



Karoonda East Murray Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

Background Report

Executive Summary

Introduction

Lucid Economics Pty Ltd (Lucid Economics) has been engaged to deliver an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy on behalf of the District Council of Karoonda East Murray.

Population

The Karoonda East Murray region had an estimated resident population of just over 1,100 in 2018, down 1.3% from the previous year. The region's population has fallen around 160 persons (or 13%) since 2001.

South Australia Government population projections show Karoonda East Murray's population growth will continue to weaken out to the year 2036. Further, the region is projected to see a significant increase in the proportion of residents aged 65 years and over out to the year 2036.

Economy

Karoonda East Murray's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was \$71 million in 2018-19, unchanged from the previous year. The region's economy has been in steep decline since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), falling an average of 6.8% per annum from 2007-2008 to 2018-19.

Karoonda East Murray's sustained economic contraction has been largely driven by the continued decline of the local agriculture industry (which is by far the largest industry in the region), which itself has declined a total of 65% since 2008-09. The economy would benefit from greater levels of diversification.

Agriculture/Tourism

Agriculture is the main industry in the Karoonda East Murray region, both in terms of its contribution to employment and Industry Value-Add (IVA). The key agricultural commodities produced in the region in 2015-16 (by value) included cereal crops, livestock and wool.

While tourism in the area remains very small, the recent silo art project demonstrates the potential power of tourism and the positive difference that visitor expenditure can make in small communities.

Key Risks

There are a number of risks that the current structure of the economy and existing trends present:

- **Changing Demographics:** the population of the Karoonda East Murray region is ageing rapidly. By 2036, almost every second person living in the region will be aged 55+, which will dramatically change the structure of local expenditure patterns, particularly as the working age population is set for a net decline during the same period.
- **Lack of Economic Diversity:** the local economy is very reliant upon agriculture. Fortunately, there are a variety of crops and livestock in the region so that it is not solely reliant on a single crop. Greater diversity is needed in the local economy.

- **Small and Shrinking Scale:** as the population and economy continue to shrink, the small-scale nature of the area makes it more difficult for remaining residents to remain, as services are slowly withdrawn from the region. For businesses, there are fewer customers, driving them to leave the region also, creating another decline in population, and therefore a self-reinforcing cycle of decline.

Consultation

Individual interviews were held with key stakeholders as well as two workshops with local business owners, including farmers. Consultation included identifying the strengths and weaknesses of operating a business in the Karoonda East Murray region, as well as opportunities to strengthen the local economy, and the role of Council in doing so.

A gap analysis was conducted on the feedback obtained through Council’s visioning workshops for the development of the *Community Vision 2040* document, which revealed what the Karoonda East Murray community would most like to have available locally. A summary of the outcomes of the consultation and gap analysis is shown in Table E.1 below.

Table E.1. Summary of Consultation and Gap Analysis Outcomes

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated area in comfortable proximity to Adelaide and Murray Bridge • Genuine country lifestyle, loyal local community, great place to raise a family • Better work hours, work/life balance than in Adelaide; one-minute commute • Small population offers the opportunity to build better client relations • Less competition • Cheaper power • Agricultural productivity is very high for the cost of land, underground water is reliable • The Karoonda township looks well-loved, ‘feels solid’ and is usually bustling • Well-positioned to access eastern markets • Space, there is lots of land • Great school and hospital, dementia unit/ access to aged care • Central location for some business types • Good climate for livestock • On-farm storage is possible • National conservation parks/natural beauty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile phone and internet blackspots • Declining/ageing population • Few rental homes/little accommodation • Poor quality hospitality businesses • Unreliable, expensive freight • Part-time doctor • Lack of skilled local employees • Poor access to training and development • Lack of visitor accommodation • Buying power of locals is very low • Lack of jobs for partners/spouses • Road network in adequate for road trains • Access to trades • Lack of human services • Lack of gas and water • Isolation • Vacancies in Karoonda mainstreet
Opportunities for Economic Growth	Opportunities for Visitor Attraction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate/repurpose vacant buildings and farmhouses • Organic farming • Develop and market brand for Mallee produce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-farm glamping/cabins • Leverage large available space to attract new tourism business to the area • Develop/promote Pioneer Park • Dirt bikes clubs and comps • Bird watching



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market a tree change lifestyle • Develop aged care offering • Business mentoring/training • Website to advertise local job opportunities • Attract renewable energy projects • Attract value adding businesses • Tap into the skill-sets of visiting demographic (grey nomads) • Agri-education • Holding yards in Karoonda for stock • Truck stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails/national park • Customer-centric businesses • Dark skies – star gazers • Wetlands in town centre • Develop the railway (and rail corridor) as an attraction • Enable camping in the mainstreet • Reactivate specialty/destination shops
Gap Analysis	Role of Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh produce and quality food outlets • Plumber, mechanic, carpenter, other tradies • Industrial land/estate • A nice, healthy café • Good pub • Local community media/communication platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively attract targeted businesses to the area • Attract more visitors to the area • Incentivise people to move to the area • Reduce red tape • Support the local agriculture industry as strongly as the tourism industry • Maintain a job/trades register of people looking for work in various categories • Consult the community frequently • Better roads/infrastructure for the agriculture industry • Advocacy • Communicate opportunities for the business community • Develop more tourism infrastructure • Leverage opportunities like The Bend Motorsport Park

Source: Lucid Economics

Project Identification

Through the stakeholder consultation, both in relation to this strategy and also through the earlier community visioning workshops, and the economic analysis and the gaps and opportunities assessment, a range of potential projects to support local economic and tourism development was identified.

In order to prioritise these projects, they were given a score between 1-10 against four metrics - capital expenditure, timing, benefit, influence - with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest. This assessment identified the following priority projects.

More Residents

- Incentivise people to move to the area
- Market the rural lifestyle/tree change
- Develop the Karoonda brand and encourage business partnerships



More Workers

- Business mentoring
- Offer grants to attract in demand skills
- Mindarie Mine accommodation facility
- Tool to advertise local job vacancies
- Investment in existing businesses

More Businesses

- Mallee produce branding
- Truck stop/car wash
- Farm stays for agritourism
- Activate mainstreet shopfronts
- Encourage mobile food vendors
- Encourage e-commerce and entrepreneurship

More Investment

- Re-purpose former East Murray school site
- Renewable energy projects
- Chicken sheds
- Feedlots/intensive farming
- Value-adding businesses

More Visitors

- Increase a variety of outdoor adventure attractions
- On-farm visitor accommodation/camping facilities
- Market the region's points of interest/visitor attractions
- Enable free camping
- Develop the railway station
- Promote a visitor-centric business ethos
- Leverage Mid Murray International Dark Sky Reserve
- Support increased visitor numbers to events
- Develop/promote Pioneer Park
- Attract relevant special interest groups
- Develop online presence

Next Steps

The information contained in this Background Report provides the evidence base for the preparation of the Karoonda East Murray Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and five-year action plan, which are contained in a separate 'working' document.

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1. Introduction

Lucid Economics Pty Ltd (Lucid Economics) was engaged to deliver an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy for the District Council of Karoonda East Murray (Council).

The intent of the strategy is to attract new industries to the region, boost the local retail and service industries, develop the local tourism and hospitality offering, and ultimately increase the region's median household income.

Council has recently delivered the *Community Vision 2040* document, which summarises the Karoonda East Murray community's long-term aspirations and goals, and includes six key themes which embody the values of the community. The goal of the 'prosperous' theme is:

“By 2040, we will have a strong and capable local economic outlook consisting largely of agricultural, service and retail businesses”.

This strategy has been informed by independent economic analysis of the region, as well as stakeholder engagement to ground-truth the data to find out 'what's really going on, on the ground'.

The strategy will create opportunities for the Karoonda East Murray community to build on its unique strengths and attributes through the five-year action plan that, while ambitious, has the ability to create tangible benefits on the ground and contribute to achieving the community's vision.



2. Economic Analysis

2.1 Overview of Karoonda East Murray Region

The rural district of Karoonda East Murray is located about 150 kilometres east of Adelaide in the heart of the South Australian Murray Mallee region. Briefly touching the mighty Murray River to the west, the 4,415km² District Council of Karoonda East Murray is part of the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong tourism region, boasting unique flora and fauna, including in two national conservation parks, and is home to the rare malleefowl.

The Ngarkat were the first humans to occupy the area, their lands extending north beyond Copeville, south towards Coonalpyn, east to near the Victorian border and west to a few miles from the Murray River. Several wells are known locally, but the area would likely have been occupied only during wet periods because of a lack of water. Indeed, Karoonda is Aboriginal for “winter camp”. The area includes the reserves of the Billiatt District, however no registered Aboriginal heritage sites have been recorded within the reserves.

Fast Facts

- Population: 1,107
- Annual average rainfall: 350 mm
- State electorate: Chaffey
- Federal division: Barker

Today, Karoonda East Murray land is used largely for dry land agriculture, particularly broadacre cereal cropping and wool production. The local economy is largely dependent upon agricultural production and property sizes tend to be large commercial scale farming enterprises with few recreational or hobby blocks.

The main township of Karoonda was established as an important rail town serving sidings and towns in four directions. Today approximately 350 people live within the township with a further 150 living in the vicinity of the town. The rest of the population of approximately 600 people is scattered across the region, with about 80 people living in and around the township of Wynarka and 40 in the Wanbi township.

One of South Australia’s less populous council areas, Karoonda East Murray nevertheless punches above its weight in terms of amenity, including aged care services, retirement village and hospital, SA Ambulance and St John services, Country Fire Service, police station, an area school (SA's first) and a childcare centre, and is well serviced commercially with a hotel, garages, grocery store, café, chemist and some lifestyle stores, along with a range of businesses servicing the local and regional rural sector.

Other towns and localities in the region include Bakara, Borrika, Copeville, Galga, Halidon, Marama, Mindarie, Perponda, Sandalwood, and parts of Bowhill, Mantung and Mercunda.

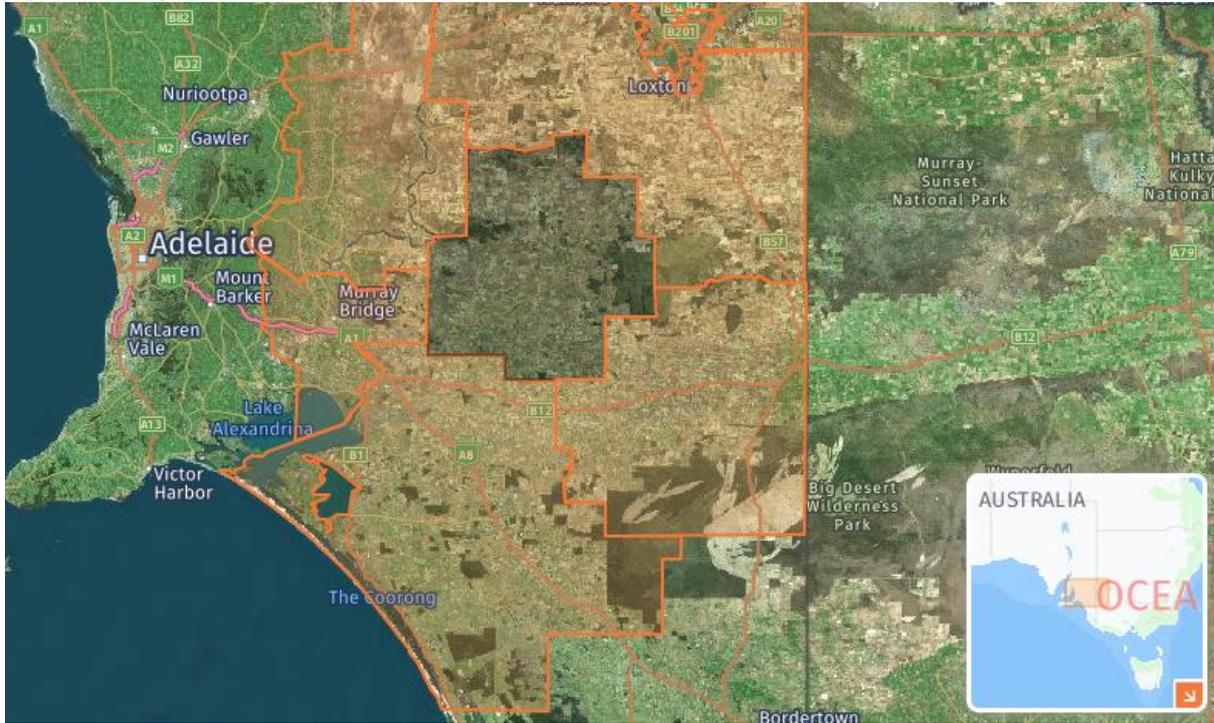
The region is serviced by the Karoonda Highway which is the main thoroughfare from Adelaide (1.5 hours easy drive) to the Riverland town of Loxton, running through the Karoonda mainstreet and is only a 45-minute drive to Murray Bridge.

Football, cricket, lawn bowls, tennis, swimming, netball and other recreation opportunities are at hand. The Historical Society manages Pioneer Park and the unique Karoonda Nature Park is part of the town area, with walking trails both for educational and recreational uses.



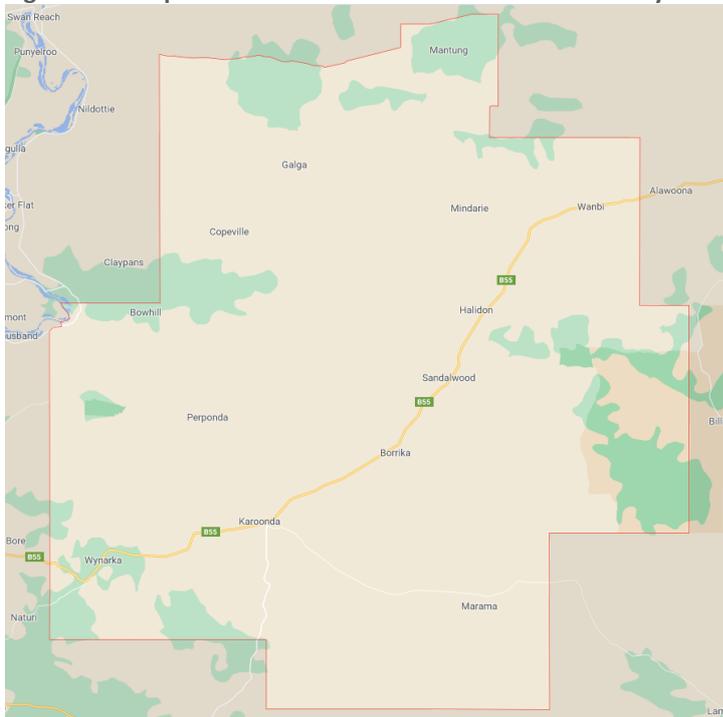
Karoonda briefly shot to international fame in 1930 when a meteorite fell to earth just to the east of the town on the night of 25 November.

Figure 2.1. Regional Context Map of Karoonda East Murray



Source: Economy.id (2020).

Figure 2.2. Map of District Council of Karoonda East Murray



Source: Google Maps (2020).

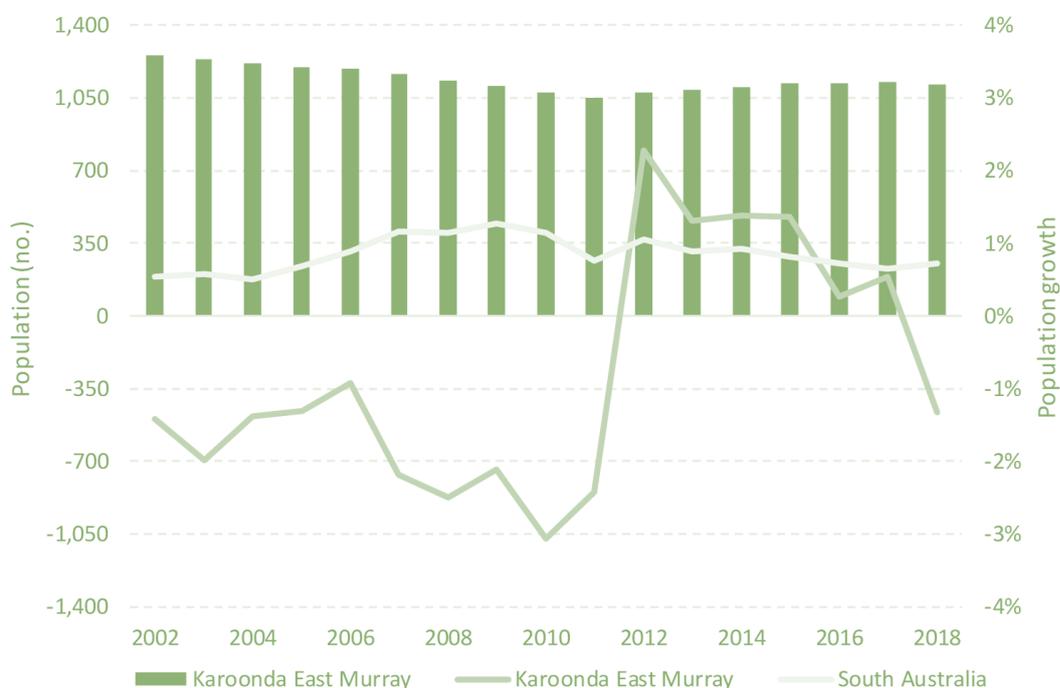
The remainder of chapter two provides an in-depth analysis of the local economy and the tourism sector using the latest data and statistics available at the time of publication. Unfortunately, due to the smallness of the area and some recent ABS boundary changes, there is a range of information (i.e. unemployment data, detailed visitor data, house prices) that is not readily available.

2.2 Population

The Karoonda East Murray local government area (LGA) had an estimated resident population of just over 1,100 in 2018, down 1.3% from the previous year (Figure 2.3). The region’s population has fallen around 170 persons (or 13%) since 2001.

The Karoonda East Murray LGA’s population growth has been significantly more volatile than the South Australian (SA) average, which is a product of the economic volatility experienced in Karoonda East Murray over the past 15 years.

Figure 2.3. Historical Population, Karoonda East Murray



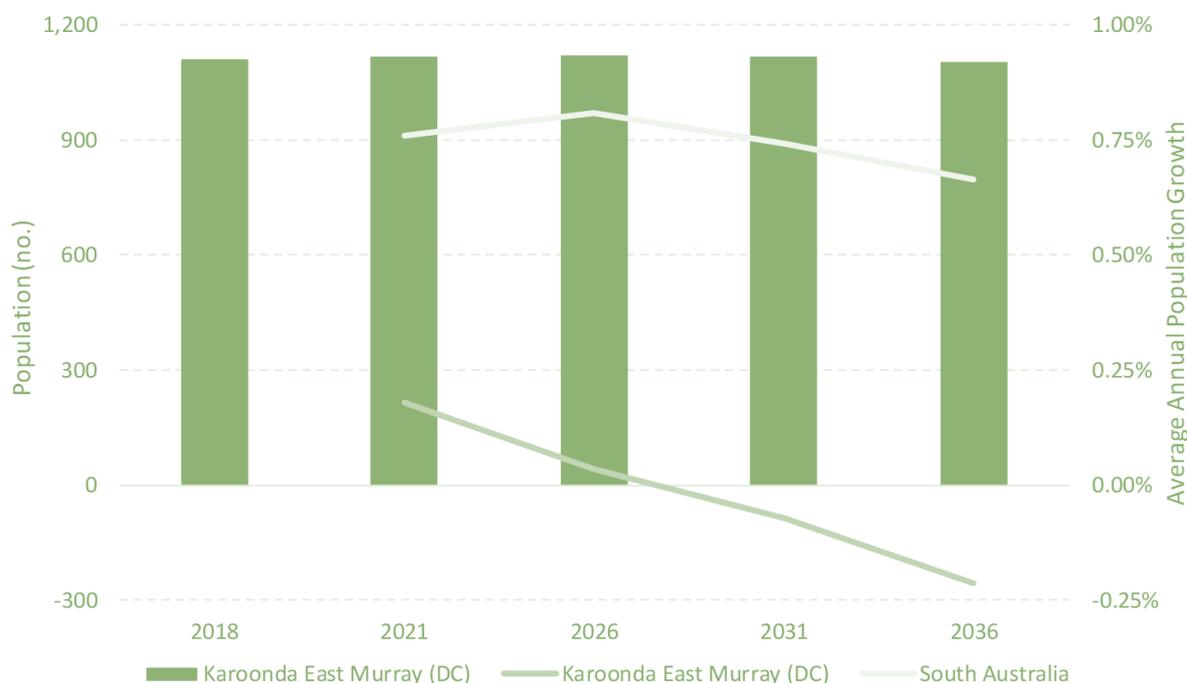
Note: Estimated Resident Population (ERP) at 30 June of each year.
Source: ABS (2019).

In 2011, Murray Zircon embarked on the redevelopment of the Mindarie sand mine, and in April 2012, gained State Government approval to restart mining. Resumption of mining commenced in October 2012, which may account for the larger spike in population growth shown in Figure 2.3. The mine was put on care and maintenance in 2015.



The SA Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (2020) projects Karoonda East Murray’s population growth will continue to weaken out to the year 2036, and also be below the South Australian population growth average through to the year 2036.

Figure 2.4. Projected Population



Sources: ABS (2019), SA Government (2020).

2.3 Age

Karoonda East Murray’s median age has been significantly higher than the South Australian medians since 2006 (Table 2). Further, the rate of ageing in Karoonda East Murray has been significantly faster than the South Australian average.

Table 2. Median Age

	2006	2011	2016
Karoonda East Murray	44	46	48
South Australia	39	39	40

Sources: ABS (2017), ABS (2012), ABS (2007).

Consistent with the rising median age in Karoonda East Murray over the past 10 years, the region is projected to see a significant increase in the proportion of residents aged 65 years and over out to the year 2036, moving from 23% of the total population in 2016 to 35% by 2036 (Figure 2.5). This equates to residents aged 65 years and over increasing between 2016 and 2036 by around 130 residents, an increase of 50% over 2016 levels. Over the same period, the working age population (residents aged 15-64) is expected to decline by 80 residents (or around 12% of the 2016 total).

Unabated, these trends will change the structure of the local economy, shifting expenditure patterns towards older residents, who spend less than other age cohorts.



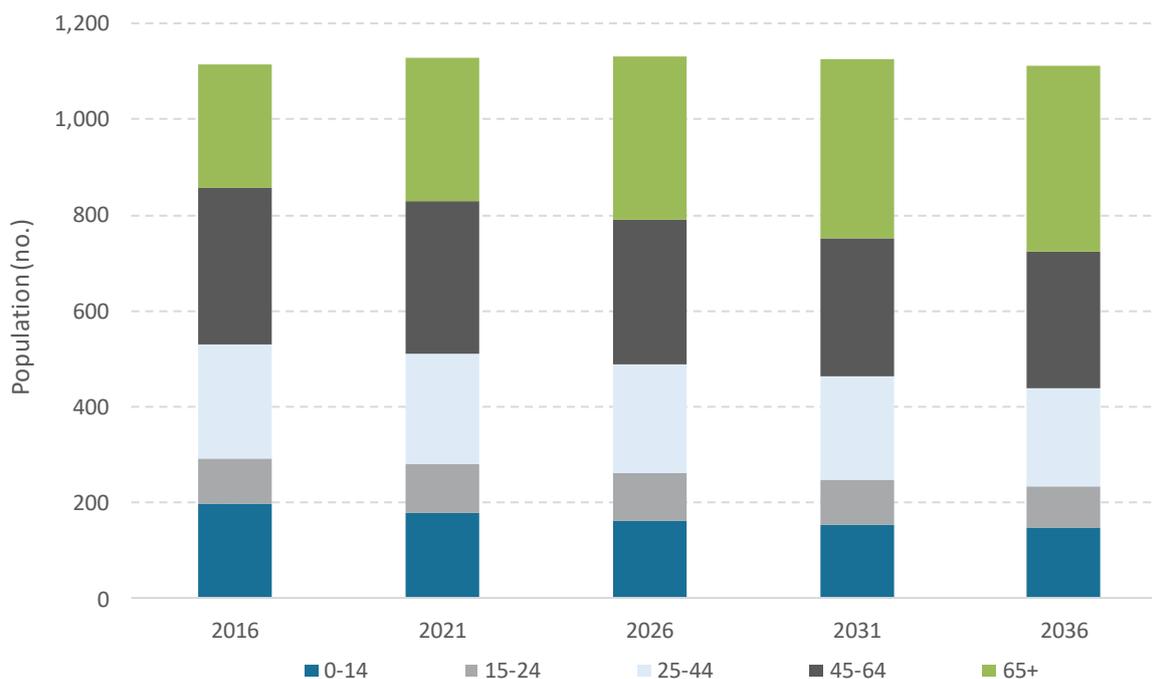
Changing Demographics will Change the Community

The ageing of the Karoonda East Murray population has the ability to change the nature, structure and shape of the community (and the economy) drastically. In 2016, almost two out of every five people was over the age of 55. If the current trends continue, by 2036, just under one out of every two people will be aged 55+.

On the surface, this trend would likely represent increasing demand for aged care services and additional future demand for infrastructure. However, the impacts would be far greater and further reaching. The expenditure profile of older residents is much lower than other cohorts, particularly the family cohorts. As such, there will be less available expenditure in the economy, which will lead to fewer shops and fewer retail options.

Furthermore, many community organisations and sporting clubs may suffer as many members are children or other young people and many of the leadership positions are held by parent volunteers. As the working age population declines in absolute terms, there will be fewer and fewer members and volunteers, which will put pressure on the viability of many community groups. Additionally, as there are fewer children in the community, the schools will likely get smaller.

Figure 2.5. Projected Age Structure, Karoonda East Murray



Source: SA Government (2019).

2.4 Income

Both the Karoonda East Murray's median weekly personal and household incomes have been significantly lower than the South Australian medians since 2006 (**Error! Reference source not found.**).



Median household income is an important measure for standard of living. While lower household incomes in the region is not ideal, household income levels in Karoonda East Murray have increased at a faster rate than inflation over the past five- and ten-year periods, providing real income gains for residents.

Table 3. Median Income

	2006	2011	2016
<i>Personal income (\$/week)</i>			
Karoonda East Murray	\$327	\$389	\$461
South Australia	\$433	\$534	\$600
<i>Household income (\$/week)</i>			
Karoonda East Murray	\$638	\$753	\$871
South Australia	\$885	\$1,042	\$1,204

Sources: ABS (2017), ABS (2012), ABS (2007).

Figure 2.6. Median Household Income



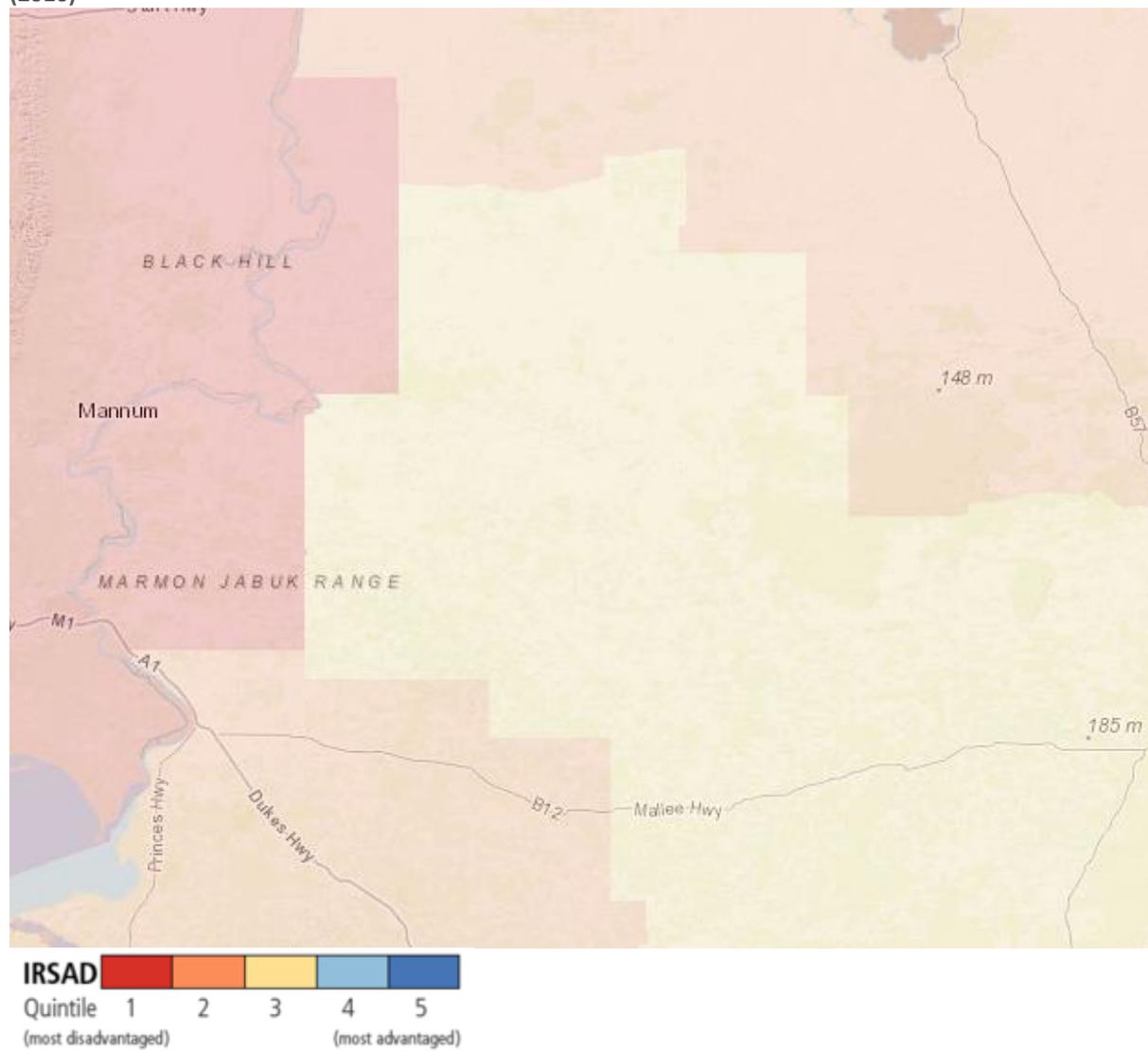
Sources: ABS (2017), ABS (2012), ABS (2007).

2.5 SEIFA

The image below (Figure 2.7) shows that the entire Karoonda East Murray region falls in the middle third quintile of the ABS's Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage.



Figure 2.7. Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage & Disadvantage (by SA1), Karoonda East Murray (2016)



Source: ABS (2018).

2.6 Size and Structure of the Economy

Karoonda East Murray's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was \$71 million in 2018-19, unchanged from the previous year (Figure 2.8). The region's economy has been in steep decline since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), falling an average of 6.8% per annum from 2007-08 to 2018-19. Only in the 2016-17 year was there considerable growth. Part of the volatility of the economy is due to its small scale, which means that any movements are often significant movements.

The region's sustained economic contraction has been largely driven by the continued decline of the local agriculture industry (which is the dominant industry in the region), which itself has declined a total of 65% since 2008-09.

The decline of the agriculture industry undoubtedly would impact negatively on numerous sectors because of the downstream industries and the fact that people would have less money to spend in the local area.

Figure 2.8. Gross Regional Product, Karoonda East Murray



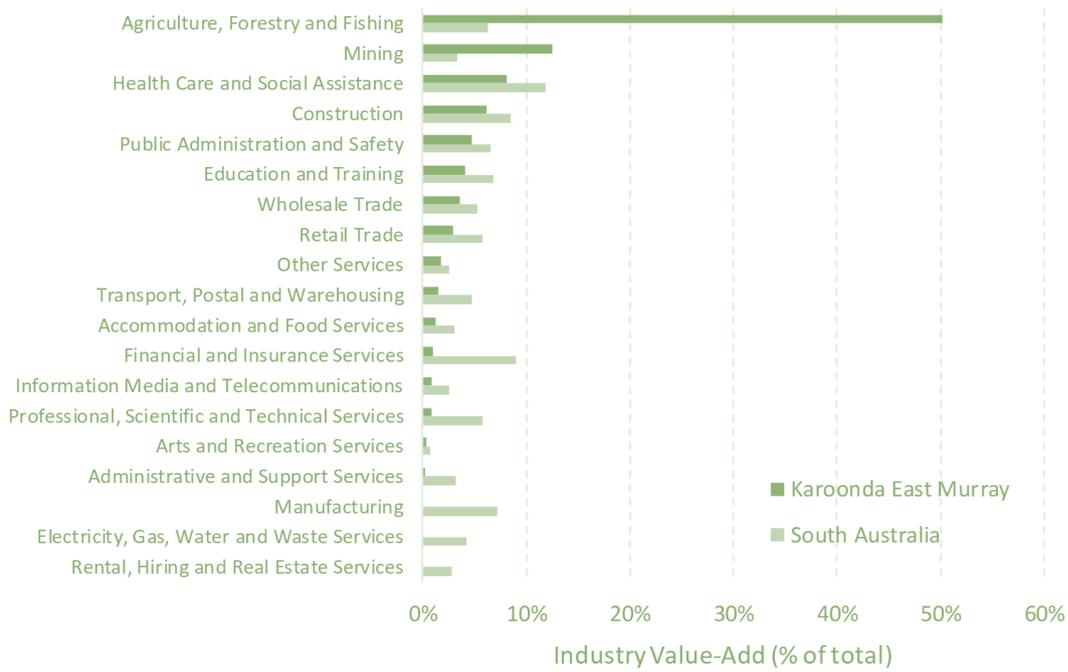
Note: Financial year ending data.

Source: Economy.id (2020).

The largest industries by Industry Value-Add (IVA) in the Karoonda East Murray region in 2018-19 were:

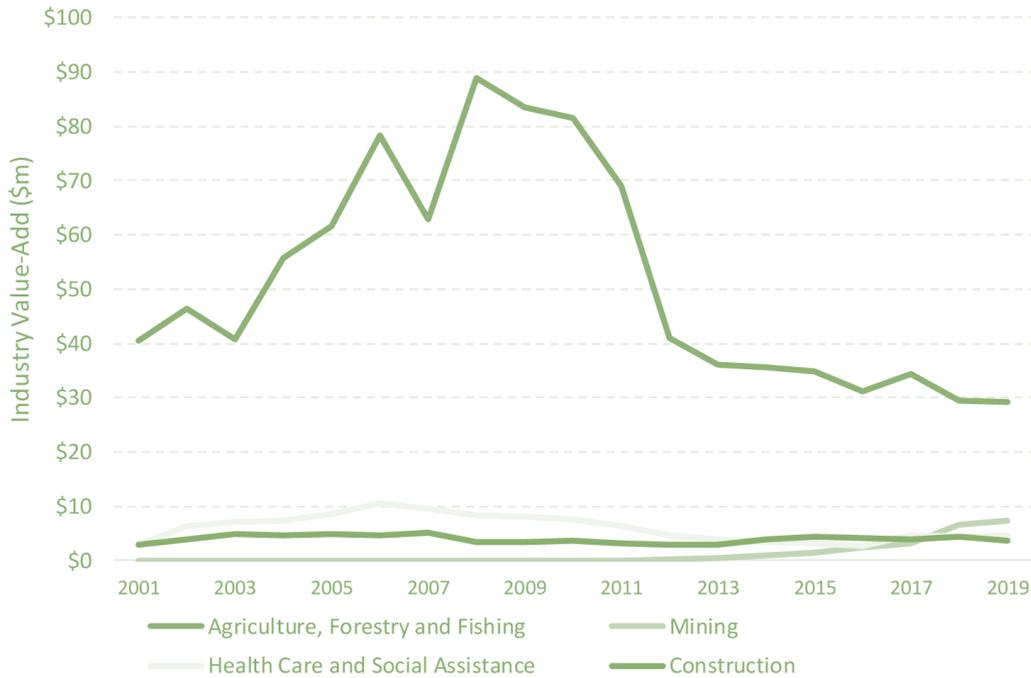
- Agriculture (by far the largest at 50% of total IVA in 2018-19)
- Health care and social assistance
- Construction
- Mining

Figure 2.9. Industry Value-Add, 2018-19



Note: Financial year ending data.
Source: Economy.id (2020).

Figure 2.10. Industry Value-Add, Top Four Industries, Karoonda East Murray



Note: Financial year ending data.
Source: Economy.id (2020).



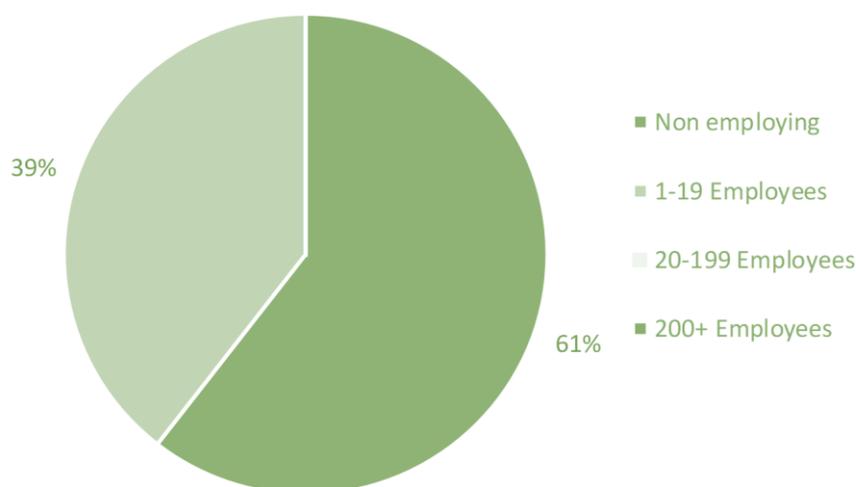
2.7 Business Counts

The Karoonda East Murray economy is entirely comprised of small businesses (100% of all businesses have 19 employees or fewer, Figure 2.11). While most local economies in Australia are dominated by small businesses, the lack of any medium and/or large businesses is unusual, even for a regional area. The agriculture and construction industries are industries where typically there is a greater number of individual traders and small businesses (Figure 2.12).

Business Counts from the ABS

It is important to keep in mind that this data reflects the registered business address of companies (only), so larger businesses such as Coles, Woolworths and other major retail businesses may not be captured in the data. Furthermore, the ABS excludes sole traders and focuses on businesses with active ABNs that are registered for GST. This methodology usually underestimates the total number of businesses in a local economy, specifically many of the sole traders and/or home-based businesses.

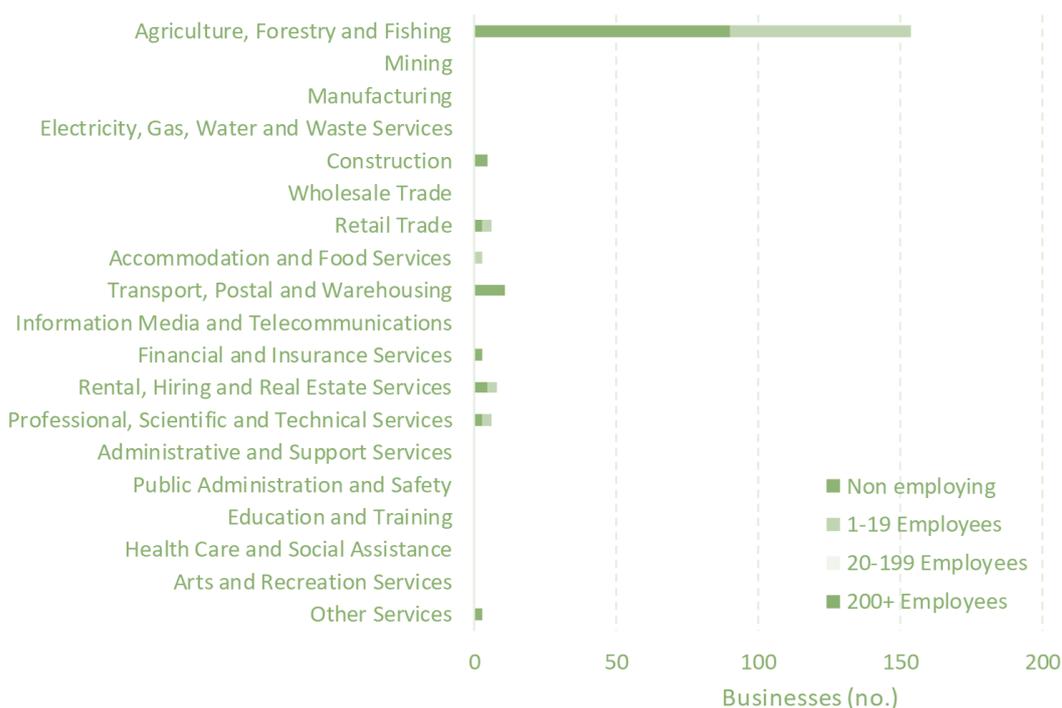
Figure 2.11. Business Counts, Karoonda East Murray, 2019



Note: Location based on registered address of businesses.
Source: ABS (2020).

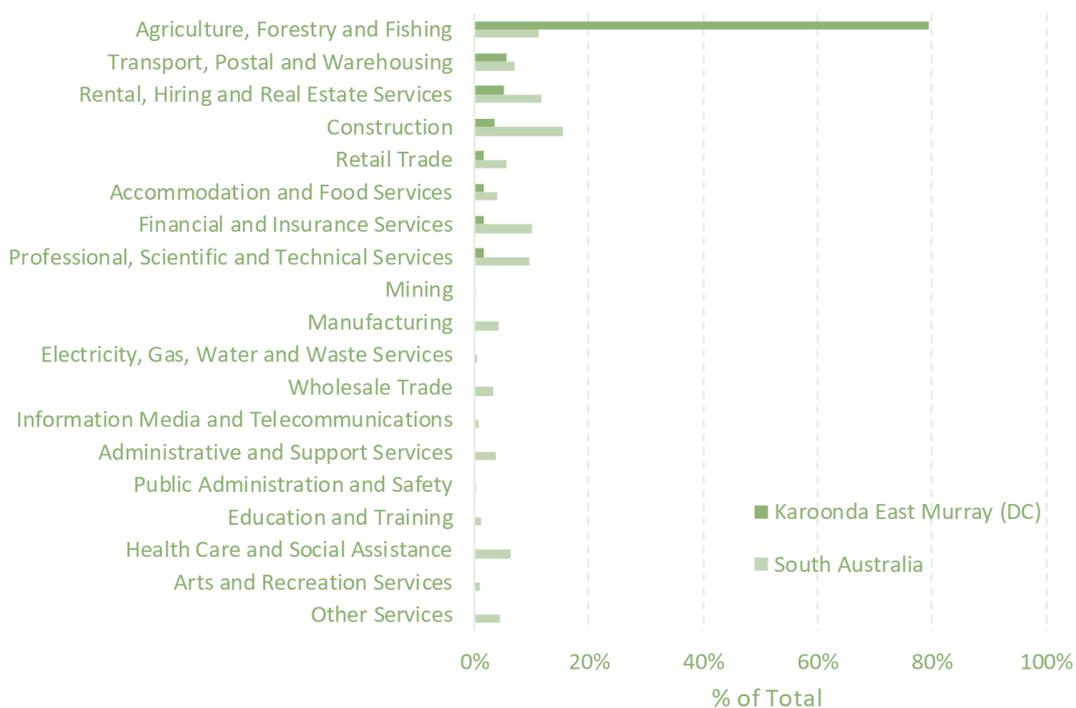


Figure 2.12. Business Counts, by Industry, Karoonda East Murray, 2019



Source: ABS (2020).

Figure 2.13. Business Counts, by Industry, 2019



Source: ABS (2020).



2.8 Labour Force and Unemployment

Small Area Labour Market (SALM) data from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment was not available for the Karoonda East Murray LGA, however, ABS Census data shows a deterioration in labour market conditions over the past decade. Employment and labour force totals in the region have declined. Further, the unemployment rate has risen (despite remaining near 5% in 2016) and the participation rate has declined.

While this data is by 'place of usual residence', 'journey to work' data shows a high proportion of the local workforce also lives in Karoonda East Murray, meaning the 'place of work' data are unlikely to significantly differ from the results of the 'place of usual residence' data.

Table 4: Labour Force Statistics, Karoonda East Murray

	2006	2011	2016
Employed	564	492	478
Unemployed	20	11	26
Labour force	584	503	504
Not in labour force	321	289	335
Unemployment rate	3.4%	2.2%	5.2%
Participation rate	64.5%	63.5%	60.1%

Note: Place of usual residence data.

Sources: ABS (2017), ABS (2012), ABS (2007).

Small Area Labour Market (SALM) data

SALM data for Karoonda East Murray was not available from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment due to the changeover from the 2011 to the 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).

SALM data for the LGA will become available upon release of the March quarter 2020 publication in June 2020.

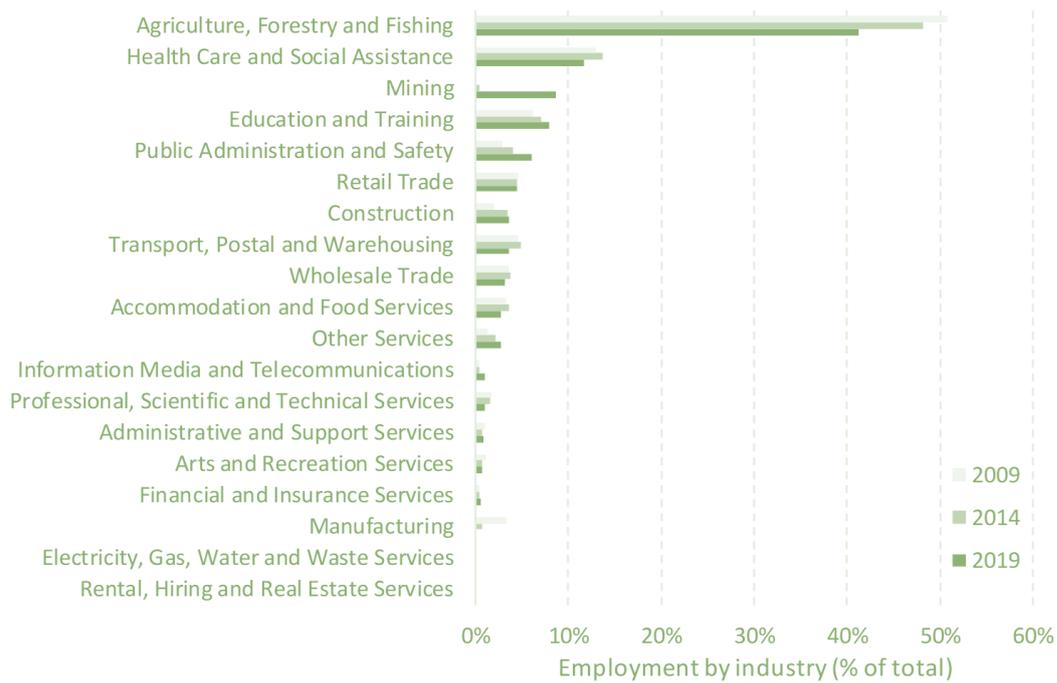
2.9 Employment

Employment in Karoonda East Murray is dominated by the agriculture industry, which accounted for over 40% of employment in 2018-19 (down from over 50% a decade earlier). However, this industry has been in decline over the past decade, with agriculture employment falling by 80 persons since 2008-09.

The local mining industry has emerged over the past decade, which has helped to diversify the economy somewhat. Other sectors contribute only a small number of jobs locally. Some industries are not present at all in the area.

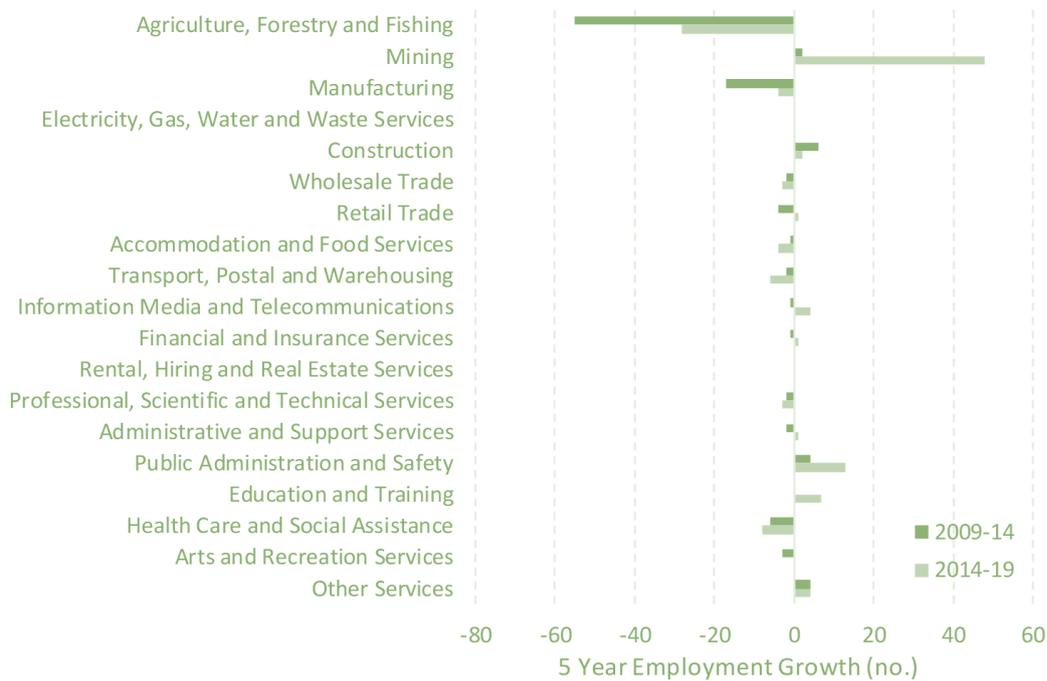


Figure 2.14. Employment by Industry, Karoonda East Murray



Note: Place of work data.
Sources: Economy.id (2020).

Figure 2.15. Employment growth (no.), Karoonda East Murray



Source: Economy.id (2020).



2.10 Journey to Work

Analysis of 'journey to work' data from the 2016 Census shows that 19% of local residents leave the Karoonda East Murray region every day to go to work, while 78% of employed residents live and work in the region. With 467 employed residents in the region in 2016, and only 444 jobs in the region, this demonstrates that there are simply not enough jobs within the Karoonda East Murray LGA for all the local resident workers, which means that some have to look outside the region for work.

While the vast majority of workers in the region also live in the region (82%), the local jobs in the Karoonda East Murray region that are not filled by resident workers are generally occupied by residents from adjoining LGAs (Table 6). This is also the case in terms of the employment locations of residents leaving the region for work.

In terms of industry, there is some migration of agricultural workers into and out of Karoonda East Murray every day for work.

Table 5. Journey to Work, Karoonda East Murray, 2016

Location	Number	%
Employed residents in the area		
Live and work in the area	364	78%
Live in the area, but work outside	88	19%
No fixed place of work	15	3%
Total employed residents in the area	467	100%
Workers in the area		
Live and work in the area	364	82%
Work in the area, but live outside	80	18%
Total workers in the area	444	100%

Source: Economy.id (2020).

Table 6. Journey to Work, by LGA, Karoonda East Murray, 2016

Top 5 employment locations of resident workers by Council			Top 5 residential location of local workers by Council		
Council	No.	%	Council	No.	%
Karoonda East Murray (DC)	364	77.9%	Karoonda East Murray (DC)	364	77.8%
Murray Bridge (RC)	23	4.9%	Murray Bridge (RC)	20	4.3%
Mid Murray (DC)	21	4.5%	Loxton Waikerie (DC)	15	3.2%
Southern Mallee (DC)	21	4.5%	Mid Murray (DC)	14	3.0%
The Coorong (DC)	15	3.2%	The Coorong (DC)	14	3.0%

Source: Economy.id (2020).

Table 7. Journey to Work by Industry of Employment, 2016

Top 5 employment industries of resident workers who work outside the Karoonda East Murray		Top 5 employment industries of outside residents who work in the Karoonda East Murray	
Industry	No.	Industry	No.
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	41	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	33
Health Care & Social Assistance	14	Public Administration & Safety	17
Construction	11	Health Care & Social Assistance	16
Education & Training	8	Education & Training	13
Wholesale Trade	7	Wholesale Trade	10

Source: ABS (2017).



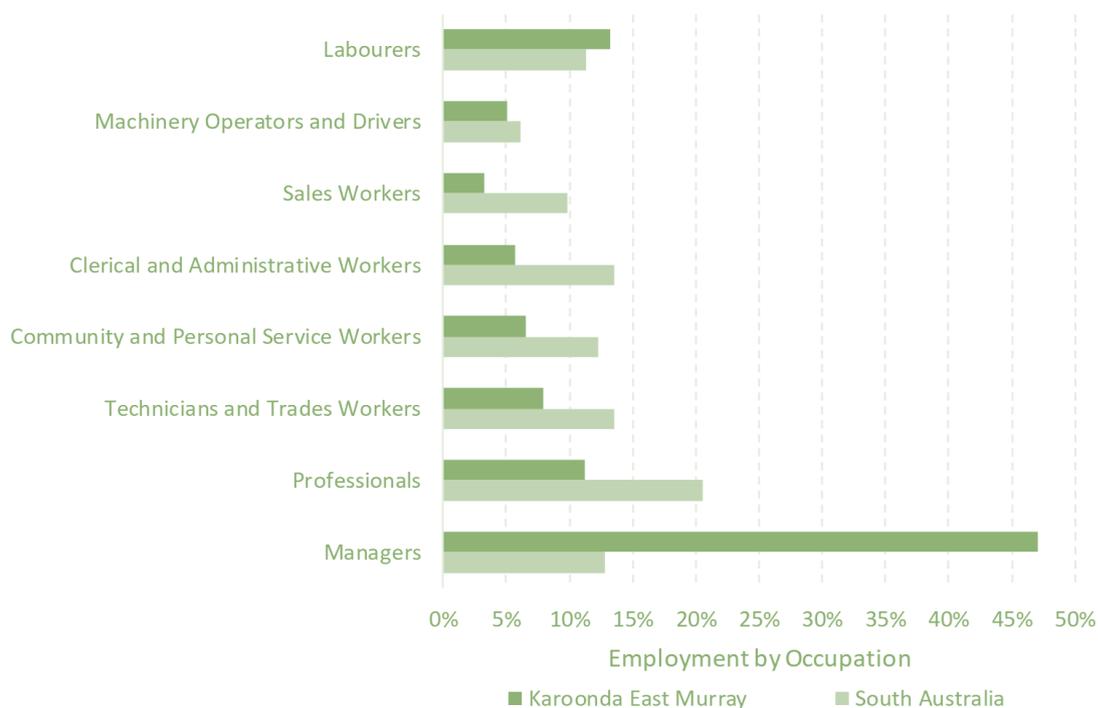
2.11 Skills

Workforce and Skills

The skills in an economy can be considered in terms of its local resident workforce (i.e. the people who reside in the area and their associated skills) as well as in terms of the local workers (i.e. the people who work locally). Because 82% of local jobs are filled by local people, these two perspectives will align to a certain degree. A shortage or surplus in any area will help to understand any existing skills gaps in the local resident workforce.

Owing to the heavy reliance on the local agricultural industry for employment, the Karoonda East Murray region had a significantly higher proportion of managers and a slightly higher proportion of labourers working in the area than the South Australia average in 2016. This data further highlights the lack of diversity in employment opportunities within the region.

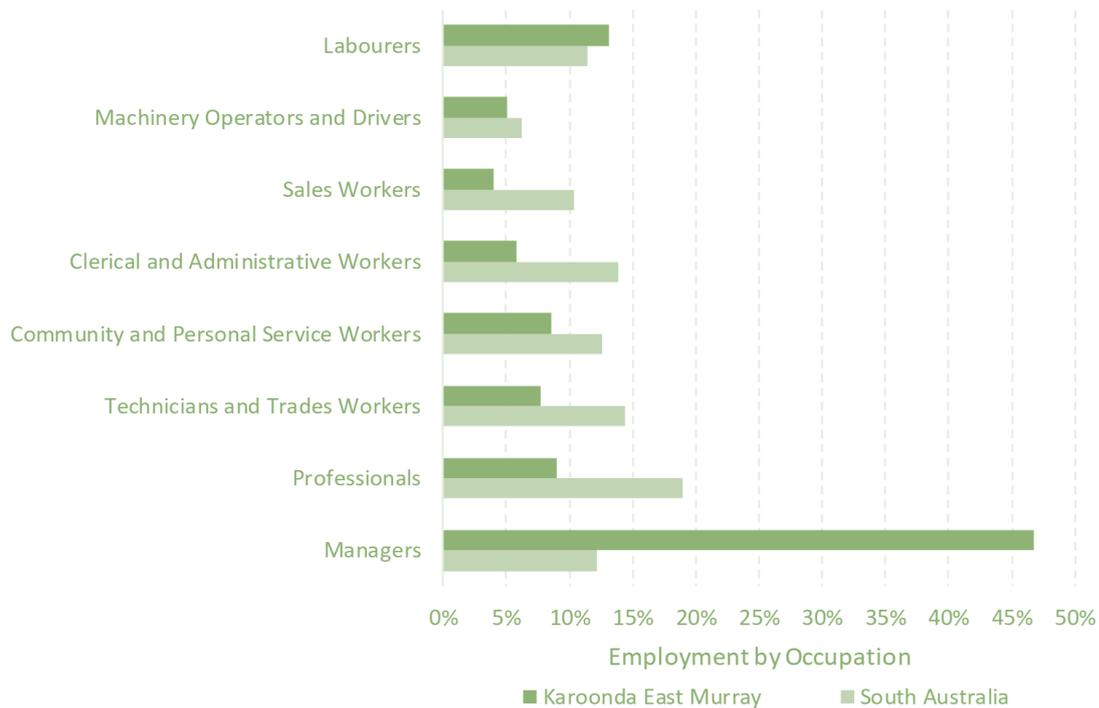
Figure 2.16. Employment by Occupation, 2016



Note: Place of work data.
Source: ABS (2017).



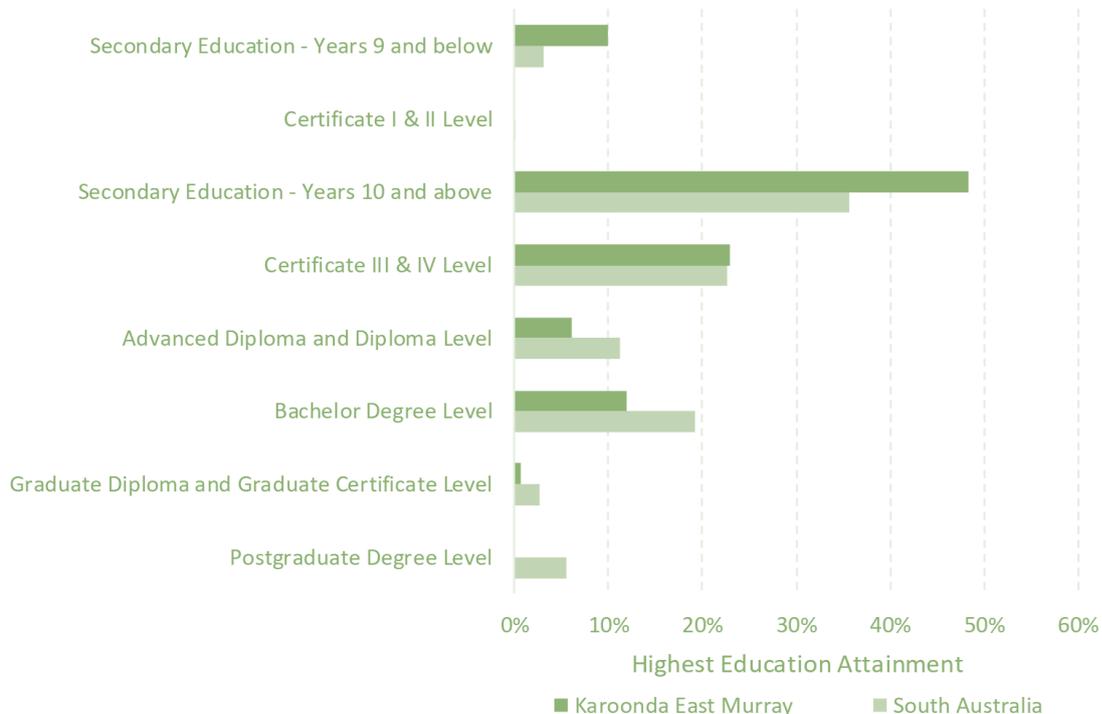
Figure 2.17. Employment by Occupation, 2016



Note: Place of usual residence data.
Source: ABS (2017).

Due to the high demand for unskilled labour to work within the agricultural industry, and the lack of job opportunities in other industries requiring higher education, the Karoonda East Murray region has a significantly higher proportion of residents listing 'secondary education' as their highest education attainment in 2016 compared with South Australia.

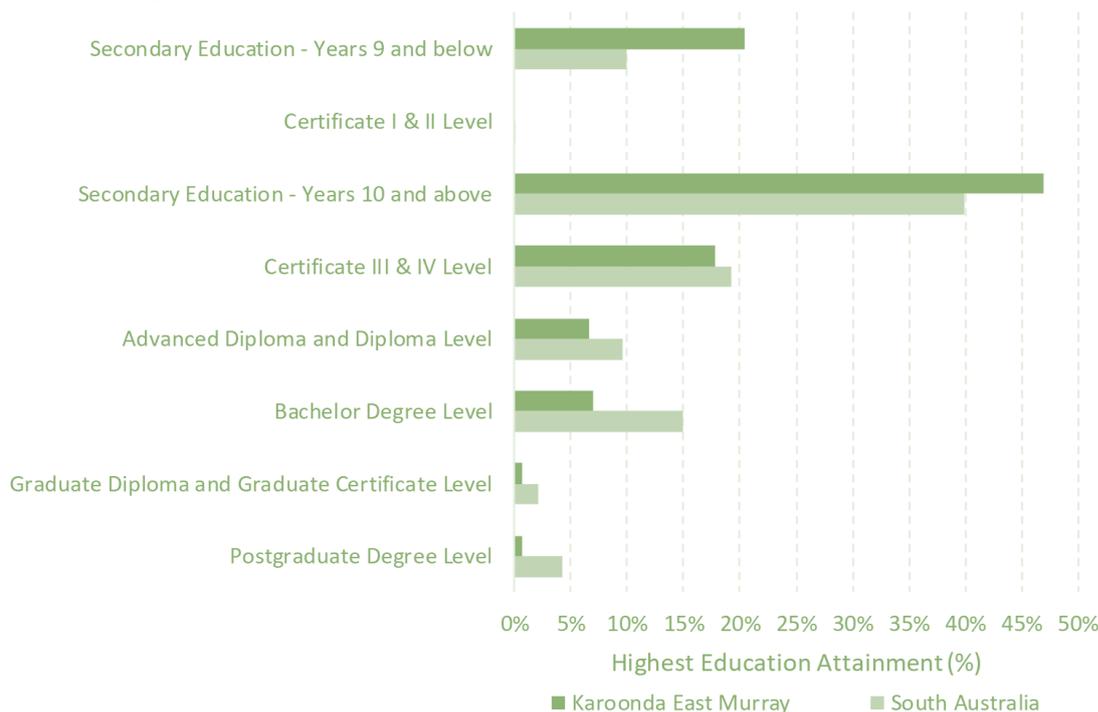
Figure 2.18. Highest Education Attainment, 2016



Note: Place of work data.
Source: ABS (2017).



Figure 2.19. Highest Education Attainment, 2016



Note: Place of usual residence data.
Source: ABS (2017).

2.12 Value of Employment

Different industries contribute varying degrees of value to the local economy based on a variety of factors, including supply chains, price of goods sold and overall position in the economy. As highlighted below, financial services, construction, mining and agriculture are amongst the highest value-adding industries in the local economy.

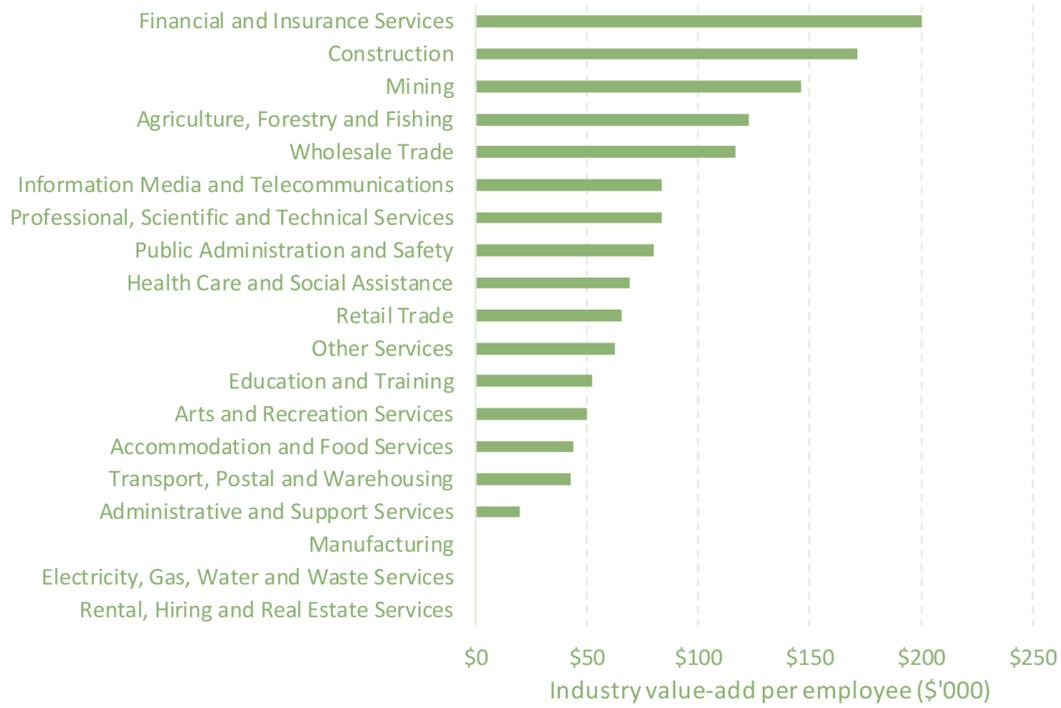
High Value-Adding Jobs

In terms of economic development, growing high value-adding jobs will have greater benefits to the overall economy than increases in low value-adding jobs. The core difference is related to the relevant supply chains of these industries as well as the wages that are often paid across those industries. High value-adding jobs will provide a greater ability for workers to spend more in the local economy, which will create a greater flow-on benefit locally. Additionally, businesses that have more local supply chains (or the opportunity for them) will have the ability to support additional businesses, creating more value in the local economy.

Because one job may offer greater value than another, this does not mean that lower value-adding jobs are not important. These jobs often provide employment for youth and offer an entry point into the workforce for many residents. Rather, understanding the value of employment should guide the balance of effort and resources in terms of various industry development and investment attraction activities.



Figure 2.20. Industry Value-Add per Employee, Karoonda East Murray, 2018-19



Source: Economy.id (2020).



2.13 Key Industry Sectors

2.13.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is the main industry in the Karoonda East Murray region, both in terms of its contribution to employment and IVA. The value of key agricultural commodities produced in the region in 2015-16 included:

- Cereal crops (\$22.8 million) including:
 - Wheat (\$12.1 million)
 - Barley (\$9.6 million)
 - Other cereal crops (\$1.1 million)
- Livestock slaughterings (\$22.3 million) including:
 - Pigs (\$9.7 million)
 - Sheep and lambs (\$9.7 million)
 - Other livestock slaughterings (\$2.9 million)
- Wool (\$8.7 million)

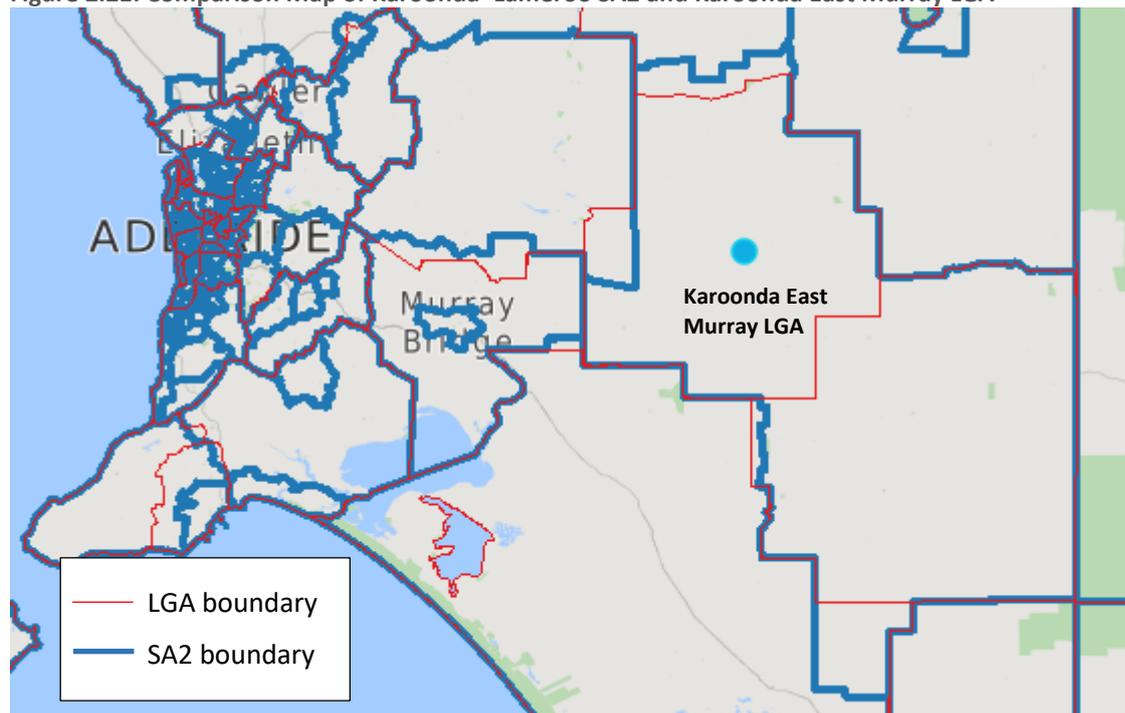
2.13.2 Tourism

2.13.2.1 Visitation

Due to low sample sizes, it is not possible to provide an accurate time series of visitation to the Karoonda East Murray region. Further, data was only available at the Karoonda–Lameroo SA2 level, with the Karoonda East Murray LGA comprising around 31% of the Karoonda–Lameroo SA2 (see Figure 2.21).

A 10-year average of survey data shows a total of 19,200 persons visited the Karoonda East Murray region in the year to September 2019.

Figure 2.21. Comparison Map of Karoonda–Lameroo SA2 and Karoonda East Murray LGA



Source: ABS (2019b).

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) data showed the Karoonda East Murray LGA hosts very few tourists annually. Of the visitors the region does host, the majority are day-trip visitors (with this visitor type tending to have the lowest per trip spend of all the visitor types), while international visitors are almost non-existent.

The purposes of visiting the Karoonda East Murray region are evenly split across holiday, ‘visiting friends and relatives’ and business travellers.

Table 8: Tourism Visitation Statistics, Karoonda East Murray

	No.	%
<i>Visitors ('000)</i>		
Day-trip	12.5	65%
Domestic overnight	6.6	34%
International	0.2	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>19.2</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Visitor Nights ('000)</i>		
Domestic overnight	14.5	66%
International	7.4	34%
<i>Total</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Average length of stay (nights)</i>		
Domestic overnight	2.2	NA
International	40.2	NA
<i>Total</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Purpose of visit ('000)</i>		
Holiday	6.6	34%
Visiting friends and relatives	6.1	32%
Business	6.1	32%
Other reason	0.5	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>19.2</i>	<i>100%</i>

Note: 10-year average data due to low sample sizes. Some columns may not sum due to rounding.

Source: TRA (2020).

2.13.2.2 Accommodation Profile

Searches across commercial accommodation booking platforms including TripAdvisor, Booking.com and Airbnb showed no results for the Karoonda region.

The only commercial accommodation options in the region are the Karoonda Cabin and Caravan Park (which includes two cabins and eight powered sites) (Karoonda Cabin & Caravan Park, 2020) and Apex Caravan Park (which provides powered and unpowered sites for caravans, campers and motorhomes), both located in Karoonda.

The towns of Karoonda and Wanbi are situated on the main highway to Loxton. Recognising that Karoonda East Murray is a through destination, the Council invested in a silo art project in 2019 to entice travellers to stop, visit, buy a coffee, get some lunch, fill up with petrol, or stay for dinner and overnight for the nightly light show.

Karoonda's silo art may well influence travellers to other Riverland destinations to choose to go via the Karoonda Highway rather than the Sturt Highway (adding, for example, only 15 minutes to the trip from Adelaide to Berri), potentially opening up the region to a new cohort of visitors.



2.14 Property

There has been little construction activity within the Karoonda–Lameroo SA2 (with the Karoonda East Murray LGA comprising around 31% of this SA2 region) in recent years. The region has averaged just 5.5 residential building approvals per year since 2012, and a total (residential and non-residential) building approvals average of \$3.9 million per year. With the Karoonda East Murray LGA’s population declining in 2018 (latest data available), there is unlikely to be much demand for residential construction in the near term.

Residential property sales and price data for the Karoonda East Murray region was not available from the Real Estate Institute of South Australia.

Figure 2.22. Building Approvals, Karoonda–Lameroo SA2



Source: ABS (2019a).



2.15 Summary

This analysis has revealed numerous elements of the local economy.

Karoonda East Murray's population fell in 2018 and is lower than it was in 2001. Further, the region has an older population than the South Australian average, with population forecasts suggesting the region's population will continue declining and ageing out to the year 2036. Declining population means there is likely to be a lack of demand for construction activity in the region in the near-term, while the continued ageing of the region's population poses ongoing risks to the region's labour market.

Karoonda Easy Murray is heavily reliant on the local agriculture industry, both in terms of providing employment and industry value-added activity. Unfortunately, the local agriculture industry has been in decline for more than a decade, which has been a major driver of the region's sharp economic downturn since the GFC.

The heavy reliance on one industry is problematic, making the economic fortunes of the region highly susceptible to changes in global demand and other macroeconomic trends (as evidenced over the last decade). Further, agriculture is a highly volatile industry and sensitive to changes in weather conditions. The lack of diversity in employment opportunities also makes it difficult to retain younger residents, accelerating the ageing of the region's population.

The tourism industry in Karoonda East Murray is very small. Developing this industry is an opportunity for the region moving forward, with benefits including diversifying the local economy as well as providing employment opportunities for younger residents and helping to keep them in the region.

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3. Consultation

Following the economic analysis, consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken to ground-truth the economic analysis data, including individual interviews with key stakeholders as well as two workshops with local business owners, including farmers.

In addition, Council held visioning workshops between December 2018 and August 2019 for the development of *Community Vision 2040*. An analysis of this feedback contributed to the identification of the gaps and opportunities experienced by the Karoonda East Murray community.

3.1 Local Strengths and Weaknesses

Consultation including identifying the strengths and weaknesses of operating a business in the Karoonda East Murray region, as well as opportunities to strengthen the local economy. The strengths and weaknesses identified are summarised in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Strengths and weaknesses of operating a business in Karoonda East Murray

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated area (especially during COVID-19) in comfortable proximity to Adelaide and Murray Bridge Genuine country lifestyle, loyal local community, great place to raise a family Better work hours, work/life balance than in Adelaide; 1-minute commute Small population offers the opportunity to build better client relations/customers become friends Less competition Cheaper power Agricultural productivity is very high for the cost of land, underground water is reliable The Karoonda township looks well-loved, 'feels solid' and is usually bustling Close to key regional centres and markets for produce, well placed to access eastern markets; good roads Space, there is lots of land Great (R-12) school and hospital, dementia unit/ access to aged care Central location for some business types Good climate for livestock - potentially intensive On-farm storage is possible National conservation parks/natural beauty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile phone and internet blackspots Declining/ageing population Few rental homes/little accommodation Poor quality hospitality businesses Unreliable, expensive freight Part-time doctor No bank Marginal country with unpredictable rainfall The National Heavy Vehicles Registration system process is a massive waste of time Lack of skilled local employees People living/shopping out of town Poor access to training and development Lack of visitor accommodation Buying power of locals is very low Absentee commercial property owners Lack of jobs for partners/spouses Road network is not adequate for road trains/Need to be able to get b-doubles into farm gates <p><i>"Sometimes I have to go and sit on top of hill to wait for a customer to call, which has a huge impact on productivity. Plus, the younger farmhands don't like being out of range".</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile phone and internet blackspots mean missed opportunities Difficult to recruit and retain good farm workers, and there's a lack of job opportunities for their partners

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to trades – e.g. plumber, stonemason • Lack of human services – no one major thing but the diminution of numerous small services compounds into ever-greater frustration • We’re taxed the same as city dwellers but do not receive the same services • Lack of gas and water • Isolation – e.g. experienced by young mothers • Vacancies in Karoonda mainstreet • Need better facilities and better opportunities for kids
<p>Opportunities for Economic Growth</p>	<p>Opportunities for Visitor Attraction</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant Education Department houses, vacant mainstreet buildings, vacant farmhouses • Organic farming • Develop and market brand for Mallee produce, especially lamb • Market a tree change lifestyle – promote work/life balance • Develop aged care offering • Business mentoring/training – mock interviews, speaker in school program, presentations by successful locals, how to write a business plan, etc • Develop a website to advertise local job opportunities (run by RDA for the Murraylands region) • Attract renewable energy projects - solar/wind farms • Attract value adding businesses – e.g. biodiesel plant (make diesel out of grain), agricultural manufacturing business (field bins), intensive livestock to access the eastern markets, recycling plant • Tap into the visiting demographic (grey nomads with caravans) – e.g. set up a caravan manufacturing/ accessories/parts business • Agri-education – training/incubator for young farmers • Holding yards in Karoonda for stock • Truck stop • Rentafarmhouse.com.au matches families with farmhouses for just \$1 a week (from all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glamping/cabins on-farm • Leverage large available space to attract new tourism business to the area – e.g. hot air balloons, aeroplane club/ultralight aviation • Develop/promote Pioneer Park • Dirt bikes – clubs and comps • Bird watching/Mallee-fowl spotting • Trails/national park – walking/hiking, mountain-biking, geocaching • Customer-centric businesses – open when tourists are here, cross-promote local businesses and attractions, great customer service • Dark skies – star gazers • Wetlands in town centre • Develop the railway as an attraction – re-open the railway café (add art gallery), railway pull carts, railway memorabilia • Enable free camping in the mainstreet (so grey nomads and others can access town businesses easily) • Reactivate the Karoonda quilt shop

over the world)	
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Source: Lucid Economics

3.2 Gap Analysis

The consultation and a gap analysis of Council’s visioning workshops also revealed what the Karoonda East Murray community would most like to have available locally.

“We can’t just jump in the car and go to the movies”.

“If you’re not into sport, there is really nothing to do after school or work.”

“A community shed where people can gather and just tinker would be a great mental health thing.”

Table 10. Gaps identified by the Karoonda East Murray community

Consultation	Visioning Workshops
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to fresh produce and quality food outlets (for lunch and dinner) • Local community media/ communication platform • Plumber, another mechanic, another carpenter • Industrial land (with services/utilities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A nice café that serves nice coffee, healthy breakfast/ brunch/lunch, offers an alternative from the pub, appeals to visitors to the silos • Decent grocer • Nice pub • Shops

Source: Lucid Economics

“I would love to be able to go down to the local café with my dog and have bacon and eggs for breakfast, but there’s just nowhere to go”.



4. Role of Local Government in Economic Development

Whilst Councils are frequently tarred with the old ‘roads, rates and rubbish’ brush, their responsibilities are in fact much broader as defined in the South Australian Local Government Act 1999, excerpt shown below.

- Provide services and facilities that benefit its area, its ratepayers, residents and visitors
- Provide for the welfare, wellbeing and interests of individuals and groups within its community
- Protect its area from natural and other hazards and to mitigate the effects of such hazards
- Manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment in an ecologically sustainable manner, and to improve amenity
- Provide infrastructure for its community and for development
- **Promote its area and to provide an attractive climate and locations for the development of business, commerce, industry and tourism**
- Establish or support organisations or programs that benefit people in its area or local government generally

Local government has a very important role to play in local economic development, and this is even truer in regional South Australia, a capital city state where state governments tend to be city-centric in their policies and politics.

Local government must play a key leadership role in local economic development. Councils are the only agency structured to service the local community and the only body attuned to local needs, constraints and opportunities. Through boosting the local economy, councils can support broader community wellbeing and deliver many positive social outcomes as well.

Local government therefore must champion the local economy and be the driving force enabling economic growth. If DC Karoonda East Murray doesn't, then who will?

Councils have numerous levers to create an environment conducive to economic growth, investment and job creation. Figure 4.1 below highlights the core areas of local government influence.

Figure 4.1. Role of Local Government in Economic Development



Source: Lucid Economics

4.1 What the community sees as Council's role in economic and tourism development

Stakeholder consultation included asking what role the Council should play in economic development. The following key themes emerged most strongly:

- Actively attract targeted businesses to the area
- Attract more visitors to the area
- Incentivise people to move to the area
- Reduce red tape - Assist new business development applications/Abolish permits
- Support the local agriculture industry as strongly as the tourism industry
- Maintain a job/trades register of people looking for work in various categories
- Consult the community frequently
- Better roads/infrastructure for the agriculture industry
- Advocacy
- Communicate opportunities for the business community – e.g. grant funding
- Develop more tourism infrastructure, building on the silo art and Pioneer Park attractions
- Leverage opportunities like The Bend Motorsport Park – e.g. accommodation offering

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5. Strategic Context

Council's economic and tourism development activities sit within a broader regional and state context - local government boundaries don't mean much to businesses.

This section provides an overview of the strategic context in which the DC Karoonda East Murray is operating and outlines the connections between Council's strategy and regional and state objectives.

5.1 Economic Development Strategic Context

5.1.1 Local Context

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF KAROONDA EAST MURRAY

Council's *Community Vision 2040* outlines how the Karoonda East Murray community will achieve its 2040 vision for a prosperous community, and Council's Annual Business plan 2020-2021 identifies what Council aims to achieve in 2020-2021 to support this, as shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11. Council's Pathway towards the Prosperous Community Vision 2040

Community Vision 2040	Annual Business Plan 2020-2021	Identified Priority Projects
Developing an ambitious Economic Development Strategy	Complete the development of Economic Development & Tourism Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise people to move to the area
Creating new and unique visitor experiences and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelopment of karoonda.com, tourist park bookings and visitor information systems Increased promotion of the Karoonda township and broader district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-farm visitor accommodation Enable free camping in the mainstreet Market the region's visitor attractions Develop the railway/station café
Developing and supporting active local business associations	Strengthen ties between Council, Mallee Business Association and local agricultural businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business mentoring Grant to attract in-demand skills
Building and maintaining relationships with federal and state governments, regional development boards and business advocates	Provide support for industry and investment attraction activities	
Enhancing linkages between schools, educational institutions and local industry	Identify funding opportunities for local business initiatives and training	

Source: District Council of Karoonda East Murray

MOBILE FOOD VANS POLICY

In September 2020, Council adopted the Mobile Food Vendor Location Rules Policy, setting a fee structure comprising of an annual fee option of \$800 and a monthly fee option of \$80 (ex-GST).

KAROONDA BUSINESS GROWTH PRECINCT/RURAL SERVICES INDUSTRIAL PARK

Council received a Regional Growth Fund grant of \$125,000 to fast track power and water installation at the Karoonda Business Growth Precinct/Karoonda business industrial park.

Karoonda's largest business, WSB Agricultural Distributors, had committed to building a new \$1 million agriculture dealership facility on the site adjacent Council's industrial park, immediately following the installation of the high voltage powerline.

'Our expansion will create significant jobs - six new jobs in management, administration and finance, parts interpreters, diesel technicians, precision ag technicians, machinery assembly, engineering, welding and basic manufacturing. This will include bringing two to three new families into the community'.

CEO, WSB

The expansion of WSB will transform Karoonda's industrial site into a rural services park and economic hub, providing economic confidence and fully serviced, cost-effective industrial allotments to attract businesses to Karoonda.

MURRAY RIVER AGRITOURISM AND FOOD CLUSTER

In August 2020, RDA Murraylands & Riverland received a \$250,000 Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) grant for the expansion of the Murray River Agritourism and Food Cluster project which supports emerging food and agritourism businesses at Blanchetown, Mannum, Morgan, Murray Bridge, Tailem Bend and Waikerie.

Karoonda East Murray's close proximity to this region potentially offers opportunities to participate.

DROUGHT COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth Government's Drought Communities Programme provided two tranches of \$1 million in grant funding to drought-stricken communities in South Australia (and other states). Karoonda East Murray's two rounds of funding have been allocated to the projects shown in Table 5.2 below.

Table 12. Karoonda East Murray Drought Communities Programme Projects

Round 1	Round 2
Provision of childcare centre in Karoonda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project was Highly Commended at the Local Government Professionals (SA) 2020 Awards 	Mallee Playground Trail (\$300k) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New play spaces for the Wynarka, Karoonda and Wanbi townships, linked to form the 'Mallee Playground Trail'
Silo painting and light projections	Drought Resilience Program (\$240k) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including a coordinator to upskill farming

<p>Range of community projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karoonda Institute Upgrade - restoration including new public toilet • Karoonda Cemetery - provision of public toilet • Pioneer Park - connection of electricity to the grounds, provision of public toilet • Wynarka Recreation Reserve - solar panels, light towers, replace hot water system • Karoonda Golf Club - solar panels, irrigation bore 	<p>Community Buildings, Infrastructure and Events</p>
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WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Waste management is an increasingly significant area of focus for Council. Council will undertake a review of its waste management practices and has budgeted to develop a waste facility strategy in the 2020-2021 financial year.

The review will include looking regional opportunities, for example through the Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association, which is also planning to develop a regional waste strategy with the support of the RDA.

A local community member has developed a proposal to establish a factory to recycle items and produce raw materials for future use ('total recycling plant'). Elements of this proposal could potentially feed into these strategies and contribute to developing a circular economy in the region.

5.1.2 Regional Context

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA MURRAYLANDS & RIVERLAND (RDAMR)

RDAMR is a not-for-profit organisation that acts as a conduit between all spheres of government and the Murraylands & Riverland business and residential communities to maximise economic opportunities for the region.

As with all regional South Australian RDAs, RDAMR is funded by all three spheres of government, including the eight Murraylands and Riverland councils.

RDAMR's vision is: *The Murraylands and Riverland is recognised internationally as a vibrant, world leading circular economy.* To achieve this vision, the *RDAMR Strategic Plan 2020-2023* focuses on the four pillars outlined below along with their supporting goals.

1. Business

- Connect our businesses to advisory, industry, government and international experts, resources and opportunities to increase capability, innovation, best practice, sustainability and profit.
- Develop business investment opportunities in the region.

2. Skills

- Identify, align and connect skills demand with supply to support businesses to achieve their goals.
- Design, pilot and run programs to support the development of required skills in region.
- Facilitate connection with national and international skills supplies to bring unavailable skills into region.

3. Infrastructure

- Work with industry and government to identify, test, prioritise and help develop funding proposals and implementation plans for regional infrastructure (built, natural and knowledge) that supports our businesses and communities.

4. Community that supports regional development

- Work across the community to enhance community participation and engagement in, and the development of, initiatives that improve business performance, individual wellbeing and community resilience.

Regional Development

- Develop a large cross-regional, multi-stakeholder proposal that seeks to attract significant new business and investment into the region.
- Develop new programs, along with delivering existing projects, to support a critical mass of regional businesses to improve their business performance.
- Develop or procure a platform that matches priority regional skills demand with supply.
- Provide pathways for the development of high-priority regional skills.
- Identify and develop proposals with partners for priority regional infrastructure (built, natural and knowledge).
- Identify and map connections between regional community groups and organisations that support ongoing improvements in community resilience.
- Create opportunities for positive international recognition of the Murraylands and Riverland as a destination of choice to visit and do business.

Murraylands & Riverland LGA (MRLGA)

The MRLGA is a Regional Subsidiary established by the same eight councils that are partners of the RDAMR. The MRLGA's purpose is to undertake coordinating, advocacy and representational roles for its member councils at a regional level, and facilitate and coordinate activities of local government at a regional level related to environment, economic and social development with the object of achieving continual improvement for the benefit of Murraylands and Riverland communities.

The MRLGA's vision is: *Attractive, Liveable Region – Prosperous Communities*. To achieve this vision, the *MRLGA Strategic Plan 2020-2025* is based on the four priority areas outlined below along with their supporting objectives.

1. Connected Region

- 1.1 -Improve transport movement, efficiency and safety
- 1.2-Attract funding for 'fit for purpose' transport infrastructure
- 1.3 -Support big data analytics that increase efficiencies
- 1.4 -Improve internet and mobile coverage
- 1.5 -Increase uptake of digital collaboration platforms and information sharing across councils

2. Resilient Communities

- 2.1 -Improve social connectedness, especially across priority groups
- 2.2 -Further improve service delivery
- 2.3 -Support 'Ageing well' practices and planning
- 2.4 -Apply evidence-based research to improve housing options
- 2.5 -Improve access to skills development programs

3. Healthy Environment

- 3.1 -Plan for changing water security and stewardship
- 3.2 -Create sustainable regional waste management
- 3.3 -Improve climate change adaptation
- 3.4 -Sustainable management of natural environments & systems

4. Economic Opportunity

- 4.1 -Initiate place-based economic development
- 4.2 -Attract investment for enabling infrastructure
- 4.3 -Coordinate effort to improve MRLGA councils’ shared services
- 4.4 -Attract and develop skills to grow the region

A number of RDA-MR and MRLGA’s goals and objectives align with the economic development priority projects identified in this strategy, as demonstrated in tables 13 and 14 below.

Table 13. Comparison of Priority Economic Development Projects with RDAMR and MRLGA Goals

DCKEM Economic Development Priority Projects	RDAMR Strategic Goals	MRLGA Objectives
Incentivise people to move to the area	Develop a large cross-regional, multi-stakeholder proposal that seeks to attract significant new business and investment into the region.	Attract and develop skills to grow the region Apply evidence-based research to improve housing options
Market the rural lifestyle/tree change	Develop a large cross-regional, multi-stakeholder proposal that seeks to attract significant new business and investment into the region.	Attract and develop skills to grow the region
Business mentoring	Work across the community to enhance community participation and engagement in, and the development of, initiatives that improve business performance, individual wellbeing and community resilience.	Attract and develop skills to grow the region
Grants to attract in-demand skills	Facilitate connection with national and international skills supplies to bring unavailable skills into region.	Attract and develop skills to grow the region

Source: Lucid Economics

Table 14. Comparison of Secondary Economic Development Projects with RDAMR and MRLGA Goals

DCKEM Economic Development Secondary Priority Projects	RDAMR Strategic Goals	MRLGA Objectives
Rent vacant farmhouses		Apply evidence-based research to improve housing options



Mindarie Mine accommodation facility	Facilitate connection with national and international skills supplies to bring unavailable skills into region	Attract and develop skills to grow the region
Develop a tool to advertise local job vacancies	Identify, align and connect skills demand with supply to support businesses to achieve their goals Facilitate connection with national and international skills supplies to bring unavailable skills into region Develop or procure a platform that matches priority regional skills demand with supply	Increase uptake of digital collaboration platforms and information sharing across councils
Investment in existing businesses	Business beautification project required*	Attract investment for enabling infrastructure
Mallee produce branding		Initiate place-based economic development
Truck stop/car wash	Develop business investment opportunities in the region	Improve transport movement, efficiency and safety Attract funding for 'fit for purpose' transport infrastructure
Old East Murray School site	Develop business investment opportunities in the region	

Source: Lucid Economics

*Feedback from tourism industry

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

Karoonda East Murray sits largely in the Southern Murray Mallee subregion of the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape region, which is described thus: 'The Ngarkat and Billiatt Conservation Parks protect significant natural assets while the rest of the subregion is used for broadacre farming and groundwater irrigated crops and pastures'.

Billiatt Conservation Park is located partly in the Karoonda East Murray region (and partly in the Loxton-Waikerie and Southern Mallee local government areas) and protects over 265,000ha of mallee ecosystems, providing important habitat and refuges for 38 state-listed threatened flora species and 46 state-listed threatened fauna species.

The smaller Lowan Conservation Park and Bakara Conservation Park are also in Karoonda East Murray along with a large number of Heritage Agreements which allow for the formal and permanent protection of native vegetation and encourage conservation management by an agreement established between the landholder and the Minister for Environment.

Council periodically (e.g. on long weekends) receives enquiries from travellers for information about camping and maps for Lowan Conservation Park but little information is available, including on the Parks SA website (which only contains information about approximately 140 of South Australia's 350



national parks because “many of our small conservation parks do not encourage visitation and have no facility for visitors”).



Source: Friends of Murray Mallee Parks

5.1.3 South Australian Context

South Australian Government Plan

The South Australian Government defines its role in achieving its 3% annual growth target as ‘to foster sector-wide growth by establishing and maintaining a competitive business environment’.

The Government’s ‘growth state’ plan is based on four key areas for growth, as outlined below.

1. Trade and investment

- Includes \$7.5m to support industry productivity and strengthen biosecurity in the red meat and wool sectors over three years (from July 2019), to improve productivity, install infrastructure and enhance market access.

2. Skills and innovation

- The Regional South Australia Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) was signed in 2019 to assist a range of industries including agriculture, forestry, hospitality, tourism, health and construction to help fill critical employment gaps and drive economic growth.
- Nine Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) have been established including for agribusiness, tourism, and transport and manufacturing. RDAMR has officers on both the agribusiness and tourism ISCs.

3. Infrastructure

- \$10 million over three years (from 2018-19) towards the Commonwealth Government’s Mobile Black Spot Program.
- Upgrades of key regional corridors, including Port Augusta to Perth, and Renmark to Gawler.

4. Land, water and environment

- *SA Grain Industry Blueprint 2020-2030* developed to enable long-term planning and inform grain industry investment decisions through public-private partnerships, boost research and development, provide jobs and skills training at all levels, and ensure that SA producers, exporters, handlers, and manufacturers can continue to access overseas markets and will help to build export opportunities.

The South Australian Government has identified the following nine priority industry growth sectors 'because of their strong potential to meet increasing interstate and global demand, attract investors and leverage comparative advantages'.

- 1) Defence
- 2) Space
- 3) Hi-tech
- 4) Food, wine and agribusiness
- 5) International education
- 6) Tourism
- 7) Energy and mining
- 8) Health and medical
- 9) Creative industries

Sector strategies have been developed to identify the issues and roadblocks that are most impacting growth. Of most relevance to Karoonda East Murray are the sector strategies for agribusiness and tourism (the tourism sector plan is considered in section 6.2 below).

Food, Wine and Agribusiness Sector Plan

The *Food, Wine and Agribusiness Sector Plan* aims to grow these industries to contribute revenue of \$23 billion by 2030 to the South Australian economy, through the following priority areas:

Productivity and innovation, especially the adoption of new agricultural technologies

- Increase local processing capacity and improve efficiencies
- Drive agtech adoption
- Enhance research, development, technology and innovation
- Add value through the supply chain

Growing business capacity and expanding the skilled workforce

- Improve business capacity and capability
- Support workforce growth and development of skills through fit for purpose training and education
- Promote career opportunities

Improving digital and supply chain infrastructure

- Improving digital connectivity (including cyber security) and mobile phone coverage
- Strengthen supply chains and transport networks
- Improve regional infrastructure to support growth

Creating new market opportunities and expanding market access

- Develop market opportunities and create new products
- Improve market access through strong biosecurity systems, product integrity, traceability and food safety standards
- Promote our state and premium products

Ensuring sustainable access to resources and encouraging clean, smart production

- Increase sustainable access to limited natural resources

- Encourage increased access and use of recycled resources
- Protect resources from biosecurity threats and pest animals
- Implement production and processing techniques that minimise costs and environmental impacts to drive business benefits

Growing the operating environment through collaboration and cost reduction

- Nurture collaboration and co-investment
- Deliver smart regulation
- Minimise business costs and administrative burdens

Many of these priority areas are directly relevant to the Karoonda East Murray agriculture industry.

5.1.4 National Context

The Commonwealth Government connects with regional communities and local government predominantly through its Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees. The South Australian model is considered the gold standard because it is the only state/territory where all three spheres of government contribute funding to the RDAs (including all regional South Australian councils).

RDAMR is an invaluable resource for DC Karoonda East Murray, offering practical support as well as the might of working regionally, and having those direct connections into state and federal government, including very important Commonwealth grant funding programs for regional communities, such as the Building Better Regions Fund.

5.2 Tourism Strategic Context

Murray River, Lakes and Coorong Tourism Alliance (MRLCTA)

Karoonda East Murray is located in the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong tourism region, one of 11 South Australian tourism regions, each of which is coordinated by a regional tourism organisation in partnership with local and state governments.

Whilst the *Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Strategic Tourism Plan 2017–2020* ends in December 2020, the review and update process for a new plan has identified that most of the current strategies are still relevant and will be incorporated into the new plan, as well as seeking to align with the State Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030 and 2025 SA Regional Visitor Strategy.

The current MRLC tourism plan identifies “three highlights that will be a recurrent theme in our communications with funding partners, neighbouring regions and operators:

- Leveraging our regional ‘hero’ products and experiences.
- Cross-regional collaboration to create a natural visitor ‘draw’ into and across regions.
- Using data to target opportunity and demonstrate return on investment to attract new initiatives and investment in the visitor economy.”

The plan has seven key elements which are summarised below, along with the associated actions most relevant to Karoonda East Murray:

Driving demand (‘key focus’)

- Increased representation on Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW).
- Identify and promote the region’s ‘hero quality experiences’.

Working better together

- Develop touring route opportunities.

Supporting what we have

- Partner with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to identify tourism opportunities.

Increasing recognition of the value of tourism

- Ensure effective communication that demonstrates visitor economy benefits.

Using events to drive visitation

- Ensure www.themurrayriver.com is a reliable source of information about all regional events with data entered via the ATDW.
- Develop a Regional Event Strategy to promote the region as 'event capable'.

Doing business

- Advocate for improving efficiencies and removing barriers to business.

Investment in public infrastructure

- Streamline the process of supporting grant applications.
- Lobby for funding and infrastructure development.

The MRLCTA has also identified agritourism as a focus sector in the new MRLC tourism plan, and silo light/art activation has been identified as an important regional asset which will be leveraged within regional 'driving demand' activities.

Table 15. Identified Priority Tourism Development Projects and Tourism Industry Intel [or relevant MRLCTA Key Element]

DCKEM Tourism Priority Projects	Tourism Industry
On-farm visitor accommodation	[Supporting what we have]
Market the region's visitor attractions	[Driving demand]
Enable free camping in the mainstreet	First impressions of Council facilities are great (good playground, clean toilets, seating, no weeds, grass green and mown) but across the road, businesses look drab and uninviting
Leverage adjacent International Dark Sky Reserve	[Driving demand]
Support increased visitor numbers to events	The current MRLCTA tourism strategy included: <i>Develop a Regional Event Strategy to promote the region as 'event capable'</i> . Due for development in 2020, this project was postponed as a result of COVID-19 and budget restraints, however MRLCTA notes that 'events remain important as a driver of visitation, although this will look different post-C19
Develop/promote Pioneer Park; add wetlands	Work with industry and government to identify, test, prioritise and help develop funding proposals and implementation plans for regional

	infrastructure (built, natural and knowledge) that supports our businesses and communities*
Attract relevant special interest groups	[Supporting what we have]
Develop the railway/station café	Accommodation/food offerings required to fully realise silo activation
Customer/visitor-centric businesses	Business capability-building is required - in the tourism space, a stronger understanding of customer expectations and who their customers are

Source: Lucid Economics

*RDAMR goal

South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC)

South Australian Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030

The *SA Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030* outlines the following six strategic priorities as the focus of industry development:

- Marketing
- Experience and Supply Development
- Collaboration
- Industry Capability
- Leisure & Business Events
- Promoting the Value of Tourism

The plan also identifies several areas with ‘critical enabling roles for the visitor economy’:

- Public infrastructure
- Labour and skills
- Streamlining regulation

Driving growth in visitation is based around the key strengths of South Australia’s ‘appeal’ to various market segments:

- Exceptional food and drink experiences
- Immersive nature and wildlife experiences
- Events and festivals

Immersive nature and wildlife experiences are a significant opportunity for the development of Karoonda East Murray’s visitor economy.

Secondary Drivers are identified as:

- History and Heritage, and Aboriginal experiences
- Road Trips

Road trips are designated routes ‘encompassing multiple experiences, landscapes, views and accommodation options’. The SATC has designated six road trips including the Mighty Murray Way, which runs from high up in the Riverland all the way through to the Southern Ocean, via the nearby towns of Mannum, Murray Bridge and Tailem Bend. While Karoonda East Murray doesn’t feature on a state road trip, the MRLCTA considers the region an important location between the Riverland tourism region and the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong tourism region.

History and heritage are also key opportunities to develop the local visitor economy, which was also identified through stakeholder engagement.

South Australian Regional Visitor Strategy

The *South Australian Regional Visitor Strategy* was specifically tailored for each of South Australia's 11 tourism regions.

The strategy's eight strategic pillars are:

- Marketing
- Collaboration
- Accommodation
- Experience development
- Events
- Industry capability
- Cost of doing business
- Visitor infrastructure

“Regional tourism plays a key role in the South Australian visitor economy. More than 40% of the state's total visitor expenditure is spent in regions, while only 23% of South Australians live in regional areas”.

Regional Response Priorities

The strategy identifies 'each region's selection of experiences which reflect the strengths and priorities of that region'. In the strategy, Murray River, Lakes and Coorong priorities are 'to grow visitor spend from intrastate day trips as well as increase overnight visits from interstate, intrastate and a small international base. As the region is a predominantly self-drive visitor market, leveraging existing touring routes and promoting and developing events and hero tourism experiences that reflect the region's uniqueness will be key'.

The strategy's regional response priorities for the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong tourism region are reproduced below, with those response priorities relevant to Karoonda East Murray emphasised.

Marketing

- Strengthen the region's position as a vibrant multi-faceted destination.
- Leverage and build upon The Bend Motorsport Park's all-year motor sports program.
- Maximise the region's penetration in the drive and boating tourism markets.
- Further grow the caravan and camping sector.
- Rejuvenate the consumer perception around river shacks (traditional shacks have been transformed into high-standard accommodation).
- Increase the promotion of highly appealing houseboat experiences.
- Increase the region's digital marketing and leads to operators and ensure alignment with South Australian Tourism Commission's digital strategy.

Events

- Address seasonality by working with the region's existing strong calendar of events and expand on seasonal fringe opportunities.

Collaboration



- Seek ways to calculate traffic flows and visitation to the region to assist planning and business cases for investment.
- Leverage private and public sector support for research.
- Partner with the Adelaide Convention Bureau and promote the region as a pre-and post-convention touring opportunity.
- Collaborate with the region's five neighbours on the Southern Ocean Drive and Mighty Murray Way road trips to drive increased visitation and traffic flows.
- Encourage the region's Visitor Information Centres and outlets to expand their role as accessible touchpoints for visitors.

Industry capability

- Raise industry capability in the areas of digital marketing, booking distribution, business management, hospitality and customer service.
- Increase operator take-up of free Australian Tourism Data Warehouse listings.

Accommodation

- Grow the region's accommodation yields by fostering the development of 42 new rooms and upgrade of 54 rooms (from 3 to 4-star) by 2020.
- The region offers a growing range of ambient accommodation via houseboats, river shacks and glamping. Encourage the upgrade and ongoing development of experiential accommodation.
- Upgrade caravan parks to include more cabins and family-friendly amenities.

Experience development

- Develop the Murray Coorong 450km walking and cycling trail as a key experience in the region.
- Develop new Aboriginal experiences and on-water experiences.
- Use the region's new products (The Bend Motorsport Park and Monarto Zoo) as platforms for developing complementary experiences.
- Create new hero experiences at the Lower Lakes and northern ends of the region.

Visitor infrastructure

- Remove barriers to river-based tourism through the improvement of river infrastructure including navigational aids, moorings, boat washing facilities and other related visitor amenities.

Nature-Based Tourism Strategy

Nature Like Nowhere Else: Activating Nature-based Tourism in South Australia promotes developing experiences in nature 'that are like nowhere else', including:

- Standout walking journeys across the landscape
- Unrivalled native wildlife experiences in Adelaide
- Marine wildlife experiences without equal
- Cutting edge sensory experiences that leave a lasting impression

Of relevance to DC Karoonda East Murray, the opportunities identified in the strategy for 'standout walking journeys' include:

- Partner with Traditional Owners, other stakeholders and government to investigate and develop new multi-day walking experiences in the Flinders Ranges National Park, on the Heysen Trail or on the Murray River.
- Use the extensive network of short walks to build tourism experiences on foot.

For cutting edge sensory experiences, the opportunities are:

- Creating infrastructure such as zip lines or cable cars, which enable people to experience nature from the treetops, mountaintops, underground or underwater.
- Investing in emerging niche markets, including geo-tourism, bird watching, mountain biking and heritage tourism.

Importantly, the strategy states that:

The State Government is ready to support ambitious ideas that further develop the unique appeal of South Australia. The State Government will activate opportunities for industry growth by driving tourism demand, coinvesting to create experiences like nowhere else, and creating an environment where nature-based tourism businesses can flourish.

During the development of this strategy, the South Australian Government announced the establishment of its Nature-Based Tourism (NBT) Co-Investment Fund, comprising an open round pool of \$5 million funding available until June 2022 (unless exhausted before then).

Grants between \$20k - \$1m are available on a matched funds basis for experiences or infrastructure. Funding priorities are:

- Projects that diversify and support tourism offerings related to *Parks 2025* projects
- Stand-out walking journeys
- Wildlife experiences
- Aboriginal and cultural tourism
- Activating heritage in national parks

Tourism Australia

Tourism Australia is the Australian Government agency responsible for attracting international visitors to Australia, both for leisure and business events. The agency's strategic plan, *Tourism 2020*, focuses on improving the industry's performance and competitiveness by pursuing new opportunities for growth and addressing supply-side factors.

Australian Government Priorities

Tourism ministers from the Australian and state and territory governments have identified the following four policy priorities under *Tourism 2020*:

- encourage high-quality tourism experiences, including indigenous tourism
- limit the tax, red tape and other regulatory burden industry faces
- undertake coordinated and effective marketing campaigns to drive demand
- work with industry to support the development of tourism infrastructure that can drive demand.

The plan outlines the following six strategic priorities:

1. Grow demand from Asia
2. Build competitive digital capability

- Developing strong and efficient digital marketing and transactional capabilities is essential to remain competitive. Australia's tourism operators *must* have online booking and payment facilities to be able to service customers both domestically and overseas.
3. Encourage investment and implement the regulatory reform agenda
 4. Ensure tourism transport environment supports growth
 - Governments will work in partnership with industry to ensure the supply of transport capacity and infrastructure continues to move ahead of demand and facilitates, rather than hinders, tourism traffic.
 5. Increase supply of labour, skills and indigenous participation
 - Government will work with industry to support industry recruitment, retention, labour mobility, education and training to address employee vacancy rates which are four times the national average, and explore ways to increase the supply of skilled tourism labour and indigenous participation.
 6. Build industry resilience, productivity and quality
 - Building on Australia's competitive advantages, governments will work with industry to increase industry productivity, innovation and quality.

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Table 16. A Comparison of Local, Regional and State Strategic Priorities

SA Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030	SA Regional Visitor Strategy	MRLCTA Strategic Tourism Plan	Karoonda East Murray opportunities
Marketing	Marketing	Driving demand	Market the region's points of interest/ visitor attractions Leverage Mid Murray International Dark Sky Reserve
Collaboration	Collaboration	Working better together	
Leisure & business events	Events	Using events to drive visitation	Support increased visitor numbers to events
Experience & supply development	Experience development	Supporting what we have	Attract relevant special interest groups Enable free camping in the mainstreet
	Cost of doing business	Doing business	
Promoting the value of tourism		Increasing recognition of the value of tourism	
	Visitor Infrastructure	Investment in public infrastructure	Develop the railway/station café Develop/promote Pioneer Park; add wetlands
Industry capability	Industry capability		Customer/visitor-centric businesses
	Accommodation		On-farm visitor accommodation

Source: Lucid Economics

6. Project Identification and Prioritisation

6.1 Project Identification

Through the stakeholder consultation, both in relation to this strategy and also through the earlier community visioning workshops, and the economic analysis and the gaps and opportunities assessment, a range of potential projects to support local economic and tourism development was identified, as outlined below.

6.1.1 Opportunities for Economic Growth

Attract more residents

- Incentivise people to move to the area
- Address barriers to moving here (may include isolation and uncertainty, lack of recreational activities)
- Market the rural lifestyle/tree change – quiet, great work/life balance, one-minute commute, affordable housing, close to Murray River and to Princes Highway

Attract more workers

- Business mentoring – mock interviews, speaker in school program, presentations by successful locals, how to write a business plan, etc
- Tool to advertise local job vacancies – e.g. an app or SMS system, run by RDA for the Murraylands region
- Offer a grant to attract in demand skills – e.g. offer \$10,000 grants to attract the tradies we need here
- Agri-education opportunities – incubator for young farmers, training for young city dwellers (within curriculum)
- Investment in existing businesses – must be return on investment; ownership status.
- Mindarie Mine accommodation facility – 50 vacant beds could be used to house the workers we need here

Attract more businesses

- Feedlots/intensive farming – international investors have shown interest
- Chicken sheds
- Farm stays for agritourism
- Develop a brand to market Mallee produce, especially lamb
- Tap into the visiting demographic (grey nomads) – e.g. set up a caravan manufacturing/accessories/parts business
- Truck stop/car wash – appropriate sites identified
- Activate vacant mainstreet shopfronts

Attract more investment

- Attract renewable energy projects - solar/wind farms, some businesses have looked, engage a specialist consultant to identify sites/technology
- Attract value-adding businesses – e.g. biodiesel plant (make diesel out of grain), agricultural manufacturing business (field bins), intensive livestock to access the eastern markets, recycling plant
- Old East Murray School site has various facilities that could be repurposed

6.1.2 Opportunities to Grow the Visitor Economy

Attract more visitors

- Increase various outdoor adventure attractions, such as:
 - Support increased visitor numbers to existing events – such as the state off-road racing championships (e.g. cars at Wynarka, bikes at Wanbi), the Mindarie-Halidon Cup, The Ariel Motorcycle Club is proud to stage round 2 and 3 of the 2019 South Australian Off-Road Championship this weekend in Wanbi, to attract more visitors to the region
 - Attract relevant special interest groups - such as photographers, metal detectors, geocachers, Pokemon hunters, etc
 - Attract tourism businesses that need large open spaces – e.g. hot air balloons, aeroplane club/ultralight aviation
 - Support motorbike/trailbike/dirtbike enthusiasts – clubs and comps, build on Wanbi event
 - Leverage national parks for walking/hiking; birdwatching ('spotting the elusive Mallee fowl'); flora and fauna experiences
- On-farm visitor accommodation - glamping, camping, cabins, farm stays (in vacant farmhouses)
- Develop/promote Pioneer Park – add wetlands
- Develop the railway as an attraction/re-open the railway café - add an art gallery, railway memorabilia, railway to Taillem Bend for future activation opportunities – e.g. push-pull cart competitions, walking and cycling
- Customer/visitor-centric businesses – open when tourists are here, cross-promote local businesses and attractions, great customer service
- Leverage Mid Murray International Dark Sky Reserve – attract star-gazers/astronomers/astrologers
- Repurpose empty/disused silos – creative reuse - art trail, movies
- Market the region's points of interest/visitor attractions – such as:
 - Whytes Well (and many other wells)
 - Cemeteries
 - Meteorite
- Enable free camping
- Promote local destination businesses – e.g. people used to travel for miles to go to the Karoonda Quilt Shop
- Attract and employ skilled grey nomads – e.g. to help restore old cottages

Figure 6.1. State off-road racing championships, the Century Batteries Wynarka Enduro, 8-9 August 2020



Photo: Summit Racing Team Car Club/Lehmann Motorsport Photography

6.2 Project Evaluation Framework

In order to prioritise these projects, the metrics highlighted in Table 17 were used. These metrics were selected to identify the projects that could have the maximum benefit at the lowest cost and that could be implemented in the shortest amount of time.

Projects were scored on a basis of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest. Projects were ranked across the four metrics relative to one another, so a project scoring a 10 in benefit would provide the maximum benefit across the projects and a project that scored 1 in capital expenditure would likely be the most expensive project to implement.

Table 17. Project Prioritisation Metrics

Metric	Description
Capital Expenditure	This criterion is based on the relative requirement for capital. High scores for this criterion are provided to projects that would require relatively little capital in order to implement.
Timing	This criterion is based on the relative time required to implement the project, which would include gaining any and all approvals as well as the time required for detailed design and/or. High scores for timing are provided to projects that require relatively shorter timeframes to implement.
Benefit	This criterion is based on the relative future benefit from the project, in terms of its ability to drive visitation and economic growth in Karoonda East Murray. High scores are provided to those projects that would drive relatively higher impact (e.g. more residents, more visitors, increased spending).
Influence	This criterion considers how much Council can influence the implementation and/or achievement of the project. High scores for influence are provided to projects that are completely within Council's control.

Source: Lucid Economics

6.3 Project Prioritisation

Based on the evaluation (Table 18 on the following page), the top scoring projects are:

More Residents

- Incentivise people to move to the area (32)
- Market the rural lifestyle/tree change (32)
- Rent vacant farmhouses (26)

More Workers

- Business mentoring (32)
- Grant to attract in demand skills (31)
- Mindarie Mine accommodation facility (28)
- Tool to advertise local job vacancies (27)
- Investment in existing businesses (27)

More Businesses

- Mallee produce branding (27)
- Truck stop/car wash (26)
- Holding yards in Karoonda for stock (26)
- Farm stays for education purposes (25)

More Investment

- Old East Murray School site (24)

More Visitors

- On-farm visitor accommodation (32)
- Market the region's points of interest/visitor attractions (31)
- Enable free camping in the mainstreet (30)
- Develop the railway/station café (30)
- Customer/visitor-centric businesses (29)
- Leverage Mid Murray International Dark Sky Reserve (29)
- Support increased visitor numbers to events (28)
- Develop/promote Pioneer Park; add wetlands (27)
- Attract relevant special interest groups (26)

Table 18. Project Prioritisation Evaluation

Project	Capex	Timing	Benefit	Influence	TOTAL
More Residents					
Incentivise people to move to the area	8	8	8	8	32
Reactivate vacant houses	7	3	7	3	20
Rent vacant farmhouses	7	7	7	5	26
Address barriers to moving here	7	4	7	4	22
Market the rural lifestyle/tree change	7	9	6	10	32
Develop aged care offering	3	3	6	3	15
More Workers					
Business mentoring	8	8	7	9	32
Tool to advertise local job vacancies	6	7	7	7	27
Grant to attract in demand skills	5	9	8	9	31
Agri-education/training opportunities	6	5	6	6	23
Investment in existing businesses	9	7	7	4	27
Mindarie Mine accommodation facility	9	7	7	5	28
More Businesses					
Feedlots/intensive farming	1	2	6	4	13
Holding yards in Karoonda for stock	8	7	7	4	26
Chicken sheds	2	2	6	4	14
Farm stays for education purposes	8	5	6	6	25
Mallee produce branding	5	6	7	9	27
Tap into the visiting demographic (grey nomads)	7	4	7	5	23
Truck stop/car wash	7	6	8	5	26
Vacant mainstreet shopfronts	4	4	7	4	19
Organic farming	8	3	5	3	19
More Investment					
Attract renewable energy projects	7	4	6	4	21
Attract value-adding businesses	7	4	7	4	22
Old East Murray School site	7	4	7	6	24
Movie sets	8	2	5	3	18
Medicinal cannabis/hemp crops	7	3	6	4	20
Retreats	7	4	7	4	22
More Visitors					
Support increased visitor numbers to events	7	8	7	6	28
On-farm visitor accommodation	9	8	8	7	32
Attract relevant special interest groups	8	6	7	5	26
Attract tourism businesses that need large spaces	7	3	7	2	19
Develop/promote Pioneer Park – add wetlands	5	7	6	9	27
Support motorbike/trailbike enthusiasts	4	4	7	7	22
Leverage national parks for walking/hiking	5	4	6	6	21
Birdwatching/flora and fauna experiences	5	4	6	6	21
Develop the railway/station café	6	8	8	8	30
Customer/visitor-centric businesses	8	7	7	7	29
Leverage the International Dark Sky Reserve	8	8	5	8	29
Repurpose empty/disused silos	4	5	6	6	21



Market points of interest/visitor attractions	6	9	7	9	31
Enable free camping in the mainstreet	6	8	7	9	30
Reactivate local destination businesses	6	5	7	3	21
Activate the disused railway corridors	3	1	7	1	12
Mountain biking	3	3	6	4	16
Attract and employ skilled grey nomads	7	4	5	5	21

Source: Lucid Economics

Based on this process, the following projects should be pursued over the short-term (next 3-5 years).

Economic Growth

- Incentivise people to move to the area (Council has announced its Building Karoonda Rebate program)
- Market the rural lifestyle/tree change
- Business mentoring
- Grant to attract in-demand skills

Tourism Growth

- On-farm visitor accommodation
- Market the region's visitor attractions
- Enable free camping
- Develop the railway/station café

While the remaining projects can all have a positive impact and will contribute to developing Karoonda East Murray's economic growth, they should be pursued over the medium to long-term.

6.4 Additional Priority Actions

In addition to the priority projects identified above, the following projects will also help to add population and jobs over the medium to long term. These projects include:

Economic Growth

- Encourage use of vacant farmhouses
- Opportunities to use the mine's accommodation facility
- A tool to advertise local job vacancies
- Promote investment in existing businesses (e.g. through the Building Upgrade Finance product)
- Mallee produce branding
- Agri-education
- Attract a truck stop/car wash
- Re-purpose the former East Murray School site

Tourism Growth

- Customer/visitor-centric businesses
- Leverage adjacent International Dark Sky Reserve
- Support increased visitor numbers to events
- Develop/promote Pioneer Park
- Attract relevant special interest groups

6.5 Projects under Investigation

KAROONDA AGRICULTURE AND LEARNING HUB

Council's recent application to BBRF Round 4 for this project was unsuccessful. Below is an excerpt from the funding application.

The District Council of Karoonda East Murray is teaming up with the agriculture industry, the Karoonda Area School Agriculture Program, AgriFutures Australia and the community to provide a place for innovation and problem solving in our small community through an education program that teaches high school students in rural and regional Australia how to solve problems facing agriculture, using innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset.

The project is to construct a new multipurpose Karoonda Learning Hub. The 216m² building will be built central to the community with digital links to the school, farms, business and the South Australian Space Program. The building will contain learning rooms of different sizes, digital studio and breakout rooms. Display of the Karoonda meteorite will be included in the hub.

The project is based on the AgriFutures startup.business program which shows young people how the skills and mindset of entrepreneurs can allow them to create their own jobs.

Like many industries today, agriculture is facing massive digital disruption and comprehensive changes to the way we think about combining innovation, technology and farming.

The project is based on the fact that the next generation of jobs in farming will be using new technologies to improve process, manage drought and survive in an entrepreneurial world.

While the majority of tertiary education providers are adapting to new learning approaches and technologies, including delivering courses more flexibly and online, access to vocational education is restricted by the location of facilities. However, rural communities and remote areas have significantly lower levels of access to physical facilities. Reduced access to adequate facilities can impact on the quality of educational outcomes. Facilities that support the delivery of technical education are often critical in a student's learning experience, and are difficult to replicate in a reduced access or online capacity.

The partnership between council, school and the agriculture industry to provide access to physical facilities beyond the classroom in the centre of our community is a unique way of learning. We will be providing the physical space, and the people through our partners support, to enable the student's passions and interests in farming in a digital world with business to be incorporated into the program. We are supporting a new generation of farmers in a digital and space age world.

Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019

BOWHILL RESORT/RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT

The vision is to develop this land as it is becoming more unsuitable for farming. The landscape lends itself to development of a world class resort on the higher ground, and running a golf course between the ridges in the lower lying.

Other features could include:

- residential subdivision
- restaurant/café
- service station
- microbrewery and winery
- floating boardwalk on the Murray River with entertainment, food and a bar
- facilities to host researchers and university students who are completing environmental studies

7. Next Steps

This document has provided a detailed evaluation of the current economy, its structure, main characteristics and key strengths. It has also identified key risks for the future which need to be addressed in order to achieve the vision.

Based on the economic analysis and the stakeholder engagement and visioning workshops, various projects have been identified and evaluated. Priority projects have been evaluated for immediate implementation and will form the basis of a five-year action plan for the Karoonda East Murray Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

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