce Development Steering Committee

Swan Hill has an workforce development strategy that will translate the economic growth into employment opportunities and population growth for the region. The committees vision is a Swan Hill region with:

- Improved opportunities for skills development
- Higher educational attainment
- Increased workforce participation
- and increased productivity

Future State – a vision for Swan Hill

The future state draws on a number of plans

Committee for Swan Hill, April 2012 Workshop Summary

This committee participated in a workshop that explored why Swan Hill needs to change, what that change looks like and some of the strategic options that are available for achieving it. The committee looked at Where does Swan Hill need to be?

The committee articulated where it needed to be under five themes:

Capacity and Capability Development : Better opportunities for quality learning and study within the Swan Hill district

Connectivity: Better transport connectivity to Swan Hill

Destination of Choice: Improved tourism and a preferred place to live

Sustainability : A preferred level of growth

Leadership: Swan Hill community regarded as a place that people are proud to be part of.

Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network (MMLLEN)

The strategic priorities listed in the 2013 Environmental Scan suggests the MMLLEN's vision for the region. Their target group included secondary students, Year 12 completers, early school leavers, disengaged youth, indigenous youth, teenage mothers and young migrants.

Their vision is for a Swan Hill with :

- Higher Year 12 completion rates and school retention rates
- Increased involvement by businesses with schools and training
- Improved career programs and knowledge of regional industries and opportunities
- Increased access to VET programs in smaller centres

Loddon Mallee Regional Strategic Plan (Northern Region)

This regional strategic plan has identified the following aspirations :

- Sustainable, water efficient farming
- Resident and connected communities
- A diverse and robust economy
- Enhanced natural and cultural heritage

Future State – A summary of Swan Hill Strategic Plans

The future state draws on a number of plans

The Desired Future State

Drawing on the visions outlined in these documents, the local community desires a Swan Hill with:

- A positive image – attractive to workers, businesses and visitors and where the community take pride
- Higher education attainment to match employer needs
- Closer links between businesses and schools to increase knowledge of local career opportunities
- Access to the training and development that supports career development
- Increased workforce participation, particularly by young people and disadvantage groups
- A productive and sustainable workforce
- A sustainable level of population growth, which includes growth in the working age population

Future State – Key themes from the consultations

A number of key themes emerged

Through the consultations, participants expressed their vision for Swan Hill and its workforce. The table below summarises some of the key themes.

Area	Vision
A positive image	Swan Hill is perceived as a good place to work, live and visit.
Improved Literacy and Numeracy skills	The local workforce has the literacy and numeracy skills required by employers.
Raised Awareness	Residents are aware of and interested in local job opportunities.
Population Growth	Population growth is achieved, particularly growth of the working age population.
Innovation is celebrated	Local innovative and productive businesses are recognised and celebrated, particularly those who contribute to the training and development of young people.
Building transferable skills	The Swan Hill community has seasonal workers who can use their skills across different industries to meet peaks and troughs in demand.
The local workforce sustains growth	Growth segments such as Aged Care and the abattoir are able to attract sufficient numbers of workers from the available local labour force pool.
New pathways to tertiary study	New pathways support resident pursuing further study in key areas.
Available skills	Existing businesses have the skills they need to be productive and to grow.
A reliable workforce	Swan Hill can attract new businesses because the region is perceived as having a reliable, literate, numerate and willing workforce
Vibrant and diverse industries	Swan Hill has diverse, productive and sustainable industries employing multi-skilled workers.

Risk Analysis – Across industries

These risks applied to all industries

1. Low awareness of career opportunities and pathways within local businesses

Low awareness of the roles, industries, career pathways and opportunities available locally is perceived to be contributing to a decline in the working age population and low enrolments in areas of job opportunities.

There appears to be widespread concern about this in the Swan Hill community. Work being undertaken to address this includes the ‘Set your Heart on a Career ...’ programs co-ordinated by Swan Hill Inc. The ‘Set your Heart on a Career in Accounting’ is perceived as particularly successful and a good model.

The MMLLEN Environmental Scan 2013 includes strategic priorities to increase the involvement of businesses in schools and increase awareness of career options and opportunities among parents. The Robinvale Advancing Country Towns Project is funding a Robinvale Mentoring Program which will encourage young people to seek out careers in agriculture, horticulture and different trades and professions through working with mentors in these areas.

Career pathways have recently expanded in the needed areas of children’s services and welfare with the introduction of Deakin at Your Doorstep. Opportunities to study early childhood qualifications on-line are increasing with programs being offered through local childcare provider, Goodstart, which is also an RTO and Latrobe University in Bendigo. The latter provides the opportunity for people upgrade their qualification from a diploma to a degree. Awareness of the options needs to be raised.

A new partnership between Alcheringa and Integrated Living (RTO and in-home provider) is likely to enhance local opportunities to gain skills and qualifications in the growth area of aged care.

Comment

Organisations and training providers have been forming new partnerships to improve opportunities for Swan Hill residents to gain qualifications in needed area and are well aware of the need to promote these opportunities. Innovative programs to raise awareness of careers such as the Robinvale Mentoring programs are underway, but more needs to be done.

Risk Analysis – Across industries

These risks applied to all industries

2 . Attractiveness of Swan Hill as a place to work

Low appeal of Swan Hill as a place to work will continue to pose a risk in terms of attracting staff, particularly skilled staff to the region.

There appears to be an incomplete understanding of what attracts people to Swan Hill although there's a recognition that Swan Hill is attracting people of working age, particularly people with young families, as well as retirees.

Some consultation participants expressed a concern that Swan Hill had many innovative and successful businesses, but were poor at acknowledging, celebrating and promoting their success. Doing so would increase the community's appeal.

The Regional Expo in Melbourne, where a local team promoted Swan Hill as a place to live and work, is an innovative strategy that offer the opportunities to uncover what people moving out of Melbourne are seeking.

Accommodation is also an issue for the workforce. There are a few issues here:

- shortage of low cost accommodation
- shortage of high quality short term accommodation suitable for professionals (other than motels)
- styles of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of diverse groups e.g. Afghan
- Accommodation for specific workforce, such as, the abattoirs and fruit farms

Comment

Swan Hill will continue to struggle to attract skilled people unless it builds its understanding of what attracts people to Swan Hill, addresses accommodation issues and promotes the opportunities available and its business success stories. The actions should be measured and monitored.

Risk Analysis – Across industries

These risks applied to all industries

3. Insufficient quality childcare available to support the workforce

Insufficient places in quality childcare is limiting the opportunity for people to study and work.

The long waiting lists for long day care combined with lower than expected workforce participation rates for young women and reports from employers and education and training providers suggest insufficient child care places is a workforce risk. It has potential to impact on the decisions of skilled workers to return to work, as well as people, particularly skilled workers, looking to move to the Swan Hill area. A lack of child care is a particular risk to the health, community services and early childhood workforces. These workforces have experienced some of the highest growth in the region and are female dominated.

Child care can also be difficult to find for shift workers which indicates a need to explore the feasibility of extending the hours of existing services.

Comment

Insufficient quality child care places pose a risk for many industries, but particularly for the high growth areas of health, community services and child care.

Risk Analysis – Across industries

These risks applied to all industries

4. Low language and literacy skills among local workers

Low levels of literacy and language skills are impeding people's capacity to undertake further education and training, reducing their productivity in the workplace.

A concern raised by employers and RTOs across industries was inadequate literacy and language skills of job hunters and existing workers. RTOs reported that students often struggle with Certificate III level qualifications and employers reported their ability to read, write, and spell was decreasing workplace productivity. It was a concern raised about students and workers, in child care, manufacturing, business, welfare and aged care. Concerns were expressed by employers that people were gaining qualification without having the level of literacy or language that was required in the workplace. The Flexible Learning options (FLO) programs in Kerang and Swan Hill are seen as innovative programs that are lifting the literacy levels of early school leavers.

Comment

Increasingly entry levels roles require Certificate II or III level qualifications or skill sets in occupational health and safety. This shift is contributing to the demand for higher levels of literacy in the workplace. Jobs in the fastest growing sectors, such as health and social assistance require high levels of literacy. New technology used in manufacturing and agriculture is also demanding higher levels of literacy. Low level of literacy pose a major risk for Swan Hill.

Risk Analysis - Manufacturing

There are risks specific to the manufacturing workforce

5. Low awareness of local manufacturing jobs and careers

Young people have low awareness of the diversity of the local manufacturing base, roles and career opportunities

Employers reported they often like job seekers to approach them rather than advertise, which may be influencing perceptions that there are limited opportunities in local manufacturing and engineering businesses. There's a perception that fewer local employer commit to training apprentices in the engineering trades in manufacturing businesses compared with other segments employing trades workers e.g. Motor mechanics.

Low levels of literacy is also an issue in the workplace. The successful 'Set your Heart on a Career in Accounting program' is seen as a model to help expose students to local opportunities in manufacturing.

Automation has potential to replace lower level jobs and generate a smaller number of more higher skilled jobs as people are required to operate, maintain or service equipment.

Comment

The abattoir is perceived as a business success story and a major employer in the region with plans to expand. It is one of a handful of industry segments experiencing strong growth in Swan Hill, and provides stable employment in Swan Hill. The valuable contribution its plays in offering around 200 people employment could be raised to help reduce the risk of future staff shortages.

Risk Analysis – Agriculture & horticulture

There are risks specific to the agriculture sector

6. People management, business and IT skills are required in farming

The complexity and size of farming operations is increasing the need for IT, business management and people skills among farmers. Providing this support to the large number of farmers who employ small numbers of people will help boost productivity and support the agriculture industry to remain a major employer in the area.

Several models exist for how farmers can be supported with people management issues, including discussion groups, mentors, hotlines, website. Formal courses and training are not seen as the most suitable model through which to provide this support and capability building.

The AgriFoods Loddon Mallee Jobs Summit is exploring the possibility of employer capability workshops.

Farm owners and employer in agriculture and horticulture are currently not involved in Swan Hill Inc.

Comment

A lack of seasonal accommodation is seen as a risk to the availability of workers. There are reports of large numbers of people sharing single houses. Seasonal workers often do not have their own transport nor hold a local drivers license.

Risk Analysis - aged care

There are risks specific to the aged care workforce

7 . Limited understanding of aged care roles and new career pathways

Opportunities are expanding in aged care but there's a perception that new opportunities and emerging roles could be better understood.

Employers perceive some people undertaking the aged care courses (Certificate III) lack an understanding of the role and tasks they will be required to undertake and may not always be a good match for personal care roles.

Low literacy levels are also a concern and hinder a person's ability to move into higher level roles i.e. from personal carer to enrolled nurse.

A new partnership between the major aged care service provider and Alcheringa and Integrated Living, an in-home support provider and RTO has been forged. Providers of aged care courses have experienced difficulties finding quality trainers in the past.

Comment

The aged care sector in Swan Hill has experienced strong growth and will continue to grow due to an ageing population. It is a sector that offers stable, reliable employment for the region.

Risk Analysis - Early childhood

There are risks specific to the early childhood workforce

8. Low literacy and a lack of childcare places

Low literacy and in some cases language skills, are barriers to students completing the qualifications and undertaking the work. Under current funding modes it is difficult to provide the literacy support these students need.

A shortage of childcare places for the children of potential students is preventing interested people from studying Children's Services courses.

Positive relationships between employers and education & training providers were reported.

Comment

Career pathways have recently expanded in the needed areas of Children's Services and welfare with the introduction of Deakin at Your Doorstep. Opportunities to study early childhood qualifications on-line are increasing with programs being offered through local childcare provider, Goodstart (which is also an RTO) and Latrobe University in Bendigo. The latter provides the opportunity for people to upgrade their qualification from a diploma to a degree. Awareness of these options needs to be raised.

Risk Analysis- Community services

There are risks specific to the community services workforce

9. Insufficient social workers to meet increasing need

Welfare agencies report a growing number of people and families are needing support. This concurs with reports from employers that drug and alcohol issues are impacting on some people's capacity to work, particularly in the low skilled roles. Hence ensuring Swan Hill has the welfare and social work staff they need will support the availability of reliable workers across industries as well as helping community sector agencies provide services to their clients.

Employers experienced difficulties recruiting and replacing social. Some positions are particularly difficult to fill e.g. education work.

There was also concerns about the relative youthfulness of welfare workers in the Swan Hill region. The literacy levels of some staff working in the field is perceived to be having an impact on productivity e.g. report writing.

Employers expressed a desire to attract more mature-aged people and expose social work students in Bendigo and Mildura to opportunities in Swan Hill.

Comment

The partnership between SuniTAFE and Deakin University, which has enabled the delivery of diploma level qualifications in community services through Deakin at Your Doorstep, was seen as a positive contributor to the availability of qualified staff.