**CONTEXT**

Colac Otway Shire is located in the south-west of Victoria, approximately 2 hours’ drive from Melbourne. The Shire has an area of about 3,500 square kilometres and a population of about 21,000. The Shire is expected to experience a modest population increase to the year 2036. There are approximately 22 towns and settlements located throughout the Shire.

The Shire includes some of the most scenic and environmentally sensitive land in Victoria including the Great Otway National Park and 90 kilometres of coastline served by the Great Ocean Road.

Agriculture is a key economic contributor to the Colac Otway Shire with the dairy and beef industries the most significant in terms of land use and economic contribution. The forestry industry also contributes significantly to the local and regional economy.

The Shire has a rich and diverse history, includes a number of important indigenous heritage areas and has played an important role in Victoria’s growth through pastoral activity, farming, forestry and tourism. A large proportion of the Shire's cultural heritage is located within the smaller towns and in outlying rural areas.

The Shire’s economic development is demonstrated by its main industries: dairying, crops, timber, wool and tourism.

The Shire is well placed to capture a large proportion of Victoria’s key tourism growth market as it provides a variety of different forms of accommodation as well as desirable tourist attractions.