

## Chapter Eight – Business and Economy

### Our Vision and Beyond

A strong economy is important for realising our vision for a resilient, safe and vibrant community. We have many unique attributes across a range of areas – food, natural environment, the arts, music, film, digital media and other creative endeavours – and an integrated and collaborative approach will see us maximise these assets.

### Community Partners

Both the Mallacoota District Business and Tourism Association (MDBTA) and MADRA are working collaboratively on economic recovery for our district. This ranges from making sure our existing businesses have the help they need to recover from disaster to identifying and embracing opportunities arising from structural changes to the economy post COVID-19.

Another community partner in our economic recovery is the Mallacoota Community Enterprises Limited (MCEL) which is the community owned company which runs the Mallacoota Community Bank®. MCEL promotes Mallacoota's recovery by working with MADRA, MDBATA and other government and non-government agencies to further the economic interests of community, business and individuals wherever possible, committing to a buy local/bank local marketing program/philosophy and providing banking products and services to support local recovery initiatives.

MCEL's community led philosophy ensures that profits from the operation of the Mallacoota Community Bank, together with the economic benefit of its local operation are retained within the Mallacoota community it serves.

### Economic Values

Our economic recovery is grounded in our values; in particular, our love of our diverse wilderness landscape and desire for it to remain pristine. Guiding values pertaining to the economy as voiced in Chapter Two include:

- Turning around the local economy and making good economic losses
- A desire for greater year-round economic diversity
- Balancing tourism with the wishes of permanent residents.
- A desire for our population to remain about the same size.

We look at our economic recovery from a number of interlinking perspectives:

- Ongoing support for our business and tourism enterprises (MDBATA)
- Broader economic outlook and trends
- Strategic research studies
- Social enterprises
- Our demography
- Critical economic infrastructure.

## MDBTA Initiatives

The following is an excerpt from the 2019-20 MDBTA Annual Report.

MDBTA has been building its membership since the bushfires, increasing from 14 businesses to over 51. As part of supporting and rebuilding the local economy, MDBTA has been nurturing close relationships with the East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC), Regional Development Victoria (RDV), East Gippsland Marketing Inc (EGMI) and Destination Gippsland.

Projects being pursued by MDBTA include:

- Expansion of the industrial estate
- Encouraging businesses to relocate in/to Mallacoota
- Creation of a mountain bike trail
- Major repair and alignment of Genoa Road
- Support for events outside our busy tourism months
- Disabled access to one or two of the Parks Victoria jetty sites
- Ecotourism initiatives
- More footpaths.

MDBTA is also driving the 'Visit Mallacoota' program in conjunction with Regional Development Victoria (RDV) which aims to increase the capability of MDBTA to assist in building economic resilience and to restore confidence in local businesses and community. This includes the message that Mallacoota is 'open for business', with the aim of encouraging new and returning visitors back to our region to explore everything it has to offer.

## Economic Outlook

Awareness of the broader economic outlook is important to how we approach our local post bushfire/COVID-19 economic recovery.

Australia has just emerged from a brief period of recession. However, the Reserve Bank governor is warning recovery from the recession is likely to be "uneven and drawn out".<sup>1</sup> While economic indicators are positive, some parts of the economy are in difficulty.

The economic outlook is

- Structural changes to the economy and employment with the danger of long-term unemployment if people are not matched to jobs during the recovery phase.
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) returning to pre-COVID levels towards the end of 2021.
- Escalating trade tensions with China albeit domestic consumption is seen to be the key to Australia's post-pandemic recovery.<sup>2</sup>
- The reduction or cessation of stimulus packages, such as JobSeeker.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-02/australia-september-quarter-economic-growth-gdp-figures/12934336>

<sup>2</sup> <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news> 2nd December 2020 Australia's economy rebounds sharply in third-quarter from COVID-19 recession.

On the upside:

- Existing stimulus packages may be replaced with stimulus of a different nature, such as nation and infrastructure building.
- A commitment by utilities providers to 'hardening' critical communications infrastructure. For example, extended battery life for mobile towers and satellite back up for communications networks.
- A range of grant opportunities including the Local Economic Recovery and Community Recovery and Resilience grant programs.
- Technological advances opening up new ways to connect, work and learn.
- Initiatives encouraging purchases from regional areas such as Click for Vic and Buy from the Bush.
- Regional lobby groups and partnerships, such as the Gippsland Regional Partnership, lobbying for regional investment and remediation of infrastructure shortfalls.

While the national outlook might look gloomy in the short term, the conditions which are onerous for some sectors give rise to many opportunities for our community. In particular:

- A predicted downturn in international travel creates more openings for domestic tourism.
- Advances in technology, and a commitment to improving connectivity, enables additional, different industries and enterprises, such as social enterprises, online and cottage industries. Such ventures do not displace existing businesses and are compatible with our economic, environmental and social values.
- Use of local trades and labourers for economic stimulus infrastructure projects such as roads and utilities enhancements.
- Working from home (WFH) is becoming a new norm. An associated trend is decentralisation, a shift away from living in major cities to regional locations.

### Strategic Research Studies

The economic outlook describes future conditions and their impact on our community. Strategic research studies provide us with insight into how we can develop local initiatives and explore innovative approaches to overcome economic challenges and build resilience. Both approaches give rise to opportunities for new business and employment opportunities.

We are fortunate to have the services of Dr Nicola Watts who has been engaged through the Australian Government's Strengthening Business Service to assist with business and economic initiatives. She is working with the MDBTA and with individual businesses and is supporting co-ordination across other levels of government.

Current research topics are on Smart Specialisation and Digital Platforms.

### Smart Specialisation

The following is taken from a paper written by Dr. Watts.<sup>3</sup> Dr Watts notes Smart Specialisation is not an appropriate and necessary response to the immediate hardship that

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<sup>3</sup> Watts N. (2020) *Smart Specialisation (S3) and Authentic Engagement for Positive Futures*. Linked In.

businesses and communities face in the aftermath of disruption and disaster but rather provides a longer-term approach for collaborative place-based development.

Smart Specialisation is a place-based approach whereby community and local businesses/industry work in partnership with government and knowledge institutions.

Smart Specialisation focuses on three areas:

- Smart – identifying the region's own strengths and comparative assets
- Specialised – prioritising research and innovation investment in competitive area/s
- Strategic – defining a shared vision for regional innovation.

A focus is on identifying complementary linkages both within the region and across other regions.

Gippsland was the first region outside Europe to be registered on the European Union's (EU) Smart Specialisation Platform through a collaboration between the Latrobe Valley Authority, University of Melbourne and RMIT, and work undertaken so far is showing promising results for revitalising regional economies.

In our Mallacoota and District (MAD) context regional specialisations which are Mallacoota current key drivers and likely future drivers of our economy include:

- Tourism/Eco-tourism – Mallacoota has a long history of attracting visitors and could be well positioned to continue to align with macro-trends<sup>4</sup> in the travel and tourism sectors which are also compatible with Mallacoota's social and environmental values (pristine wilderness environment, sustainability etc).
- Marine related activities:
  - Recreational fishing
  - Commercial fishing and seafood harvesting
  - Boating Infrastructure and commercial diving
  - Water-based transport/boat charters/boat hire
  - Marine infrastructure maintenance
  - Small boat building (power, sea-kayaks)
- Food:
  - Fish/Seafood harvesting and processing
  - Indigenous foods.<sup>5</sup>

#### Digital Economy

The global economy is undergoing a digital transformation; that is, more and more economic activity is taking place online.

One manifestation of this transformation is a paradigm shift in the way we work with less need for a permanent office. More and more people are realising they can work pretty

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/lists/top-travel-trends-in-2020/>;  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandratalty/2020/12/31/the-four-biggest-travel-trends-for-2020/?sh=54b9b7541ced>; <https://bigseventravel.com/2019/10/2020-travel-trends-the-7-top-things-to-watch-out-for/>;

<sup>5</sup> Email from Dr Watts dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

much anywhere with stable internet and telecommunications infrastructure. This has given rise to the 'digital nomad' – a person who earns a living working online in various locations of their choosing (rather than a fixed business location)<sup>6</sup>.

Mary O'Malley, a local documentary maker and digital media consultant, and Meg Allan, a local business owner with a focus on sustainable economics, are developing a paper on promoting Mallacoota as a destination for digital nomads. Their research suggests digital nomads desire a co-working space. Part of their project is looking at how to provide a co-working space to facilitate online/digital firms (transient and permanent).

This ties in well with the creative endeavours of locals -such as Kristin Rule, Mary O'Malley, Larry Gray and others - which include film making and editing, music composition and animation. Kristin, Mary and Larry are interested in mentoring and teaching interested locals.

COVID-19 has seen working from home (WFH) shifting into the mainstream with an associated trend being decentralisation, a shift from living in capital cities to regional and rural locations. Knowledge based industries such as consulting, writing and designing are conducive to home-based work. Enticing more digital nomads to our district also assists with knowledge exchange and bolstering the ideas and skills of local people.

The digital economy also creates opportunities in the creative, education, research and health and wellbeing sectors:

- Creative arts and culture
  - Creative arts and craft.
  - Jewellery – Mallacoota Abalone Pearls Australia (MAPA).
  - Indigenous culture.
- Education and Research
  - Caring for Country.
  - Conservation.
- Health and Well-being
  - Healthcare/services for an ageing population.
  - Telehealth.

There are potential synergies within all of the above to guide innovation and collaboration across community, business, government and knowledge institutions to support Mallacoota's aspirations around being a sustainable and vibrant community.

Regional economic drivers and specialisations in turn support secondary service provision.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Oxford dictionary

<sup>7</sup> Dr Watts email dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

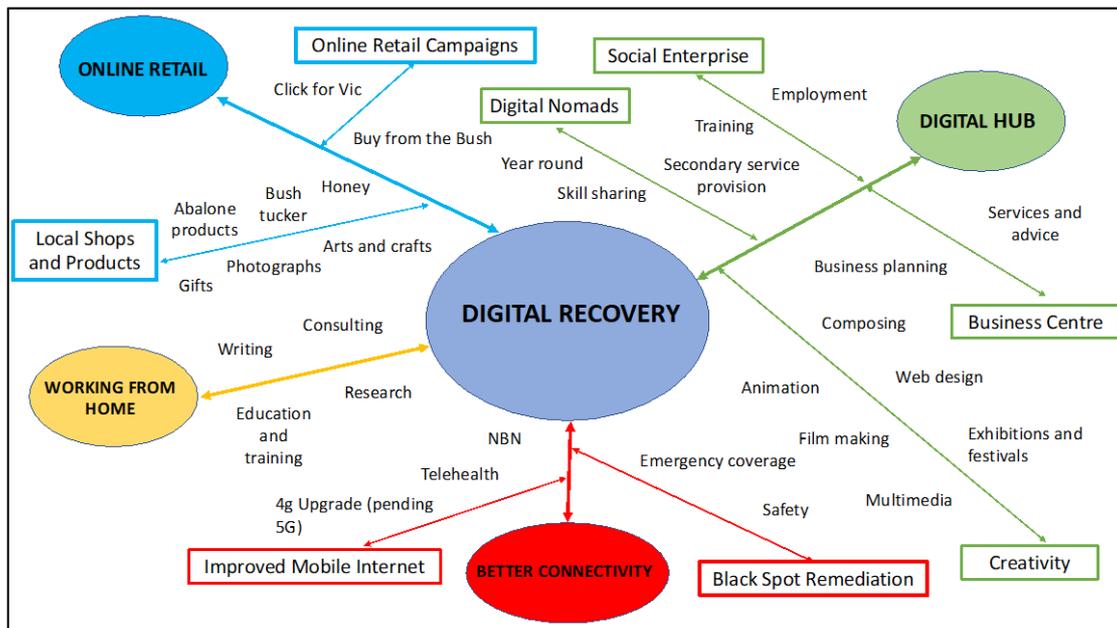


Figure 26 Our Vision and Beyond – Digital Recovery

### Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are businesses that trade to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide people access to employment and training, or help the environment.

Using the power of the marketplace to solve the most pressing societal problems, social enterprises are commercially viable businesses which exist to benefit the public and the community, rather than shareholders and owners. A social enterprise:

- has a defined primary social purpose environmental or other public benefit,
- derives a substantial portion of its income from trade, and
- reinvests 50 per cent or more of annual profits towards achieving the social purpose.<sup>8</sup>

As at 2016, our unemployment was at 10 per cent. Structural changes to the economy could see this figure rise. At the same time, our recovery process necessitates new and different skills sets and ventures as we seek to rejuvenate our landscape and rebuild our homes and infrastructure.

Ways in which social enterprises could provide employment pathways include:

- employment training and support for disadvantaged groups,
- the creations or maintenance of products and/or services in response to social or economic needs in the community, not met by the market, and
- businesses that exist to generate profit which are redistributed to social programs or charitable activities.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/about-social-enterprise/what-is-a-social-enterprise/social-enterprise-definition/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/about-social-enterprise/what-is-a-social-enterprise/social-enterprise-definition/>

Not only can social enterprises deliver training and employment benefits, there are potential flow on effects for other businesses through secondary service provision and through collaborative efforts.

Given the focus of social enterprises is on community benefit, social enterprises can allow us to explore new economic directions commensurate with our values and can be an innovative way to integrate our history, our unique assets and our shared vision for a vibrant and resilient future.

The Black Duck Foods case study beneath is an example of a successful local social enterprise.

**Case Study: Black Duck Foods**

The following excerpts are from [www.blackduckfoods.org](http://www.blackduckfoods.org).

**We want to tell the story of our land. For a long time, the story of traditional agriculture was buried. Stories from Elders across the Country were ignored. We respect the keepers of these stories and acknowledge their resilience. Our stories come from a time when story began and now we are transforming these stories into new opportunities for indigenous peoples as part of a journey towards Food Sovereignty.**

Black Duck Foods is social enterprise based in Mallacoota with the aim of developing and commercialising indigenous food. Founded by the author and farmer Bruce Pascoe, Black Duck foods has a vision to “explore the Old Peoples’ knowledge and to share it with wider Australia for social, nutritional and environmental purposes.”

Traditional farming systems use less land and water and fewer resources while enabling the production of nutrient rich foods. In addition to food production, related initiatives include corporate retreats at the Black Duck Foods farm on the outskirts of Genoa and, in conjunction with Sailors Grave brewery, the development of a Dark Emu beer featuring grains grown in our region.

The Black Duck vision is to redevelop traditional food growing and country management processes for the economic benefit of indigenous people and country. Their promise reads:

1. Research what our elders did – indigenous led research is a core value.
2. Understand how our elders managed Country – and identify what value that creates now.
3. Understand how our elders sustainably grew foods that benefited all of life on Country – identify what systems processes and methods can be implemented today.
4. Actively encourage indigenous people to be employed to learn and share this knowledge.
5. Inspire the broader Australian community to value this knowledge and reform agricultural practices across Australia for the sake of Country.
6. Develop the process so that other indigenous communities don’t have to start from scratch – paying from scratch.

**Figure 27** Case Study – Black Duck Foods

## Demography

We are one of the oldest communities in Victoria and getting older. As at 2016 nearly half of our population of 1166 was over sixty, nearly one quarter was over seventy and one

seventh was over 75. In 2006 the median age of people living in Mallacoota was 51, as at 2016 this had risen to 58.

The 2021 census will give greater insight into the extent of changes to our demographic changes subsequent to the bushfires.

Potentially, we could lose a significant proportion of our population to post disaster relocation. Many people lost their homes, and some have moved away as a direct consequence. This is in addition to our normal losses as people move away to be closer to family and/or aged care and medical facilities.

We need to be mindful of the flow on effects to our economy if the loss of our elderly is not balanced by the arrival of younger people. This could include the loss or downgrading of support services and of retail and trade businesses with commensurate loss of employment.

There are strategies we can adopt in anticipation of changes to our demography. The first is encouraging young people and families to move and/or return here. This involves fostering new job and lifestyle opportunities which are suitable for young people/families. In addition, we need facilities and amenities which will be attractive to this demographic such as recreational facilities and health care.

Another strategy is providing services which do not currently exist here, and which are needed for our elderly people, so they do not need to relocate if they do not want to. For example, more independent living units, assisted care and advanced care facilities. An added benefit might be attracting more retirees here with flow on benefits to our economy including employment opportunities.

#### Critical Economic Infrastructure

Reliable internet, telecommunications, energy and sea/air/road access are critical components of our economic infrastructure. We are working with utilities providers and regional lobby groups to significantly improve our utilities. In particular, mobile internet is currently problematic during peak tourism season. This potentially impacts health and emergency services and has a significant adverse impact on local businesses who rely on internet for payroll and other business needs (to the extent that such transactions can only be made when others are sleeping). In January 2021, the CEO of Telstra has been asked to provide a plan and timeline for how this service will be significantly improved.

In addition, there is a need for more commercial and industrial land to attract the types of businesses we need here.

See Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure.

#### Projects and Initiatives

The following paragraphs contain the ideas received from members of our community pertaining to economic recovery.

Some are ideas which can be picked up by interested parties and implemented without a requirement for grant or other funding. For example; more ‘packaging’ of tourism offerings.

Other suggestions require ‘owners’; that is people or groups who will initiate, implement and manage projects going forward. Project owners are needed if projects are to be funded through available grant opportunities. The form of ownership in accordance with discrete funding program terms and conditions.

Projects and initiatives are grouped under the following broad headings:

- More strings to our economic bow
- A digital hub
- Tourism
- Buy Local
- Education and training.

#### More Strings to Our Economic Bow

The bushfires highlighted the seasonal nature of our economy. Broadening and diversifying our businesses and income will foster a year-round economy. This means:

- Identifying and encouraging new businesses and economic activities which complement existing businesses and are in line with our values.
- Creating training and employment opportunities and taking advantage of incentives for apprentice and traineeships.
- Attracting businesses here for which there is a need/market, such as a sailmaker. This includes expanding the industrial estate to open up more commercial land.
- Adding value to existing business ventures.

The following table is a compilation of the ideas submitted by community members, groups and businesses for expanding our economic base. Finding funding and expert assistance for innovative ventures to enable business diversification is a priority. To this end, we have sought assistance from Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) and EGSC.

<b>MORE STRINGS TO OUR ECONOMIC BOW</b>	
<b><i>Theme</i></b>	<b><i>Suggestions</i></b>
<b>Creative activities (arts, crafts, writing, multimedia, digital enterprises, photography and music...)</b>	<p>We are home to many artistic people. Creative ventures might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salvaging burned/felled logs to make furniture and other artifacts.</li> <li>• Capturing and recording our stories in different formats and storytelling.</li> <li>• Art, craft woodworking and metalwork classes.</li> <li>• Film making and editing.</li> <li>• Photo opportunity tours together with photography lessons.</li> <li>• Packages – accommodation, field trips, lessons.</li> <li>• Making music – classes in composing and tuition in instruments, musical camps and weekends.</li> </ul>

<b>MORE STRINGS TO OUR ECONOMIC BOW</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An annual Writers Camp in the tradition of E.J. Brady.</li> <li>• Workshops on aspects of digital enterprise.</li> </ul>
<b>Adding value to existing businesses</b>	<p>Mallacoota Abalone Limited (MAL) is exploring several ideas and grants for adding value to their business including a tasting area, tours and a range of abalone-based products including a line of food products, such as sauce from abalone guts, abalone shell fertiliser. Abalone gut has been provided to Sailors Grave for Abalone Beer.</p> <p>With the right assistance, there is potential for other local businesses to build additional value into their products and services. This might include collaborating with other businesses to 'package' visitor experiences or adding an online element to retail ventures. A digital hub, in collaboration with local businesses, could assist with this.</p>
<b>Events</b>	<p>Ideas for events include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on the successful Wild Harvest Seafood Festival</li> <li>• Winter solstice celebrations</li> <li>• An annual forest fire management conference to be held in Mallacoota in Winter</li> <li>• Film festivals featuring content made in Mallacoota and District.</li> </ul>
<b>Aquaculture, Horticulture and Food</b>	<p>There are some fantastic food businesses featuring our local produce. We can build on these ventures through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing native plants and grasses, bush tucker and other food.</li> <li>• Food and drink manufacturing utilising local ingredients. See the Black Duck Foods case study at the end of this chapter.</li> <li>• Cooking classes utilising local ingredients such as abalone, local fish, wild grains and bush tucker.</li> <li>• Holiday packages featuring regional produce, beers and wines. This might include lake cruises, fishing trips (how to cook what you caught) and bush tucker trails and tours.</li> <li>• A regional cookbook.</li> <li>• Working with regional providers to create new product and employment. For example, Sailors Grave Brewery Dark Emu lager and Abalone Beer. MAL is working the Moogii Aboriginal Council re employing indigenous locals and value adding on sea urchin products.</li> </ul>

**Figure 28** More Strings to our Economic Bow

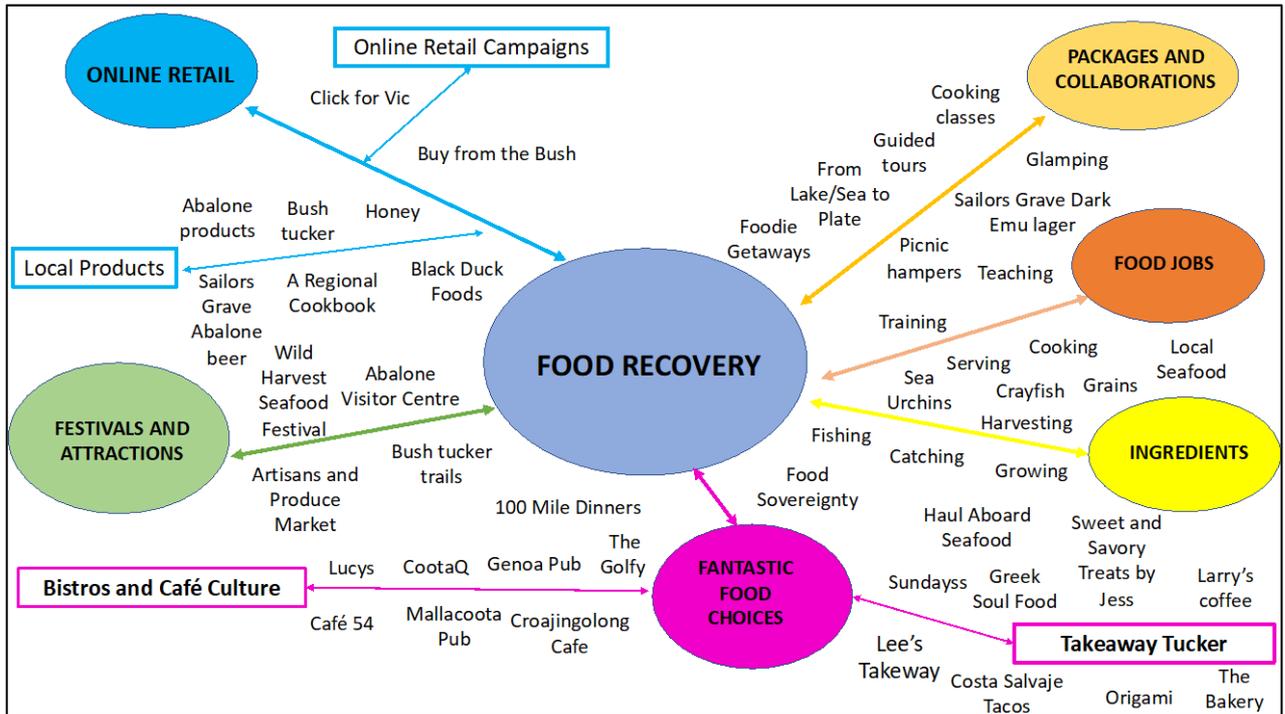


Figure 29 Our Vision and Beyond – Food Recovery

### Tourism Opportunities

As stated earlier, MDBTA is actively pursuing opportunities to encourage visitors to our district.

The 2007 Mallacoota Urban Design Framework states:

“Mallacoota has the potential for growth in the tourism sector, through the provision of experiences connected to the natural assets of the area, although potential impacts will need to be adequately managed. Proximity to National Parks and the unique setting of the town provides a major opportunity in terms of tourism in the region. The attraction of existing natural assets will need to be supported by other tourist infrastructure such as quality accommodation and cafés/restaurants.” p.5

The following table depicts the suggestions which have been received to make our district more attractive for visitors and tourists.

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES	
Theme	Suggestions
Beautification Projects	<p>Ideas for making our district more attractive to visitors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement township improvement schemes through cohesive, landscapes, improved signage and artworks.</li> </ul> <p>Refurbish commercial precincts such as Foreshore caravan park and Genoa main street.</p>

<b>TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
<b>Additional Visitor Attractions</b>	<p>We received a number of ideas for low impact visitor attractions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing recreational infrastructure to cater such as an upgraded skate park, BMX pump tracks and mountain bike trails. See also Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure.</li> <li>• More ‘packages’ – the MAD experience cut different ways ie hire boat/picnic hamper combos, quilting weekends, wilderness experience packages.</li> <li>• Building exercise equipment into a town walking trail.</li> <li>• Visitor centres focusing on our unique attributes. For example, the old school site at Genoa could be transformed into a visitor centre which provides information on a variety of subjects including aboriginal healing and culture, tetrapods, bush tucker and our unique flora and fauna.</li> </ul>
<b>Tourist Trails</b>	<p>Special interest groups will often travel in pursuit of hobby and interest related attractions. Examples include food and art trails, bike and skate park trails. MAL is actively pursuing a station at Mallacoota in the Victorian Abalone Trail. With State Government support, the trail will commence at MAL and go through to Port Fairy.</p>
<b>The Mallacoota and District (MAD) Brand</b>	<p>Several ideas were put forward for developing our ‘brand’ to appeal to a range of market segments. These ideas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and build our environmental credentials.</li> <li>• Projects which enhance our environmental credentials such as Dark Skies.<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>

**Figure 30** Tourism Opportunities

#### A Digital Hub

COVID-19 has revolutionised the way we work. Who would have thought even a year ago that a professional person could be employed in Sydney but working day to day in Mallacoota?

But that is indeed what is happening. The rise of ‘zoom towns’ opens up enormous opportunities for Mallacoota to attract people who can work online while enjoying all that our coastal wilderness town and surrounds offer.

The arrival of NBN and bolstering of the Telstra Network make this possible.

Many regional towns soon will vie for the business of digital nomads, people who learn their living working online in various locations of their choosing rather than a fixed business

<sup>10</sup> The Dark Sky movement is an international campaign to reduce light pollution by reducing the effects of electric lighting on the environment with environmental, health and safety benefits including cutting down on energy use, protecting nocturnal animals and increasing the number of stars visible at night.

location. This is a growing movement with upwards of 200,000 people participating globally.<sup>11</sup>

Mallacoota has an opportunity to be on the front foot and build a campaign to attract these kinds of workers who can populate our accommodation in the off-peak seasons. Qantaslink starting up more affordable, regular runs from Merimbula make it possible to work in Mallacoota, attend a meeting in the city for the day and be back home by evening.

Many of our existing events could be tailored to meet this market. We could offer digital nomad discounts to businesses in town and special rates on accommodation when booked for three weeks or more.

Related to this initiative could be the establishment of a social enterprise digital media hub in which professionals living in Mallacoota could mentor people in the community to work on multi-media projects around music making, videos and films, animation, storytelling, editing and other digital skills. Artists and students could showcase their works in a variety of ways – exhibitions, concerts, mini film festivals and pop up installations. And digital nomads could eventually be enticed into this program to share their skills. Potentially, digital nomads could be enticed into this program to share their skills.

Research shows that digital nomads want a co-working space where they can find printers, scanners, internet ports and the company of like-minded people.<sup>12</sup>

A business centre could also defray some of the hub costs through the provision of services to local businesses – such as design, photocopying and promotional material - and spaces for rent to digital nomads.

A digital hub might also provide education and advice through visiting or local experts to set up online businesses including training, web design and related products as well as technical advice to assist the set-up of home offices to facilitate WFH.

During summer, many tourists also enquire online about the availability of such services.

Bolstering our business hub capabilities would serve our existing markets and help us build for the future.

### Buy Local

Not only can our community assist in our economic recovery through shopping and utilising local services, we can encourage others to sample our wares. Key is ensuring local is 'value for money' and in line with our values. For example, protection of the environment through sustainable packaging.

Ideas received under this heading include:

- A 'Shop Local' campaign.
- Promote the 'empty esky' concept.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.businessthink.unsw.edu.au/articles/How-digital-nomads-keep-working-as-they-wander>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329182172\\_The\\_History\\_of\\_Digital\\_Nomadism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329182172_The_History_of_Digital_Nomadism)

- Encourage participation in the local Artisans and Produce markets.
- Participation in online shopping sites such as 'Click for Vic'<sup>13</sup> and 'Buy from the Bush'.<sup>14</sup>
- Creation of more online shops to supplement local businesses. Local items could include abalone products, honey, jewellery and artwork.



Figure 31 Buy Local

#### Environmental Education and Training

Understanding our environmental values is critical to sustaining our diverse bioregion and informing how we protect our communities from natural hazards. Maintaining and enhancing the wilderness values of the Wilderness Coast and Croajingolong National Park is an important drawcard to Far East Gippsland and Mallacoota.

There are low impact ways in which we can educate ourselves and visitors on our environment including locally made films, guided nature walks, visitor centres and e-books. Such initiatives could contribute to our economy and provide employment pathways.

The Natural Environment subcommittee will identify opportunities to educate and facilitate interest, love and passion for our biotic and abiotic components of our natural environment while highlighting our region's high conservation and biodiversity values. Ideas already identified are described in the table beneath.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
Theme	Suggestions
Environmental Studies Program	The establishment of an environment studies program will enable the community to deal with change and respect both environmental hazards and our unique values/assets. The program will target the

<sup>13</sup>[www.viccountrymarket.com.au](http://www.viccountrymarket.com.au)

<sup>14</sup>[www.buyfromthebush.com.au](http://www.buyfromthebush.com.au).

<b>ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
	<p>general community, including school children, visitors and tourists. Activities might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sessions and new articles about environmental protection, weed management, restricted activities etc</li> <li>• Interpretative signing such as maps of local attractions, walking trails. Signage could incorporate QR codes which link to additional information.</li> <li>• Guided bushwalks.</li> <li>• Mini field days (with weed/native plants etc).</li> </ul> <p>The program would be reinforced through the dissemination of environmental awareness information through local media including the Mallacoota Mouth, 3 MGB and social media.</p>
<b>Establish a Mallacoota Environment Education and Research Centre (MEERC)</b>	<p>The MEERC would offer both locals and the outside world the opportunity to study the best of what our district has to offer as well as enhancing MAD's off-season economy in an environmentally sensitive way.<sup>15</sup> This project has been under development for some time but requires project owner, such as a university.</p> <p>Three initial projects have been proposed for which seed funding is required. These projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A residential workshop with visiting academics to explore available opportunities.</li> <li>• Build an observatory and obtain a community owned telescope.</li> <li>• Establish a longitudinal estuarine study investigating the past, present and future health of the estuary.</li> </ul>
<b>Land Management industry</b>	<p>As part of bushfire recovery, volunteer groups such as Friends of Mallacoota and the Sanctuary Wilderness Coast project are engaged in on ground remedial works. See <a href="#">Chapter Nine – Environment and Biodiversity</a></p> <p>Volunteers cannot undertake these works alone. Increased investment by Parks Victoria and DELWP to enable improved management of our surrounding National Park and Crown Land would also increase local employment opportunities.</p> <p>Ideas in this space include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants to train and employ local people in areas such as bush, coast, pests and fuel management.</li> <li>• Road verges clearance.</li> <li>• Certification (like Green Corp organised cert 11) and other training pathways into DEWLP and Parks Victoria.</li> <li>• Lobby for more funding for land care management departments, highlighting lack of remote job opportunities</li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> Letter from MEERC project team undated

<b>ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
	and reliance on volunteerisms for emergency and other services. This includes bush, coast, pests, and fuel management.

**Figure 32** Environmental Education and Training

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