

MUNICIPAL PROFILE

The municipality has an area of 6,000 square kilometres and is located in the north-west of Victoria. The Murray River borders the municipality. The Murray River corridor accommodates the majority of the population and irrigated agriculture. The municipality is part of a wider region which features an extensive agricultural area and one of the most productive areas of the Murray Darling Basin. Swan Hill's strategic location and transport advantages enable ready supply to markets in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide.

Both Swan Hill and Robinvale play an important regional role and have cross border significance at either end of the municipality that extends into south western New South Wales and areas in Victoria outside of the municipality.

Coordination of strategic and land use planning with the State and local governments in New South Wales is particularly important within the Murray River Corridor, including land within the floodplain. Protecting the Murray River's water quality and riverine habitat are major issues for all Murray River Corridor municipal councils. Coordinate cross border planning is also important for border towns such as Swan Hill and Robinvale.

The municipality's distinctive nineteenth and twentieth century character tells an important story about the way of life, rural hardships, taming of the environment, economic and social development within the region. It is important that heritage places are recognised, protected, retained, conserved, interpreted and celebrated and that new development is respectful of and makes a positive contribution to the municipality's heritage values.

The municipality, like other parts of the region, has seen structural change in the population for several decades. The population is ageing, and there has been significant population loss from rural areas and small centres, specifically in dryland farming areas. A counter trend is also evident, largely resulting from the location of the municipality, and its two largest centres on the River Murray within increasingly important horticultural areas, and areas where lifestyle advantages have drawn new people to settle.

In 2006 the estimated population of Swan Hill Rural City was 21,285 and is forecast to grow by less than 1,000 to 2026. The Council Plan 2009-2013 states that Council is seeking to grow the regional population to 40,000 by 2040.

The municipality's urban focus is provided by Swan Hill regional centre and Robinvale which serves the northern part of the municipality. Swan Hill is a major regional centre for population, employment, retail, business, industrial, government, educational and health-medical services. Robinvale's role as a sub-regional centre is growing. Smaller centres such as Lake Boga, Woorinen, Nyah-Nyah West, Boundary Bend, Manangatang, Ultima, and Piangil serve local needs.

The agricultural base of the municipality and adjoining areas is expanding and diversifying, particularly with new irrigation areas supporting expanded vine planting and vegetable growing. Increasingly the prospects for local food processing are being enhanced. Beef cattle and sheep for meat and sheep for wool production are important industries for eastern Mallee. The Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has released the proposed Basin Plan which has the potential to reduce the amount of water available for agriculture and divert it for environmental purposes within the Basin.

Tourism attractions based on the Murray River, the river towns, recreational opportunities at places like Lake Boga and the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement are important components of the municipality's tourism role. Horticultural industries and product and special regional events are becoming important components of local and regional tourism.

The livelihood of the municipality depends upon efficient transport corridors especially the Loddon and Murray Valley Highways which provide regional connections to Bendigo and Mildura and the Mallee Highway link between Adelaide and Sydney. The local road network is an important road infrastructure that needs to be maintained and improved especially for all weather access. New urban development needs to be integrated with land use and road based transport planning, including public transport.

SWAN HILL PLANNING SCHEME

Airports of regional significance are located at Swan Hill and Robinvale. SwanLink and V-Line provide daily connections between Swan Hill, Melbourne and other regional centres and between centres in the municipality.

The provision of a reticulated gas supply to Swan Hill is central to growing the local economy further.