

# annual **REPORT**

2024

peak chamber of commerce  
**north west Victoria**



@westvicbusiness

# about our sector

Altruistic in nature, chambers of commerce and business groups align with the values and purpose of most not-for-profit organisations. Their core focus being the benefit and gains of their intended cohort. Not their own success, rather their intent is the sustainability of the organisation

A chamber of commerce is an association or network of business-people designed to promote the growth and protect the interests of its members. Influencing regulators and legislators across all levels of governance, West Vic Business is organised with its advocacy efforts through specified projects and representation across sectors



OUR ORGANISATION  
WAS FOUNDED IN 2006

BUSINESS FIRST

*“Defying the odds and working outside the confines of the norms attached to the sector, West Vic Business Inc. has been successful in its long term sustainability through innovative strategic planning.”* **Ambassador, Stacey Taig**



## Our Core Focus

West Vic Business has led the region in its ongoing focus on precinct development. Strong precincts build prosperous sectors and drive growth within our business communities. By encouraging shire councils and economic development units to prioritise livability and development in social, recreational, and tourism sectors, we can create new business opportunities and mitigate downturns in struggling sectors

This strategy aims to address and ultimately lead to the reversal of aging demographics by retaining youth and attracting young families to the region, resulting in long-term and positive impacts for all

link

connect

train

inform



# west vic business

- personal & confidential small business advisory, guidance & support
- advocacy at a wider community and industry specific level with all three tiers of government
- representation and work in collaboration on behalf of members with key stakeholders
- inclusion in regional sector networks
- free promotional opportunities through quarterly e-magazine with reach of 12,000 across the region
- complimentary promotions across social media platforms
- project development aimed at delivering long term benefits and growth opportunities for members and the business community
- training and programs for member business owners & staff
- complimentary inclusion in the Shop Your Town Gift Card program

**member benefits**

[info@westvicbusiness.com.au](mailto:info@westvicbusiness.com.au)



# Business Direction



## Rate of Growth

The Australian economy grew 1.5% in 2023-24, the weakest annual growth (excluding the COVID-19 pandemic) since 1991-92, a year that included the gradual recovery from the 1991 recession

(ABS)

## Labour Market

The labour market remains tight, with staffing a continuing challenge across sectors. Persistent low fill rates for roles requiring Certificate III/IV qualifications. Managers and professionals represent the majority of 4-digit occupations with high hourly earnings and low fill rates

(Jobs & Skills Australia)

## Structural Challenges

Almost five years on, and for all the disruption caused by the pandemic, a lot feels the same. Most notably, the important, structural challenges facing the Australian economy remain. These structural challenges largely exist on the supply-side of the economy, which consists of three key drivers: **population, participation, and productivity**. Right now, all three are in focus

(Deloitte)

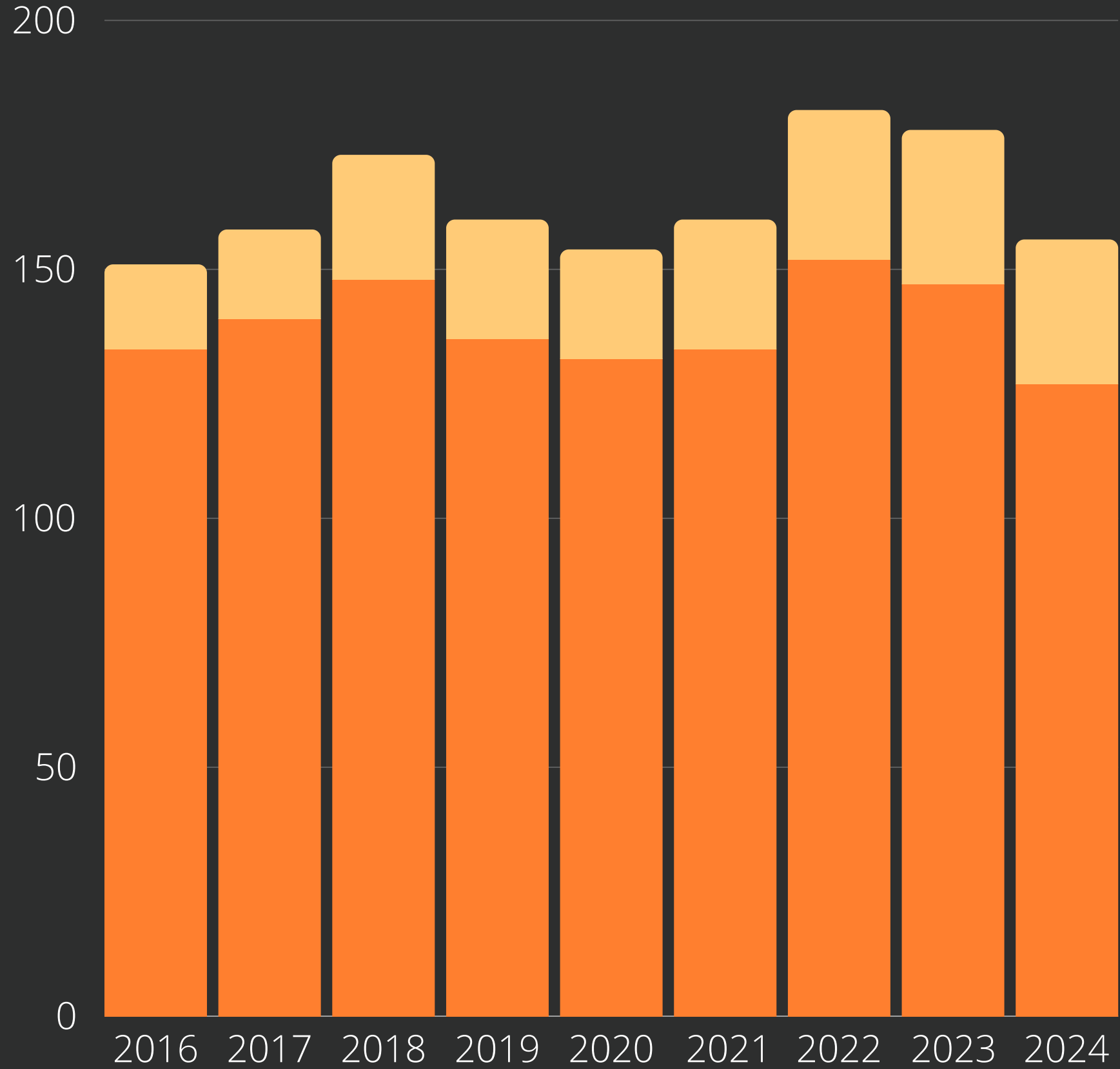


# challenges & opportunities

Amidst the recent economic challenges faced by all Australians, membership-based organisations like West Vic Business have been significantly impacted, prompting a crucial need to reassess and re-strategise their financial standing. Adopting a business mindset is not typically a strategy employed by non-profits, yet the demand for sustainability is now shaping how organisations approach their operations and offerings. Taking a broader perspective to support our member businesses and the wider communities where they reside, is essential for ensuring not only their growth and success but also their very survival. As always, the West Vic Business team view challenges as opportunities in disguise, and we have commenced and will continue our repositioning strategy into 2025

# Membership Data

perceived vlaue  
community engagement  
economic impact



**2019-2021**



Membership data indicates the effects of the pandemic, during which a blanket provision of services was offered across all sectors, regardless of membership status

**2022-2023**



As confidence grows and a sense of community focus and togetherness becomes the new driving force, membership numbers begin to increase

**2024**



The ongoing and compounding effects of the economic challenges confronting every Australian family begins to influence and impact subscription and membership based organisations

 primary members

 secondary members



**Growth Potential**

program development

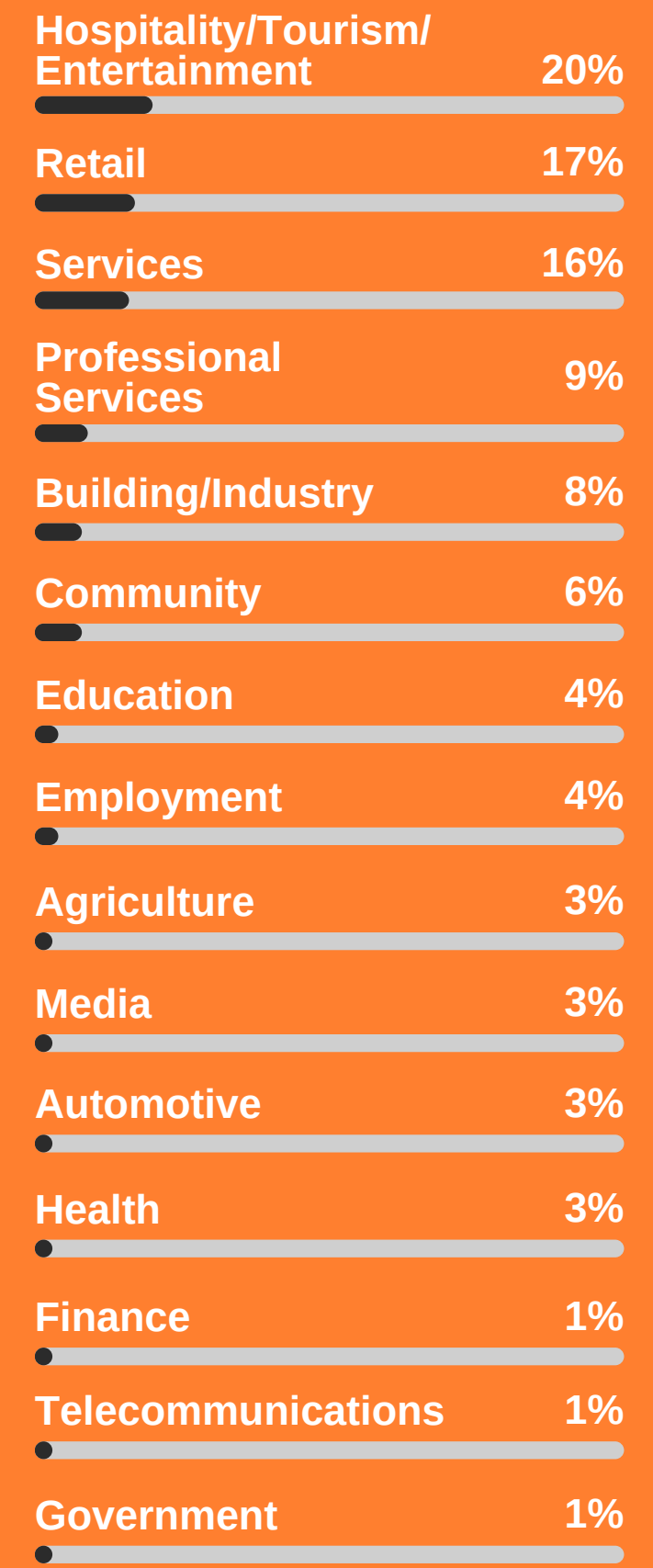
servicability

expanding networks



**sector representation**

Representation highlights areas for potential growth and development through specified networks and program delivery



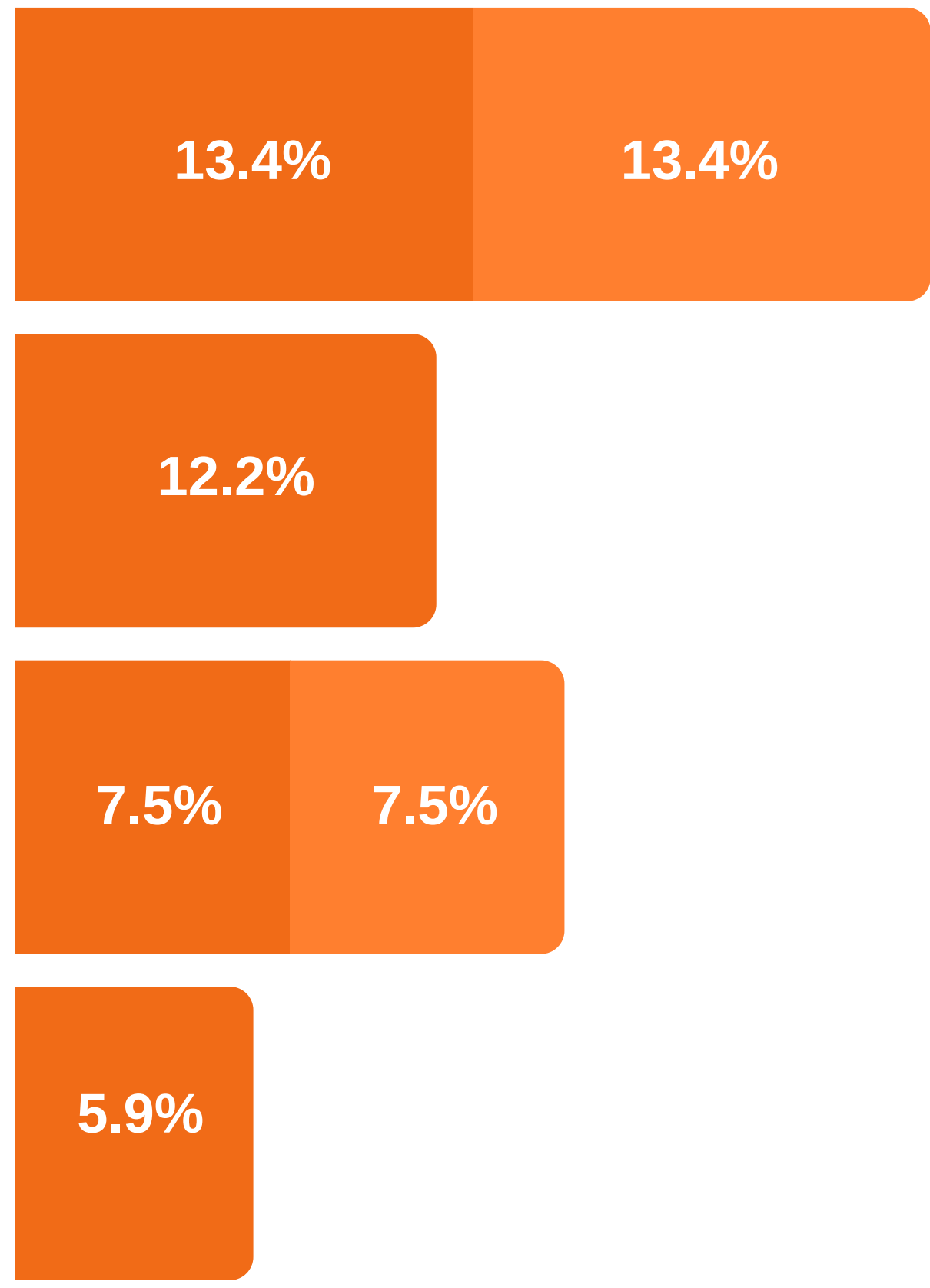


health & education

Mining

Finance & Construction

Manufacturing



output of key sectors

(Reserve Bank of Australia)  
figures as at 6 November 2024

# sector specific networks

In 2024, we have initiated the creation of regional, sector-specific networks. The aim is to unite like-minded and experienced business owners and their teams, encouraging a collaborative environment. This will enable the development of an industry knowledge bank, offering fresh ideas and perspectives to assist members in overcoming challenges and exploring new opportunities

## **hospitality**

The hospitality industry often does not get the recognition it deserves. As a significant catalyst for foot traffic, hospitality clusters have the potential to revitalize dormant and declining activity areas, as well as providing strong foundations for new developments. This sector plays a vital role in influencing retail and directly affects its success. Networking sessions commenced mid 2024

## **retail**

Retail, often considered one of the more challenged sectors, is poised for a transformation. In response to this shift, West Vic Business plans to tackle these changes in 2025 by forming a newly established traders' group and pursuing new opportunities

## **education/training**

The initiative to connect member education and training organisations with local and regional businesses through networking projects has begun. Exciting opportunities and developments are scheduled to be unveiled in 2025

## **manufacturing/industry/agribusiness**

MAIN network is currently in development, with a launch anticipated in early 2025. Our most robust sectors are closely interconnected, and as the region prepares for significant advancements in this area, the integration and collaboration among all three sectors will be essential for project development and a regional team approach in the years ahead

## **accommodation/events/tourism**

Recognising the clear connection between these sectors, Executive representation at West Vic Business has initiated the development of the AET Network to enhance information sharing and support for member businesses

## **finance/services**

What is our most impactful and influential sector? Planning for the Finance Network commenced in mid-2024. Led by Executive representatives, this network aims to gauge business sentiment throughout the region and connect new and ongoing project leads with potential local developers and investors



# Quarterly Highlights



## Precinct Forum

The first quarter saw the facilitation and hosting of the 2024 Precinct Forum, with keynote speakers Executive Director of Small Business Victoria at Victorian Government, Ylva Carosone and Mainstreet Australia's Cinzia Crea, along with representation by Regional Development Victoria and the four shires of the Wimmera Mallee



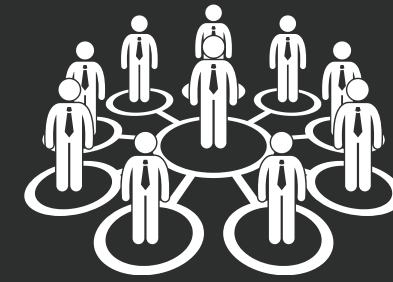
## Yarriambiack Chapter

Keynote speaker Victorian Small Business Commissioner Lynda McAlary-Smith, opened the inaugural Yarriambiack Business Expo and helped launch the first official chapter, West Vic Business Yarriambiack in the second quarter. Commencement of one-on-one support of specific new member businesses and inclusion in both project and event representation has taken place across the remainder of the year, with recruitment and further project development set for 2025



## Town Strategy Masterclass

The FRRR funded community placemaking program 'Town Strategy Masterclass' was facilitated by Spark Strategy, and designed to help small rural townships and precincts think like a business, and develop community driven strategic plans to ensure growth and sustainability through challenging times such as drought. With participation across four shires and initial input from six, the program ran throughout 2024 culminating in a two day immersion session



## Spring Clean Your Business

Emphasising the significance of taking a moment to assess both the health of your business and your personal well-being, this member networking event was held in the serene and stunning setting of Norton Estate winery. Attendees had the chance to hear from speakers such as nbn Co. and Executive member Rural Finance Counselling Service, alongside member speaker JMJ EA for a Day. This provided a valuable opportunity for participants to connect and learn from fellow business owners throughout the region



# 2024 PRECINCT FORUM

it's always the small pieces that make the big picture



extraordinary  
**EXPO**



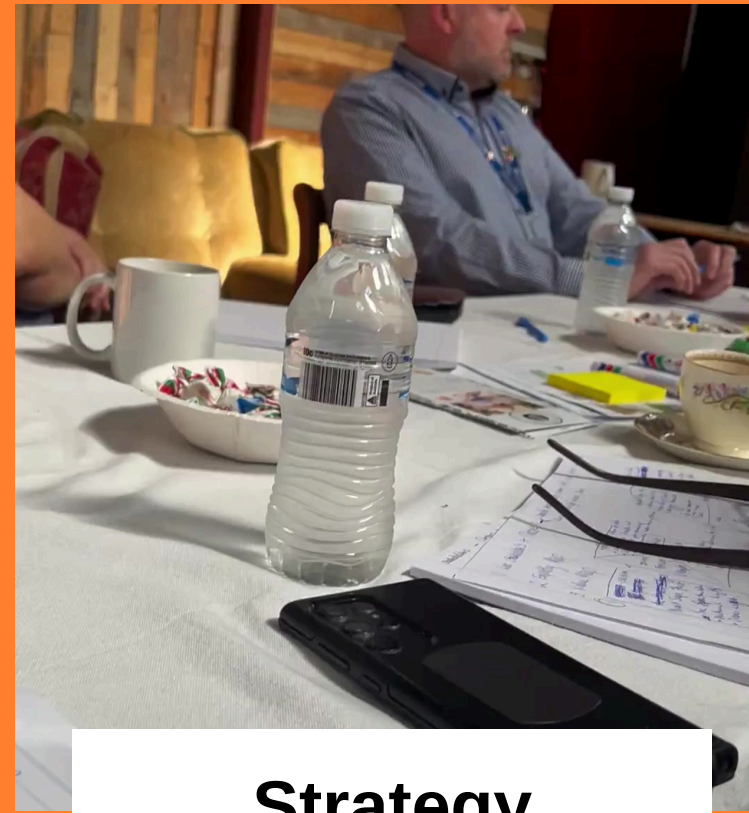




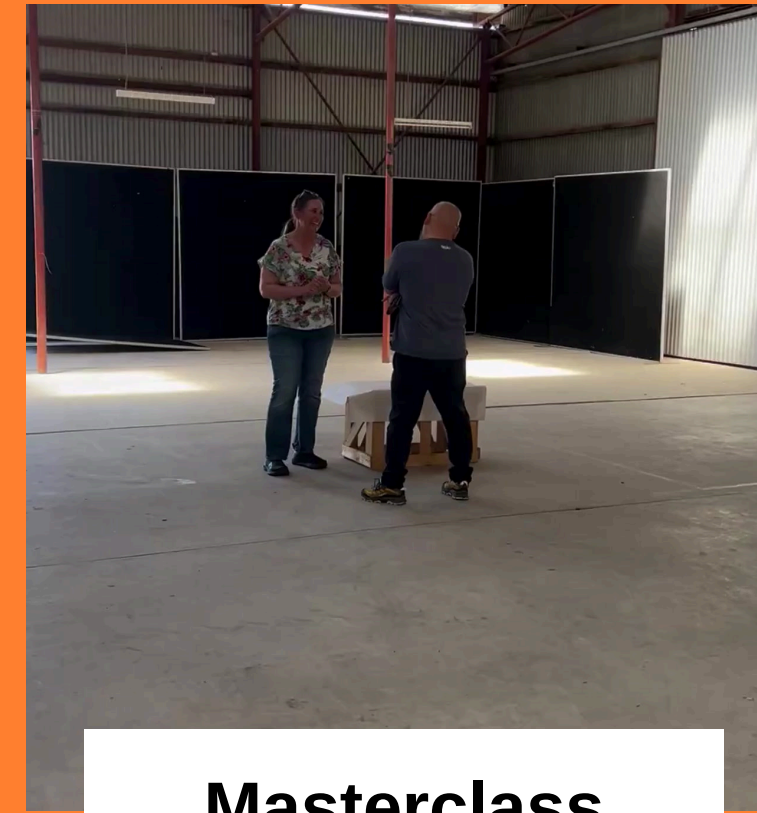
# Helping Build Regional Success Stories



**Town**



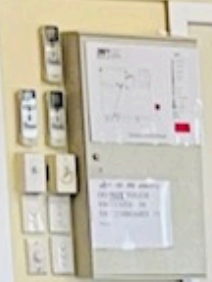
**Strategy**



**Masterclass**

www.frrr.org.au

The aims of the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative is to strengthen and improve the ability of agriculture-dependent communities to adapt, reorganise or transform in response to changing temperature, increasing variability and scarcity of rainfall and changing seasons, for improved economic, environmental and social wellbeing. West Vic Business were one of three local organisations successful in their submissions

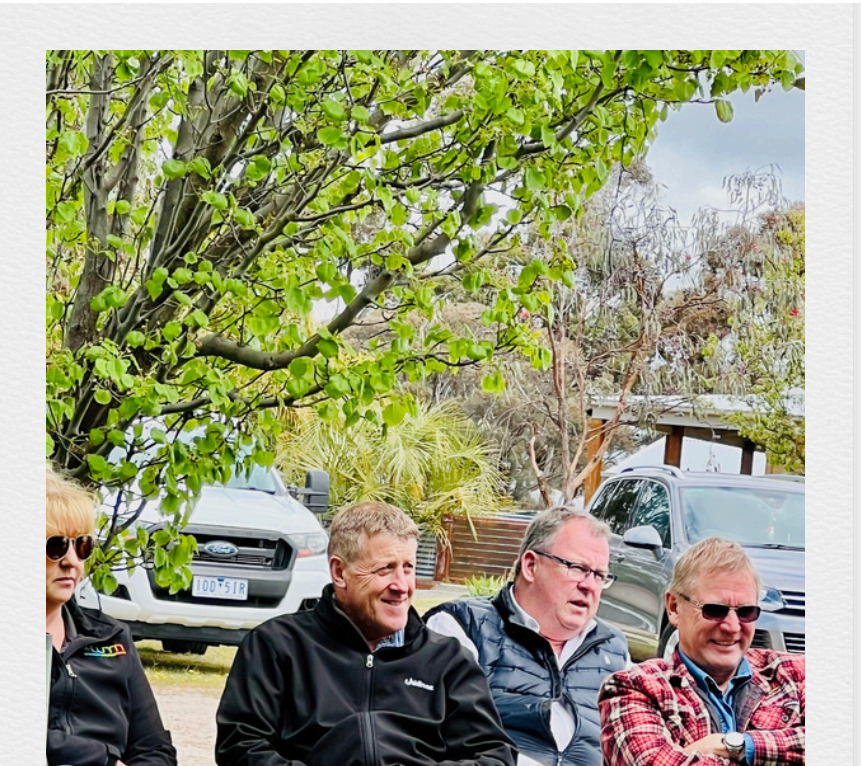




# Power in Planning



**BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED  
NETWORKING IN NATURE**



spring clean your  
**BUSINESS**





# DID YOU KNOW



“In a strong signal to international investors, the Deloitte Access Economics’ Business Outlook report predicts that Victoria will lead all Australian states in economic growth over the next five years”.



# Partnerships Worth Fostering

**Corporate and purpose driven partnerships are part of the growth strategy for West Vic Business**

Expanding on current partnerships while incorporating new ones across diverse sectors, is essential for fostering purpose driven relationships that benefit both the organisation and its members. This year has witnessed remarkable collaborations, and a sustained enhancement of connections across teams



# Partnerships



## Telstra

The participation of the local and regional Telstra team in West Vic Business projects, networking, and events has been a significant highlight this year. Further enhancing our existing partnership, Team Telstra has revamped the West Vic Business website and is exploring options to shift the Shop Your Town Gift Card program to a virtual platform, designed to increase financial support for member businesses throughout the region

# Creating Tomorrow's Destinations



## Mainstreet Australia

Membership with Mainstreet Australia consistently delivers a creative and thoughtful approach to our ongoing dedication to precinct development. Our primary goal is to implement meaningful and positive changes for regional business communities. The collaboration with Mainstreet has not only created a mutually beneficial relationship, but also enabled West Vic Business to enhance its learning and connect with some of the nation's leading place-making professionals



Loving your aspirations, Andrea!

[@westvicbusiness](https://www.instagram.com/westvicbusiness)

# COLLABORATE FOR COLLECTIVE SUCCESS

Providing key stakeholders including Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, GWM Water, WSM Development, Wimmera Mallee Tourism, and the shire councils of Horsham, Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Northern Grampians, Southern Grampians, Ararat, and Buloke the opportunity to engage in West Vic Business projects has helped to build mutually beneficial relationships. Contributing to ongoing research and surveys, participating in stakeholder initiatives, collaborating on activities and developments, and working together for future success are essential for regional growth and prosperity, and has continued throughout 2024



Courtesy The Weekly Advertiser

opportunities

growth

positive

together

CONTINUED COLLABORATION

# lake PRECINCT

Gazing out at the mountains, toes in the sand on a beautiful warm day, it all began with a simple conversation: “Let’s see if we can make something happen.” Three years later, West Vic Business has played the lead role in bringing key stakeholders together through the initial development of a conceptual plan for The Yacht Club at Green Lake. The list of benefits from developing the lake precinct ticks ever box. Health and wellbeing is a given, however the flow on to youth retention and attracting young families to the region through much needed social and recreational opportunities is key, and the economic impact on our local business communities will be immense and far reaching. Each lake offers its own unique appeal. Taylor’s is known for its exceptional fishing, Dock is a paradise for nature lovers, and the family-friendly Green Lake boasts stunning views of the mountains. Affectionately dubbed ‘Three Lakes,’ this area is poised to become a significant economic driver for our city and the broader Wimmera Mallee region. The trifecta of lakes presents an incredible marketing opportunity. Serving as a gateway for tourism in our region, it patiently awaits its potential. The dedication and determination of all key stakeholders to collaborate and turn this vision into reality is both fulfilling and exhilarating. We eagerly anticipate what lies ahead, and will continue the work that has occurred throughout the last three years into 2025 and beyond











[www.westvicbusiness.com.au](http://www.westvicbusiness.com.au)



2024



## Over \$300,000 into member businesses to date

What an incredible initiative!

West Vic Business's Shop Your Town Gift Card Program has given our members tangible impact through dollars in the bank. Used throughout our sectors, these cards have been used at dentists through to accountants. An amazing way to give the gift of choice that gives back to our community and drives foot traffic into local businesses across our region

# Shop Your Town Gift Card

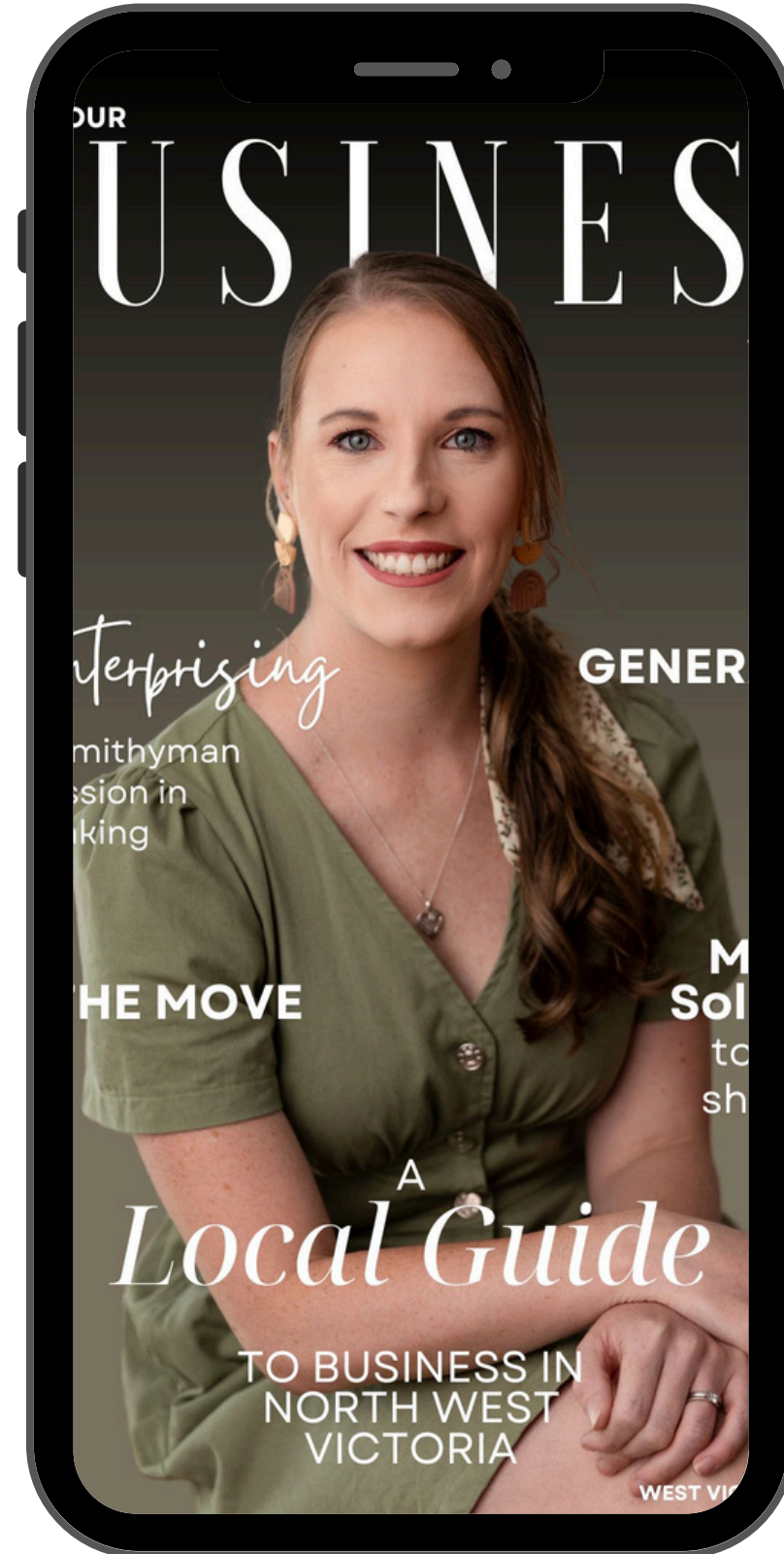


# Mind Your Business



## Free Member Promotion

Offering free promotional stories and advertising, the Mind Your Business quarterly e-magazine provides the perfect platform for members to promote their business across the region



## Local Stories, Local Connections

This magazine showcases the Wimmera Mallee region and its unique beauty, featuring stories about our local businesses, their families, and our communities



**Tenure**

**2 Years**



# Mark Clyne

*Chair*

My time as chair has been a source of both professional and personal development, offering numerous rewards. With my values closely aligned with those of the organisation, West Vic Business has enabled me to contribute to my community and help build positive change throughout our region. There is so much to be thankful for, along with many exciting opportunities on the horizon for our cities and towns. The groundwork laid in 2024 promises remarkable growth and an innovative approach to future planning, and we are excited to be a part of this journey

A stylized, handwritten signature in orange ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

[www.westvicbusiness.com.au](http://www.westvicbusiness.com.au)

# Our Best Teamwork

Our team boasts experience across various sectors and industries, bringing together a diverse array of personalities. From big-picture visionaries to detail-oriented analysts, this diversity is what sets our team apart and makes it truly exciting



**Jessica Koenig-Fisher**  
*Vice-Chair*



**Catherine Shirrefs**  
*Treasurer*



**Stacey Taig**  
*Ambassador*



# Audited Financials

To view a copy of the West Vic Business audited financials for the 2023-2024 year, please contact our team or email [info@westvicbusiness.com.au](mailto:info@westvicbusiness.com.au)



**CONTACT US :**



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