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C58**MUNICIPAL OVERVIEW****Our Place in the World**

The municipal district of the City of Ballarat is part of an area of land under the traditional custodianship of the Wathaurong people. The municipality centre is the city of Ballarat, which is one of Australia's largest inland cities and the third largest city in Victoria. The City of Ballarat has an area of 740 square kilometres and is located in western Victoria, surrounded by the municipalities of the Shires of Hepburn, Pyrenees, Golden Plains and Moorabool.

The City of Ballarat lies within a gently undulating section of the midland plains, which stretches from Creswick in the north to Rokewood in the south; and from Lal Lal in the south-east to Pittong in the west. These plains are made up of alluvial sediment and volcanic flows, and contain large areas of rich agricultural soils.

The City of Ballarat is also located within the upper-most portions of three major river basins. These are known as the Barwon, Hopkins and Loddon River catchments with each being managed by the Corangamite, Glenelg Hopkins and North Centre Catchment Management Authorities respectively. From these, water flows into the ocean at Barwon Heads, Warrnambool and Goolwa in South Australia (via the Murray River) respectively.

Attractive City

It is important that future development within Ballarat and its townships makes a positive contribution towards the high quality presentation of the city by recognising the character of its setting, preserving heritage and the natural landscape values. In this way an important component of the liveability of the city will be maintained. This is also an integral component in maintaining Ballarat's reputation and integrity as a tourism destination for authentic heritage and cultural experiences. Heritage places in the municipality provide a character and ambience that needs to be respected, conserved and appropriately managed that allows for contemporary design that is complementary to the City's heritage, in both urban and rural settings. While the positive attributes of the city's presentation are evident, a number of negative attributes are also apparent and present an opportunity for improvement. High amongst these are several of the main entrances to the city, particularly those which come through industrial areas where open storage areas, poor landscaping and run down buildings provide a negative first impression to the visitor and resident alike.

Culturally Vital City

Ballarat is one of Victoria's premier tourist destinations attracting visitors for gold and architectural heritage, parks and gardens, art and cultural activities and as a gateway to western Victoria. Approximately 1.8 million domestic day trip visitors come to Ballarat each year, contributing \$139 million to the local economy.

Ballarat is well known for its schools and hospitals which service a wide area. Its recreation facilities are also an important community asset. Ballarat businesses offer a broad range of products which includes catering for the rural community's needs. It has a diverse range of community groups, service clubs, sporting clubs and arts based societies and groups catering for a full spectrum of people and interests.

People City

The City of Ballarat has a population (2004) of just under 87,000 persons which is forecast to grow to 112,000 by 2031 representing an annual growth rate of 1.3%. Ballarat city has a population of approximately 65,000 people. The other townships are at Learmonth (population 300), Buninyong (population 1,800), Miners Rest (population 450) and

Cardigan Village (population 200). Like the rest of Victoria, Ballarat's population is aging with the number of people over the age of 65 projected to grow by 60% over the next 20 years. This has significant implications for services, jobs, the type of residential accommodation which is being provided and Ballarat's social mix.

Transport improvements are fuelling increased levels of population growth in areas between Melbourne and Ballarat. Projects such as the Ballarat-Melbourne fast rail project expected to double commuter numbers and are likely to bring new residents to Ballarat and its environs. Ballarat will continue to take advantage of the higher order services and facilities offered by Melbourne and the additional employment opportunities provided to its residents. Ballarat will however continue to be a city with its own identity and character and where employment opportunities will continue to be created. The Melbourne 2030 Strategy will be a key document influencing the future relationship between Melbourne and Ballarat and a document that has significant implications for future growth rates and population levels. Through Melbourne 2030, the State Government will encourage accelerated growth in regional centres and stronger networking between Melbourne and regional centres, particularly through improved transport and communication links.

Quality of life (amenity), access to services and facilities and safety are fundamental needs and are the basis upon which the Council will work to maintain and further develop Ballarat as a "People City".

Prosperous City

Ballarat is in a key strategic position at the centre of some of Victoria's most important freight, tourist and commuter transport routes. The four main highways radiating from Ballarat connect it to industrial centres such as Melbourne, Adelaide, Geelong and Portland; regional locations like Bendigo and Mildura; and agricultural areas in the Mallee and Wimmera. Ballarat has traditionally been a city that prospered on mineral and agricultural based resources, however this has changed. Manufacturing, tourism, health and community services, education and retailing are now the key industries in the city. These industries, along with the banking and finance sector and government services are strengthening Ballarat's role as a regional service provider. Ballarat is a major regional retail centre with approximately 186,000m² of retail floorspace and this figure is expected to increase to about 230,000m² by 2021.

The information technology sector is also emerging to become a significant industry within the region. The municipality hosts a modern communications network that provides easy data exchange worldwide. The municipality incorporates land which is part of a broader high quality farming area. Agricultural production within the City of Ballarat in 1997 was valued at almost \$27.5 million with pigs, potatoes and wool being the highest valued commodities. Ballarat is also home to nearly 250 manufacturing business producing a wide range of products for local and international markets. As Ballarat is a central inland city, it provides a regional hub for the state's bus and rail transport network. The completion of the fast rail project is anticipated to reduce the current 80 minute rail trip between Ballarat and Melbourne to close to 60 minutes. Melbourne International Airport and the ports of Melbourne and Geelong are also within one hour's travel time.

Council aims to create prosperity through economic development with a focus on retaining and increasing employment opportunities by strengthening and growing existing business and facilitating the establishment of new business where opportunities arise.

Sustainable City

Natural resource management is a key issue for the municipality as the economic and social well being of the region is dependent upon the sustainable management of natural resources. This is particularly important given the location of the municipality within a region that is highly dependent on natural resources for economic and social well being.

For Ballarat to be a sustainable city there must be the simultaneous achievement of economic, social and environmental goals. Ecologically sustainable land management

practices are essential to ensure the viability of biodiversity assets and the future of primary production. The sensible use of natural resources and recycling or reuse of waste products, utilisation of renewable energy sources, greater treatment of emissions to protect air and water quality are key factors. A climate that encourages innovation in business and the community will ensure sustainability and prosperity are achieved. These goals are inexorably linked. Sustainability is really prosperity in the long term. Short-term profit based on exploitation of finite natural resources must be forsaken for long-term sustainable prosperity.