



Introduction

Regional Growth Plans are being prepared for Victoria's eight regions as the next stage of planning for growth and change across Victoria.

The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan is being developed in partnership between local government, state agencies and authorities.

The Regional Growth Plan will provide land use planning responses to the strategic directions and actions identified in the Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan.

The Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan identifies that the overall goal is to position the Central Highlands region to 2030 and beyond to provide a productive, sustainable and liveable region for its people.

The Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan can be found here: <http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/victorian-regions/grampians/central-highlands>

The Regional Growth Plan will identify opportunities for encouraging and accommodating future growth and managing the change that will occur over the next 30 years.

This is your chance to provide feedback about the preferred long-term future for the Central Highlands region and the strategic directions of the plan.

Why do we need a Regional Growth Plan?

A regional approach to planning will enable co-ordinated responses to issues which occur across municipal borders. The Regional Growth Plan will also provide a regional context to inform local councils in planning for their municipalities.

Population projections suggest the region may grow by around 53,500 people by 2031. Much of this growth will be guided by existing plans, but the Regional Growth Plan will help bring these together and identify where further residential and employment growth may be supported.

What will the Regional Growth Plan do?

The Regional Growth Plan will identify preferred locations for particular activities and development.

The Regional Growth Plan will:

- identify where future development will be supported and where it will not.
- identify important environmental, economic, community and cultural resources to be preserved, maintained or developed across the region.
- identify key regional priorities for future infrastructure planning and investment to support growth.

Following completion, the Regional Growth Plan will be provided to the Minister for Planning for consideration and endorsement. The plan is intended to be implemented through planning schemes.

What area will be covered by the plan?



Figure 1 – Local government areas in Central Highlands

Who is involved in preparing the plan?

The plan is being prepared in partnership between the State Government and the Rural City of Ararat, the City of Ballarat, and Golden Plains, Hepburn, Moorabool, Pyrenees Shires. Other key stakeholders include Central Goldfields and Northern Grampians Shire Councils, catchment management authorities and water authorities.

How will be the plan be developed and how can you be involved?

The plan is being developed over a two year period and includes opportunities for community input.

1. Project establishment
2. Prepare background issues paper
3. Establish the plan's strategic directions
4. Prepare draft Regional Growth Plan
5. Prepare final Regional Growth Plan



Regional planning principles

The strategic directions set out in the Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan have been refined to provide a basis for guiding the Regional Growth Plan.

We would like your feedback on the following proposed regional planning principles.

- 1. Plan for population growth in sustainable locations throughout the region.**
Opportunities for growth will be provided in appropriate locations which build on the capacity, liveability and resilience of the region's cities, towns and settlements.
- 2. Plan for and strengthen the region's economy so that it is more diversified and resilient.**
Economic development will build on the region's strengths and assets.
- 3. Capitalise on the region's access to the highways and railways.**
Planning for regional growth will recognise and enhance links to and from key centres and provide for improved freight movements to markets.
- 4. Enhance the level of access to key services.**
This will be achieved by planning around communities of interest which share services and facilities and are linked by integrated transport services.
- 5. Encourage land use patterns, developments and infrastructure which make the region more self-reliant and sustainable.**
This may include sustainable energy sources and the provision and distribution of water.
- 6. Integrate planning for growth with the provision of infrastructure.**
This will require the coordination of transport, community facilities, water and reticulated sewerage services.
- 7. Manage and protect the region's land, soil, water and biodiversity.**
These natural assets will help determine appropriate locations for growth and provide a basis for the region's prosperity and liveability.
- 8. Support long term agricultural productivity.**
This will be achieved by protecting the region's agricultural resources and supporting related industries and infrastructure.
- 9. Recognise the importance of heritage and landscape assets.**
These assets should be protected given their role in defining the identity of the region and making it attractive to residents and visitors.



A proposed concept plan for regional growth

An important part of preparing the Regional Growth Plan is to establish an overall picture for how the region could manage growth and adapt to change. To encourage discussion, a draft concept plan has been prepared to help illustrate how the Central Highlands region could grow over the next 30 years. It provides a strategic regional overview of where growth is proposed and suggests key elements of the future Regional Growth Plan.

We would like your feedback on the plan and whether it provides an appropriate direction for planning the Central Highlands.

Some of the key issues we have considered in creating this draft plan are described in the next section.

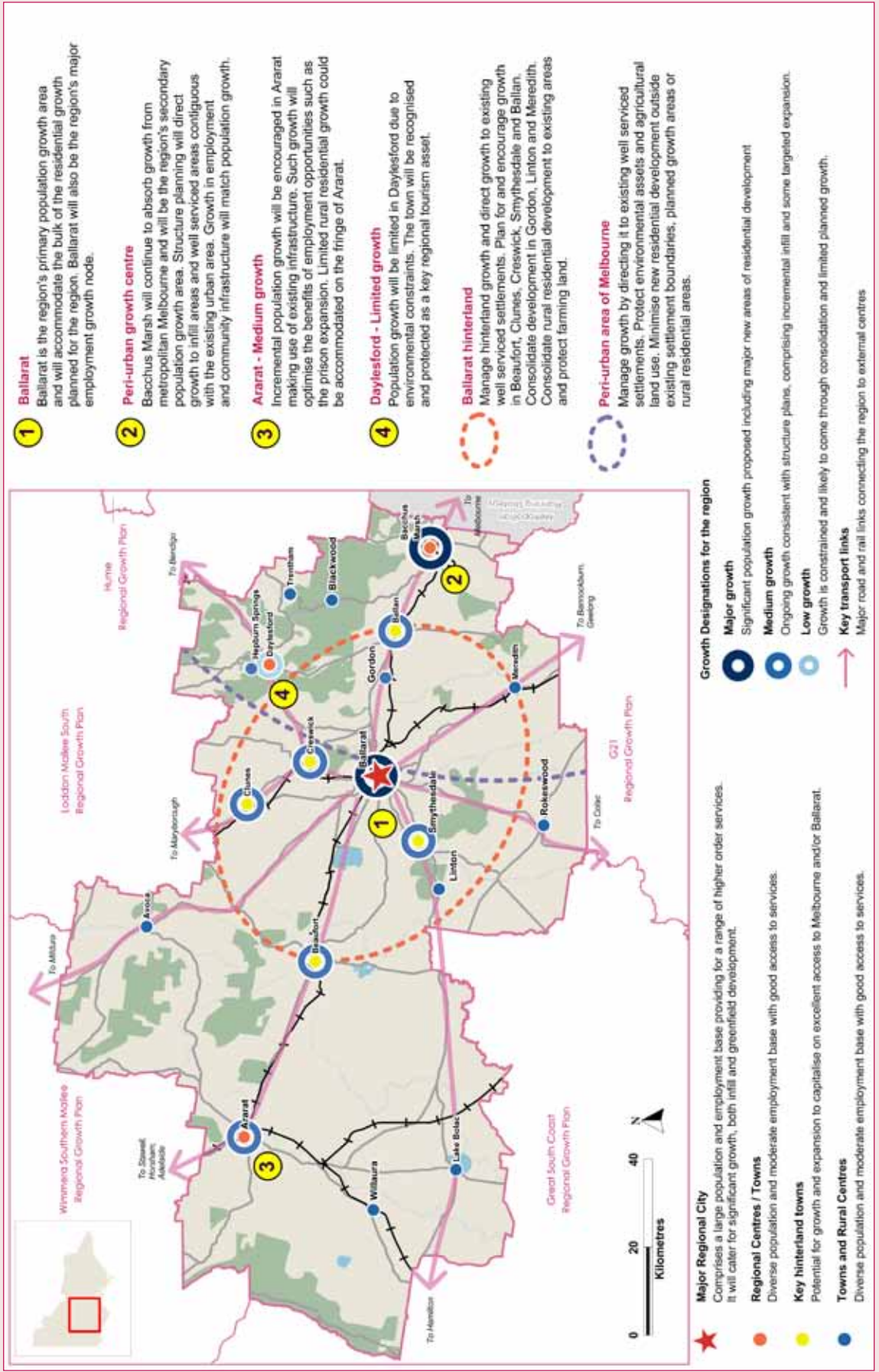


Figure 2 – Central Highlands concept plan for regional growth

What has been considered in developing the draft concept plan?

In order to develop this proposed concept plan we have explored various ideas and issues about how and where growth might occur.

The Central Highlands Region includes a major regional city, areas within commuting distance of Melbourne and Ballarat (known as peri-urban areas), large towns, smaller settlements and rural residential areas. Given this complexity, there will be a number of different elements which make up any future plan for the region.

The following four key themes were identified as a starting point to help explore the future direction of the Regional Growth Plan. These themes were based on concepts from the Central Highlands Regional Strategic

Plan and important regional planning issues identified through the background issues paper. A workshop was held with local and state government and other key stakeholders to discuss these themes and a brief summary of the benefits and concerns identified by stakeholders as applicable to each theme is provided below. The most beneficial aspects of each of the themes are reflected in the draft concept plan.

We have also prepared a background issues paper which provides some further discussion about the trends, challenges, opportunities and existing work which influence planning for the Central Highlands. The issues paper is available at

www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans.

Theme A – Settlement corridors radiating from Ballarat

The concept we explored: Ballarat continues to grow, whilst managed growth is also encouraged in small to medium sized settlements along road and rail corridors within 30 minutes commute of Ballarat.

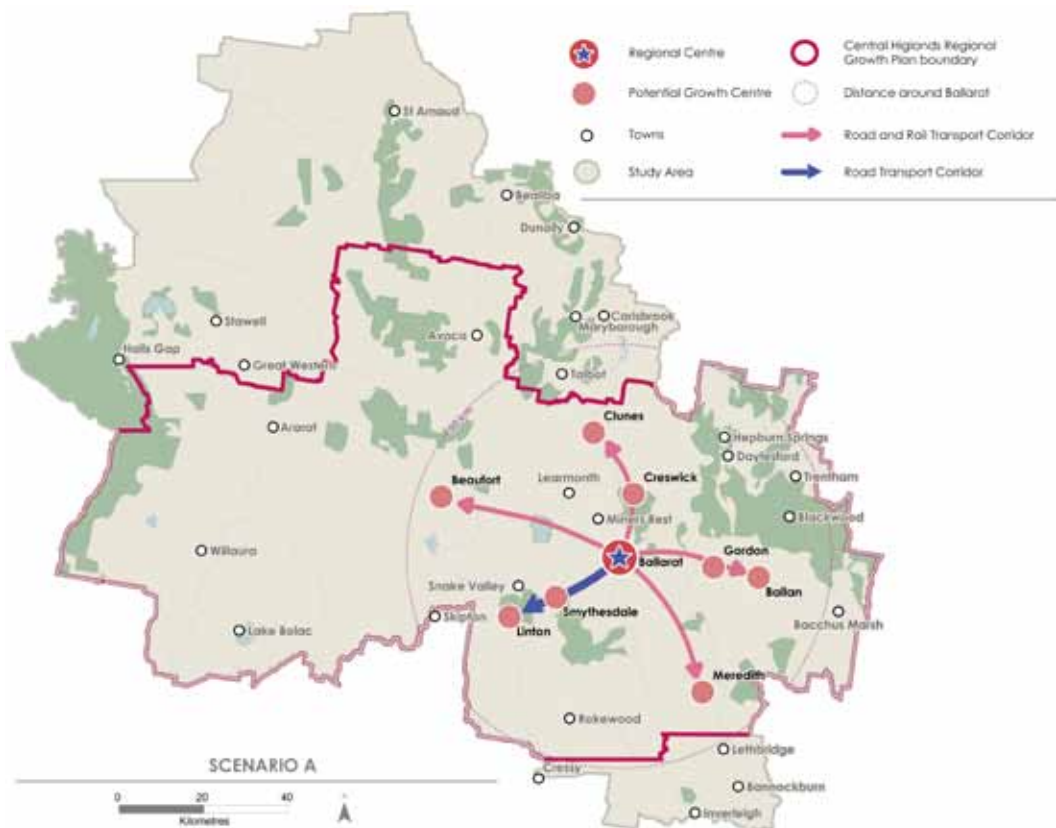


Figure 3 – Theme A: illustration of the settlement corridors concept

Benefits:

- A growth pattern based around sustainable transport and building on existing infrastructure.
- Choice for living opportunities, with the different attributes in each corridor complementing housing opportunities in Ballarat.

Concerns:

- Not all corridors, or towns within each corridor, may be suitable for growth, given infrastructure and environmental constraints.

- May be better to focus growth in a small number of towns along these corridors.
- Too much focus on Ballarat compared to other large towns in the region.
- Settlements to the east of Ballarat are potentially more orientated towards Melbourne.

Suggested outcome:

- Urban expansion is focused in a few key existing towns along the transport corridors.
- Other towns in the region will continue to consolidate and grow incrementally.

Theme B – Growth in Region’s Largest Towns

The concept we explored: Growth is targeted towards the region’s largest towns such as Ararat, Daylesford and Bacchus Marsh. Ballarat remains a key focus as the major regional city.

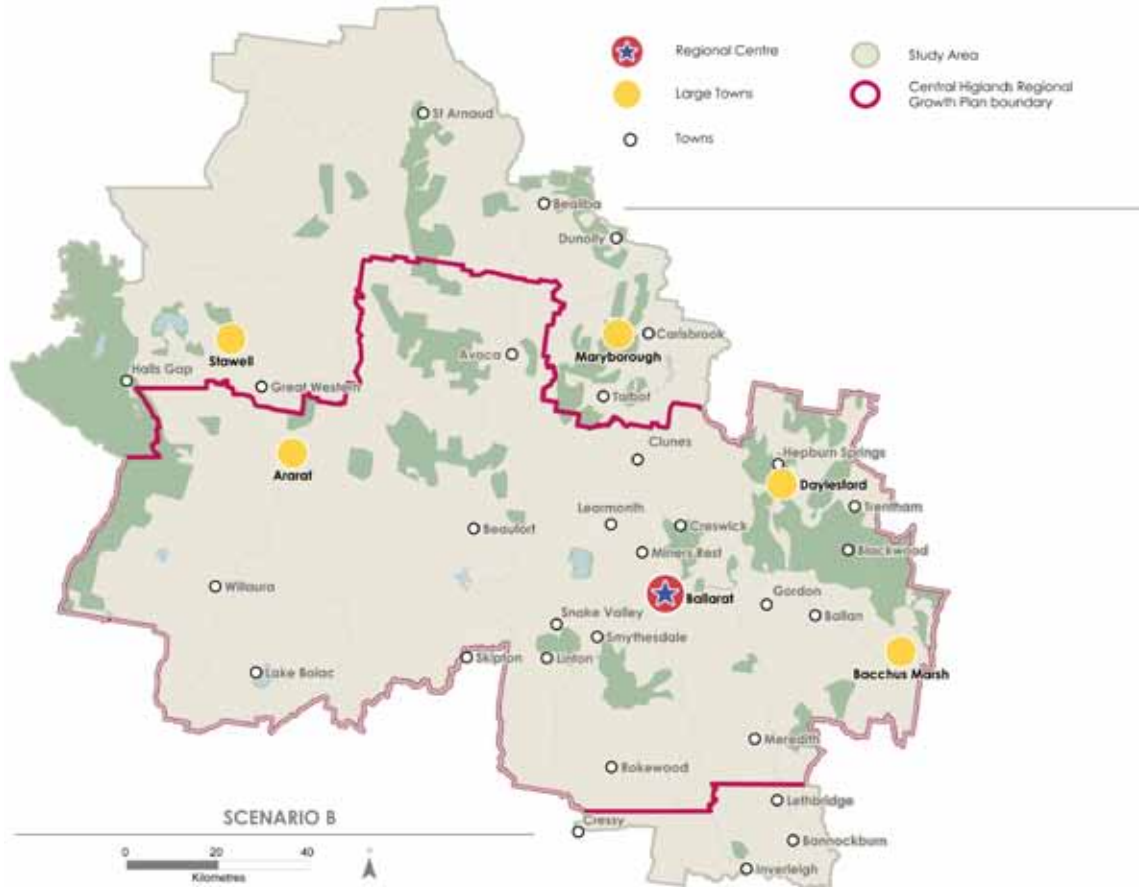


Figure 4 – Theme B: illustration of the major towns concept

Benefits:

- Will help the development of rural areas and communities around these large towns.
- Good connections to Ballarat help with access to jobs and services.
- Utilises existing infrastructure and transport corridors.

Concerns:

- The largest towns cannot be viewed as all being suitable for growth. Other smaller towns, may in fact be more suitable for growth.
- Growth should be targeted to towns where there are investment and employment opportunities.

Suggested outcome:

- The largest towns remain a focus for services and regional attractions.
- Towns to be differentiated on the basis of whether they are appropriate for significant growth, ongoing planned growth, or limited growth.

Theme C: Rural residential growth

The concept we explored: Rural residential development opportunities are available to provide lifestyle choice, but have been consolidated and are only provided for where there is good access to services.

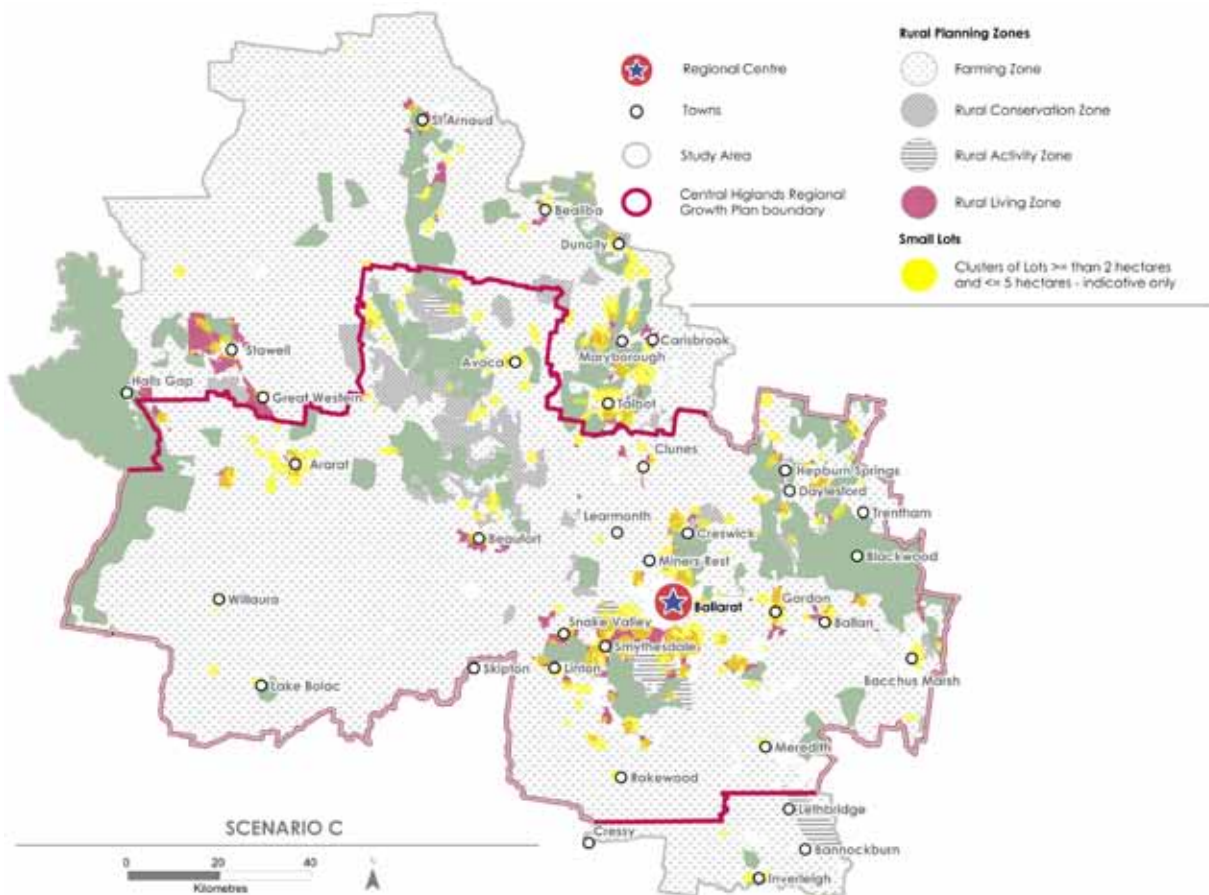


Figure 5 – Theme C: location of rural living and small lots in rural areas

Benefits:

- Lifestyle choice.
- Rural living can be beneficial to smaller settlements suffering population decreases and can contribute towards community resilience.

Concerns:

- Environmental constraints (such as bushfire).
- Impacts on agricultural uses.
- Impact of rising energy costs on dispersed settlements.
- Protection of water catchments.

Suggested outcome:

- In the peri-urban areas (places within commuting distance) of Melbourne and Ballarat, rural residential uses are consolidated to locations where they will benefit existing settlements.
- New rural residential areas are focused around the largest towns or rural centres (towns with good services and facilities) outside the peri-urban region and with limited environmental constraints.

Theme D: Peri-urban development

The concept we explored: Pressure for growth in Melbourne's peri-urban area (100km radius from Melbourne) is managed by directing development to small and medium settlements. The rural landscape is protected and fragmentation of farming areas avoided.

Benefits:

- Provides balanced growth for the region.
- Would help stimulate growth and manage development pressures in larger centres.
- Minimises the impact on environmental assets and landscapes.
- Minimises conflicts with agricultural uses.

Concerns:

- The need to extend infrastructure to dispersed communities.
- The impact of rising energy costs.
- The impact on environmental assets and landscapes.
- Conflict with intensive agriculture.

Suggested outcome:

- Direct development to support designated medium and small settlements.
- Manage growth in peri-urban areas to utilise existing social and physical infrastructure to support a network of sustainable communities.
- Minimise new residential development outside existing settlement boundaries, planned growth areas or designated rural residential areas (where growth will benefit existing settlements and address environmental constraints).

Have your say

Tell us what your vision is for the Central Highlands.

Find out more

For more information about the Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan please visit:

www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/regionalgrowthplans

This website will be updated throughout the life of the project. The background draft issues paper which has informed this document is now available.

The Central Highlands project team can be contacted on **(03) 5327 2847**.

To ensure we can consider your comments, please provide any feedback by **Friday 24 August 2012**.

Comments may be sent by post, email or fax to:

Timothy Westcott, Senior Project Manager
Department of Planning and Community Development
111 Armstrong Street North
Ballarat, Victoria, 3350
Email: CentralHighlands.RGP@dpcd.vic.gov.au
Fax: (03) 5327 2830

Personal information provided by you will be used by the Department of Planning and Community Development for the purpose of recording public comment. Personal information and your submission may also be included in a publicly available report. However, you do not need to provide your personal information if you prefer not to.

You can request access to your personal information by contacting DPCD's Freedom of Information unit by phone on (03) 9208 3112 or email foi@dpcd.vic.gov.au.