

MEDIA RELEASE *04 May, 2009*

Wimmera Southern Mallee sets sights on future growth

A major exercise to identify the key contributors to the Wimmera Southern Mallee's future sustainability, productivity and liveability is now underway.

Consultants RMCG have been engaged to identify priorities for growth that build upon the region's natural strengths and assets.

Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Strategic Planning Executive Committee chairman Jim McKay said RMCG had a long association with the region and was familiar with the challenges and opportunities before it.

"This region has undertaken various regional planning initiatives over the past decade," Mr McKay said.

"One of those was the 2007 Wimmera Southern Mallee Drought Report, also completed by RMCG, which resulted in the State Government's \$3 million Drought Support Package.

"As part of that package, the Government said it would fund a regional growth strategy to help this community identify how it could grow and prosper into the future."

The first stage of this was a Scoping Study, completed by RMCG in 2008.

RMCG Partner Simon McGuinness said his firm planned to build on work that had already been completed to identify the drivers of change and the barriers to regional wellbeing.

"We'll be working closely with local councils, community and industry leaders and State Government agencies throughout that process," Mr McGuinness said.

"Our brief is to identify the most regionally significant issues that contribute to the region's future wellbeing and prosperity.

"This is not just about economic development – it's also about the social and cultural aspects associated with healthy, vibrant communities."

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Mr McKay said the overall aim was to set out the Wimmera Southern Mallee's priorities and broad strategies for the State Government's consideration as it prepares its 'Provincial Victoria – the next decade' strategic plan.

He said all regions within Victoria had been asked to identify their key priorities in this way.

"Mid-way through 2008, the Victorian Premier announced a new direction in regional planning that focuses on development long-term regional and sub-regional plans for regional Victoria," Mr McKay said.

"In essence, the State Government is asking the question of each of the regions across the state – how do you envisage your future and what resources do you need to get there?"

The Wimmera Southern Mallee region includes the municipalities of Buloke Shire, Hindmarsh Shire, Horsham Rural City, Northern Grampians Shire, West Wimmera Shire and Yarriambiack Shire.
