Nine new Regional Partnerships have been established by the Victorian Government across the State to give regional communities greater say about what matters to them and ensure their voices reach the heart of government. Partnerships will significantly increase collaboration between communities, industry, businesses and government to address the most important challenges and opportunities in each region. The Regional Partnership is guided by a diverse group of members drawn from local communities, businesses and the three-tiers of government.

Members will engage with their communities on priorities for their region, building on existing strategies and plans - harnessing the good ideas, the energy and the passion of locals. Priorities will be presented directly to the Victorian Government’s Rural and Regional Ministerial Committee.

People from the community, industry and government will come together at the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Assembly to discuss and debate the region’s top priorities. Online consultation has helped to inform the agenda for the Regional Assembly. A total of 784 people visited engage.regions.vic.gov.au and provided 316 pieces of feedback.

What are your priorities for the Wimmera Southern Mallee region?

We identified what we think the top priorities are for the Wimmera Mallee region and asked you to choose your top three priorities. We heard that you see a stronger economy with more local jobs as the top priority for the region.

You also highlighted telecommunications (mobile phones and internet coverage), attracting tourism to the region, affordable childcare, health promotion and early intervention, improved vocational and workplace based training opportunities, improved sports, social and community facilities as priorities for the region.

“Think about what we look for when visiting another town and apply the same logic to the experiences offered to visitors by our own small communities.”
“Improved telecommunications will assist existing businesses to be more competitive and help attract new businesses and visitors to the region.”

What opportunities should we explore to make the Wimmera Southern Mallee region a better place to live, work and invest?

You said that improved communication infrastructure would enable virtual working lifestyles for residents in remote areas and create opportunities for local service workers in the health, childcare and education industries. You proposed that the focus should shift from tourism to stimulating the visitor economy by capitalising on the strengths of the region including the strong community, natural assets, cultural activities, sporting clubs, national parks, Aboriginal heritage, and agriculture research. To reverse the population decline in the region it was suggested to promote the affordable land and housing availability, and create improved services in the “lifestyle blocks”, away from the town centre. Additionally, you said that attracting industry to the shires was also seen as a solution to population decline. You also suggested integrating community resources and facilities to alleviate funding stresses, for example integrating schools with community and sports facilities and health service visits to schools to increase early intervention rates for health issues.

How can we turn things around and address the areas of disadvantage in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region?

We asked how we can turn things around to address the areas of disadvantage in the region. You said that early intervention and education needs more targeted resources, especially the low access rates to maternal and child health services and to ensure that there is affordable childcare in the region’s smaller towns. Additionally, it was highlighted that research to determine whether the same children are missing out on kinder and preschool be undertaken along with providing additional education resources for new parents. You said that skills development will improve the health and education outcomes for children in the region.

“Develop a solutions based approach to address rural population decline.”