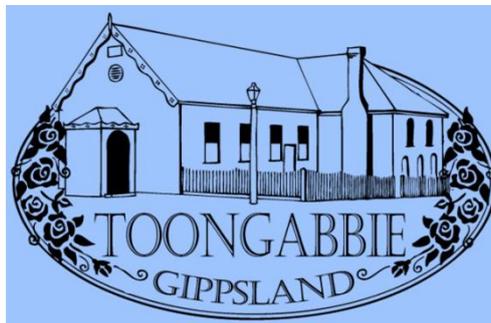




Toongabbie

*“Land of the hills near
the water”*

Latrobe Valley Gippsland



Discover our Town of Toongabbie
www.toongabbie.vic.au

By email: rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au

9th May 2012
Latrobe Valley Transition Committee Secretariat
Regional Development Victoria
Level 12, 1 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Directions for Latrobe Valley Transition

Toongabbie Township Planning & Development Group welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the draft paper outlining the future strategic direction of Latrobe Valley.

The rural township of Toongabbie is part of the seven small towns network within the shire of Latrobe City and is dependent upon our local council working together with our State and Federal governments to the benefit of our rural communities and that of the regional area rather than for the greater good of the Victorian economy.

It is anticipated that this direction will also support and progress our regions other diverse and positive assets aside from the coal industry given the future mining expansion currently espoused by both state and federal government.

With the objectives of this committee being to support the economic transition of Latrobe Valley as a whole, consideration should be given to those in the rural areas that stand to be directly impacted upon if mining expansion becomes reality and that they are not unfairly disadvantaged. As such, a lot of the challenges we see currently facing the survival of our small rural network within the Latrobe Valley is the impending expansion of the mining industry and to its impacts on community renewal, and as a consequence, the liveability of our region.

The challenge is to balance unpopular industry expansion (mining) with that of food security, water and energy whilst protecting our regions landscape assets, environmental health and investments.

Toongabbie's submission will addresses three areas of the committee's discussion paper, these include:

- **Land management Issues**
- **Strengthening innovation and competitiveness**
- **Attracting and facilitating investment and trade**

Land Management Issues

Presently, Latrobe Valley is struggling with the impacts of the existing open cuts coal mines on the environment, infrastructure, close proximity to residential land and ongoing sustainable use of water.

This creates much uncertainty for future planning. Local councils must retain the right to facilitate future planning under state planning regulations. However, with the expansion of new mining developments within and outside of the exempt area, any future residential expansion cannot be determined.

Additionally, conflict with competing land use will be significant between mining prospects and those existing businesses already dependent on the status quo for water access from both Gippsland Water and ground water reserves. Any further or future drawdowns from the Latrobe aquifer will have enormous implications for existing and future agribusiness.

It is of concern that in the Minerals Council submission to the Greenfields Inquiry, they stated ***“that mining operation’s water consumption by volume could be largely offset by minor efficiency gains in the agricultural sector, and that food security, while an international issue of concern, is not yet a real concern for Australia”***

The Victorian Government’s priority for coal is open cut for export. Competing with this would be Coal Seam Gas extraction and Mineral Sands mining. To co-exist alongside agriculture would be problematic for sustainable use of our limited water capacity without creating considerable negative impacts for Gippsland.

Furthermore, the rehabilitation upon completion of any future mining operation must be considered as a major priority for strategic land management prior to expansion.

Strategic Planning for Land management to consider:

- availability of water for new industry development to maintain a sustainable resource for agriculture, environment and existing business
- immediately clarifying no-go areas to:
 - provide certainty and investment opportunities for diverse industries outside of mining which include agriculture and tourism
 - secure areas for residential development
 - protect biolink corridors
- that the completion of any current or future mining activity is that the land can be rehabilitated and used for a wide range of purposes with exception being the transforming of open cuts for industrial or hazardous waste.

Strengthening innovation and competitiveness

Under the strategic direction for competition, this paper needs to make a clear recognition that liveability is an important aspect for a regions success.

Placed in context to the comparable regions of Bendigo and Ballarat, our major competitors for lifestyle opportunities, the more industrialised the Valley becomes, the least attractive or liveable we become.

Specialist services for the essential sectors of health and education are growing so for us to remain competitive and ensure Latrobe Valley is adequately serviced, a balance has to be achieved with mining expansion within a 20km radius of the major regional centres.

If no balance can be achieved, it will become more difficult for the unintended implication of an industrialised surrounding environment will be a perceived decline in lifestyle well-being and recreational attractions.

Attracting and facilitating investment and trade

The tourism sector provides a significant economic contribution to the valleys economy and will continue to grow if investment is supported for the key areas of nature and adventure based tourism.

The tourism sector contributes both directly in terms of employment and economic wealth and indirectly through positive flowthroughs with increased exposure for economic strengthening opportunities of business investment and relocation options.

- To achieve this increased potential, tourism must remain a high priority for any future strategic direction and identified areas be free from expanded industrialisation.

In summary,

The success of this response should reflect that Latrobe Valley is the connection between significant economic assets being both resource and natural. And it is this minority of rural Gippsland who and which provide and contribute substantially to the economic value of this region and the broader regions of Victoria GP. It is hoped that a dominance of one industry over another will not impact negatively due to future Governments strategic planning directions as economic decisions made now should not be to the detriment of Gippsland in the future.

Yours sincerely

TRACEY ANTON
Chairperson
TTP&DG