



**MURRAY  
MALLEE  
REGIONAL  
PLAN**

**Draft Summary**  
February 2025



**STATE  
PLANNING  
COMMISSION**





## **Acknowledgment of Country**

The State Planning Commission acknowledges First Nations peoples as the Traditional Custodians of South Australian land and waters and we extend our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We value and recognise the ongoing cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship First Nations peoples have with these lands and waters and the continuing importance of this today.

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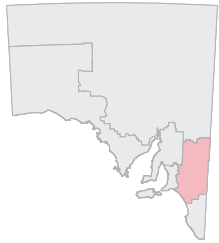
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# Murray Mallee planning region

- Regional City
- Major Service Centre
- Supporting Service Centre
- Local Service Centre
- National parks and conservation reserves
- State marine park network
- Local government area
- Major transport route
- Railway



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# Introduction

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**The Murray Mallee region, spanning about 71,000 square kilometres, stretches from the River Murray's entrance point into the state all the way to the Lower Lakes and river mouth in the Coorong. The region is characterised by a diverse range of landscapes, ecosystems and rich cultural heritage.**

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The Murray Mallee Regional Plan (the Plan) maps the government's long-term planning vision for the region to 2051 and beyond. It provides governments, businesses, industry and not-for-profit organisations with the data and direction to better plan for and respond to growth and change in our community and towns, while achieving our conservation goals. This is delivered within an electronic platform that can be tailored to the user's requirements.

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# Key themes

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## People, housing and liveability

- Expanding housing supply and diversity to accommodate a growing and ageing population.
- Enhancing design quality to improve liveability and community wellbeing.
- Addressing affordable housing challenges, particularly in growth areas.
- Ensuring housing meets the needs of various household types, including seasonal workers, seniors and younger families.
- Preserving the region's unique cultural and heritage identity.

## Productive economy

- Strengthening primary industries like agriculture, viticulture, and renewable energy to drive economic growth.
- Supporting the development of employment lands to accommodate future workforce needs.
- Promoting innovation in key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and renewable energy.
- Diversifying the regional economy through investment in tourism and events such as the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve.
- Addressing the ageing workforce and attracting young talent to key industries.

## Natural resources, environment and landscapes

- Protecting biodiversity and ecological assets, including Ramsar listed wetlands and coastal ecosystems.
- Strengthening climate resilience through adaptation strategies, including updated hazard mapping (flooding, bushfire, etc.).
- Safeguarding the Murray River and surrounding riverine environments from degradation.

- Ensuring water security and quality for agriculture, industry, and communities, especially in the face of climate change.
- Managing natural hazards such as floods, bushfires, and extreme weather events.
- Reducing emissions and mitigating the impact of hazardous activities on the environment.

## Transport and infrastructure

- Promoting integrated planning to ensure coordinated land use and infrastructure development.
- Investing in strategic transport infrastructure to improve connectivity across the Murray Mallee region.
- Expanding energy infrastructure to support renewable energy zones and ensure regional energy security.
- Strengthening integrated water management to secure water resources and improve quality.
- Preserving infrastructure reserves and transport corridors for future growth.

## Delivery and implementation

- Delivering an online platform (e.g. Regional Planning Portal) for tracking and reporting the progress of the Plan.
- Setting measurable targets and actions to guide regional development and assess success.
- Prioritising short-term actions that address immediate needs, particularly in infrastructure and housing.
- Ensuring that long-term regional growth is supported by effective land use policies and planning processes.

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## What is the Murray Mallee Regional Plan?

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Regional plans explore how areas are projected to grow, identify land and infrastructure for housing and jobs while making recommendations about zoning and land development to support sustainable growth over the next 15 to 30 years.

The State Planning Commission (Commission) developed the Plan using insights gathered from the community and stakeholders in the previous engagement phase, ensuring that local perspectives are reflected in the planning process.

The Plan addresses population growth by ensuring land supply, managing appropriate expansion of the region's towns and smaller settlements to facilitate a range of housing options near existing employment lands, health and community services.

The Plan incorporates data-driven strategies to manage risks associated with increased temperatures, extreme weather events and reduced rainfall, ensuring the resilience of communities and natural eco systems.

The Plan is aligned with and supported by various regional, state and federal policies. This includes the South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025, the 20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy, the Transport Strategy and the South Australian Economic Statement.

Implementing the Plan will provide clarity to the community, local councils and the development sector regarding the region's long-term growth.



**It is crucial that the region's community, industry and stakeholders provide feedback on the draft Plan during the engagement period. This feedback will ensure that the final Plan can be best tailored to meet the needs and complexities of the region.**

**The Plan will be finalised in late 2025.**

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# A snapshot of the Plan

**By 2051, the Murray Mallee is projected to accommodate an additional 28,000 permanent residents.**

**Growth over this period will be concentrated within the Regional City of Murray Bridge and Major Service Centres such as Renmark, Loxton, Waikerie, Mannum, Tailem Bend, Berri and Barmera.**

Growth is expected to be driven by job creation in the tourism industry, renewable energy projects, viticulture and agriculture. The Plan aims to future-proof the region's productive economy by identifying and facilitating the land, infrastructure and housing it requires to prosper.

The Plan also identifies strategic land use actions to increase the supply of affordable, accessible and diverse housing options that are well-connected to services. Diversification is crucial to support a range of household types, life stages and lifestyle choices. Ensuring adequate housing and employment opportunities is also important for attracting and retaining younger workers, to respond to the region's ageing workforce.

The River Murray is the state's primary source of water and one of its greatest assets. Much of the primary industry within the region relies heavily on fair, equitable and sustainable access to the river for irrigation. Achieving sustainable levels of demand for water is essential, particularly considering the effects of climate change and the importance of protecting the biodiversity of the river and the region as a whole. These are important considerations of the Plan in responding to projected future growth.

The Murray Mallee region frequently experiences drought, intense storms and is particularly vulnerable to flooding events. The Plan prioritises land use strategies that consider the economic, social and environmental cost of natural disasters. Planning appropriately can safeguard affordability, create more resilient communities and reduce recovery.<sup>1</sup>

The region's diverse and scenic landscape is a key attraction for both South Australian, interstate and international visitors. The natural beauty plays a significant role in the state's tourism economy, supporting vital local employment opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> Addressing Resilience in Land Use Planning – summary for policy makers, IAG, October 2023

The region is home to a diverse range of native species, with over 2,000 plants and more than 450 animals.<sup>2</sup> The region includes critically important habitats such as the River Murray, Ramsar listed Chowilla floodplain, the Coorong and Lower Lakes. Approximately 30% of the region is covered by over 40 conservation parks, national parks and reserves. The Plan includes actions to protect these sensitive environments, ensuring the region's long-term wellbeing and liveability.



**73,000**  
current  
population



**101,000**  
2051 population  
projection



**13,900<sup>3</sup>**  
additional  
dwellings required  
by 2051

## Key economic features and drivers



### Gross State Product

The region contributes approximately \$4.818 billion to South Australia's Gross State Product (GSP)<sup>4</sup>



### Agriculture

Agriculture, viticulture, meat processing, health, aged care, and social assistance are the region's largest employment sectors<sup>5</sup>



### Wine industry

Australia's largest wine-grape region by tonnage, with over 22,000 hectares of vineyards<sup>6</sup>



### Almonds

The Riverland accounts for over 20% of almond plantations nationally



### Tourism

\$373 million visitor expenditure (2023). Attractions include nature-based tourism, premium food and wine and experiences such as Monarto Safari Park (the largest safari park outside of Africa) and the Bend Motorsport Park<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/native-plants-animals/managing-biodiversity>

<sup>3</sup> An occupancy rate of 2.3 persons per dwelling is based on the current average across the region as reported in the 2021 Census.

<sup>4,5</sup> 2021 Census <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/d6861ad2-f9c3-4547-8d28-39fd8fc2341/MI\\_Riverland-Region-Snapshot-2023-24.pdf](https://www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/d6861ad2-f9c3-4547-8d28-39fd8fc2341/MI_Riverland-Region-Snapshot-2023-24.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [vot\\_dec\\_2023\\_murray\\_river\\_lakes\\_-\\_coorong.pdf](https://www.vot_dec_2023_murray_river_lakes_-_coorong.pdf)



# Key initiatives and projects

## 1. High Productivity Vehicle Network Business Case - Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT)

Seeks to upgrade several key roads (including Sturt Highway, Dukes Highway and Princes Highway) to improve the road freight network. This is particularly important given Murray Bridge, Tailem Bend and Monarto South provide a key intersection for road and rail from Victoria. Murray Bridge and Tailem Bend may be attractive locations for new transport and logistics businesses to establish and take advantage of improved regional road access.

## 2. Greenhill Energy Riverbend Energy Hub

The Riverbend Energy Hub will be an integrated processing facility, converting landfill waste and sustainable biomass into products such as fertilisers and synthetic fuels, and into low-cost, clean hydrogen, aiding the transition to a net-zero economy.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve

An initiative by Mid Murray Landcare SA and the Mid Murray Council, the 3,200 square kilometre reserve showcases exceptionally dark skies and was accredited by the International Dark Sky Association in 2019.<sup>9</sup>

## 4. Thinclab Loxton

A collaboration between the University of Adelaide and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA), Thinclab Loxton is a regionally focused 'business incubator' specialising in agtech, food innovation and regional businesses.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. Project EnergyConnect

ElectraNet and Transgrid are partnering to deliver a new energy interconnector between South Australia and New South Wales, with an added connection through to Victoria<sup>11</sup>. This project is currently under construction with more than 200 kilometres of the South Australian component already complete. This project presents a significant opportunity for renewable energy projects in the region as they will be able to directly connect to the grid.

<sup>8</sup> [Projects Archive - Greenhill Energy](#)

<sup>9</sup> [About Us | River Murray Dark Sky Reserve](#)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/thinclab/locations/loxtion>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.projectenergyconnect.com.au/>





# Get involved: have your say

**Engagement on the Plan is open for  
12 weeks until 5pm on Tuesday 17  
June 2025.**

## Have your say

- Visit [yoursay.sa.gov.au/murray-mallee-regional-plan](https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/murray-mallee-regional-plan) to provide your feedback
- Fill out our [Easy Read survey](#)
- Complete the [online submission form](#)
- Email [plansasubmissions@sa.gov.au](mailto:plansasubmissions@sa.gov.au) (Subject: Submission – Murray Mallee Regional Plan)
- Post your submission to:  
Planning and Land Use Services  
Attention: Growth Management Team  
Department for Housing and Urban Development  
GPO BOX 1815  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

## Need help?

Join one of our online briefing sessions to hear directly from our planners. Register at [plansaevents.eventbrite.com](https://plansaevents.eventbrite.com)

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PlanSA Service Desk  
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# Next steps

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Once engagement has concluded, feedback will be collated, summarised and the Plan will be updated.

The updated Plan will be provided to the Commission for endorsement with the final version expected to be released in late 2025.

The Plan will be fully digital and accessible via the Regional Planning Portal.

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