committee for ballarat
thinking ahead

Commonwealth Games 2026

Position Paper: Ballarat & the region

INTRODUCTION

Committee for Ballarat is a member-based organisation representing over 120 businesses and individuals from across every sector of the region's economy and community.

Our Purpose is to *Inspire diverse thought leadership and unlock potential.*

Our Vision is for a *Thriving and vibrant regional community, known for its liveability, sustainability and inclusion.*

This position paper has been prepared following the engagement with our 120 members from business and the community, across all sectors. Appendix A will show the range of organisations who have contributed to this paper, along with associated organisations and individual community members.

The 2026 Commonwealth Games presents a once in a life-time opportunity for regional Victoria and Ballarat. The members of Committee for Ballarat, along with the broader regional community, fully support the games and congratulate the State Government for being able to secure such an iconic international event.

We fully support the Games as a world-class event, delivered in regional Victoria, that will leave a valuable legacy. Further, the event will be a driver for regional development, build local capacity and showcase our regions to a national and international audience.

The investment the Victorian Government will make in delivering the Games will be significant. This investment will be leveraged when it can be used to accelerate the delivery of many current priority projects and master plans that have already been adopted, including:

- Housing (Bakery Hill Master Plan)
- Visitor Economy (Sovereign Hill Master Plan)
- City Activation (Federation University Campus Vision, Creative City Strategy)
- Transport (Integrated Transport Action Plan)
- Net Zero Emissions (Circular Economy Plan)
- Ballarat Base Hospital Re-development.

The purpose of this paper is present to the Office of the Commonwealth Games and the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee (CGOC), the collective view of the Committee for Ballarat, for initiatives that will:

- Contribute to the successful delivery of the Games in Ballarat and the surrounding region
- Proposed Legacy projects that will have greatest impact on local infrastructure, sport, housing, tourism, sustainability and social opportunity across our region.

SPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Athletics is the biggest sport in any Commonwealth Games program and for Ballarat to host the Athletics competition brings an enormous opportunity to develop further **Mars Stadium.**

In recent years, the State Government has invested heavily in the stadium and the Games will enable further significant investment elevating the venue to a boutique, event ready stadium, suitable for many large sporting and entertainment events into the future.

Legacy:

- Permanent seating capacity of 20,000
  - Additional 10,000 temporary seating capacity

- An international standard athletics facility to be used as a warm-up facility for the Games and post the Games, a new permanent home for Athletics in the region

- Ballarat's Athletics history is a rich and proud one with many athletes representing this region with success at Commonwealth Games, Olympic Games and World Championships

- The Games provides the opportunity to recognise excellence and secure a new state-of-the-art regional facility fit for future generations of athletes

- The current Regional Athletics Centre at Llanberis Reserve is ageing and would require significant investment if it is to continue as a fit-for-purpose facility post the Games

- Improved access and amenity to Mars Stadium, including parkland, active transport links and arrival experience

- The Ballarat Major Events Precinct is one of the key Transformative Projects as part of the 'Ballarat. Now and Into the Future 2022' strategy.

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TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

RAIL

Rail will be the single most efficient mode of transport to bring spectators to the Games.Currently there are rail projects and planning that can be accelerated to meet the Games timeline.

An additional Ballarat station catering for events at the stadium, would be ideally situation directly opposite, on the Maryborough line. In the short term, this could be an 'Events Style' station with provision for later development, given the future population growth anticipated in Ballarat's North and the Mt Rowan areas. Further activation of the Maryborough line would provide enhanced connectivity to the townships of Creswick, Clunes and Talbot.

Legacy:

- *The Western Rail Plan* (Department of Transport). To include the extension of electrification of the Metro system and the required duplication of tracks, to remove commuter trains to Melton from the Ballarat V/Line services.
    - This will result in significantly faster travel times by running trains express through the western suburbs to Melton, including the new and up-graded suburban stations of Ardeer, Deer Park, Caroline Springs, Rockbank and Cobblebank.
- Ballarat Railway Station upgrade: to ensure DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliance
- Ballarat Railway Station, Southside Precinct development: completion of the works as considered by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)
- A new Events Station to access Mars Stadium, directly opposite, situated on the Maryborough line.

INTRA CITY AND INTER CITY CONNECTIVITY

The movement of people into the city from Melbourne and other destinations and the movement of people within the City and the region will be critical to the Games success.

Legacy:

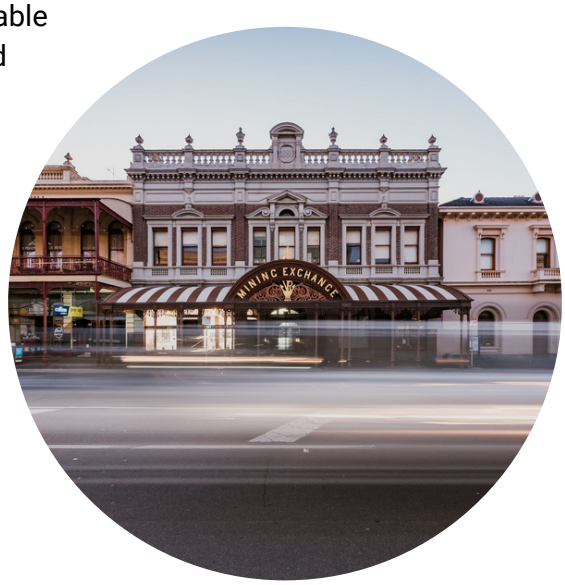
- Opportunity to expand Hydrogen Bus/Electric Vehicle transport technologies for intra city connectivity, commuter and park and ride services
- Enhanced Inter City connections via public transport, Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong and the regional towns between
- The duplication of Creswick Road and a gateway entrance to Ballarat from the Western Freeway
- Enhanced active transport links with joined up cycle paths and walking corridors to access the city's key precincts
- 'WayFinder' signage and technology to ensure the visitor experience provides clear routes to the city and region's attractions.

HOUSING – ACCOMMODATION

The housing opportunity the Games present by way of an Athletes Village and other possible infrastructure will be a partial solution to the region's current housing accessibility problem.

The style and location of an Athletes Village - with the capacity to accommodate up to 2000 athletes, officials and support staff - could create a significant legacy of diverse housing stock, including affordable, social and privately-owned accommodation.

The City of Ballarat's Bakery Hill Master plan and the Committee for Ballarat's CBD Revitalisation project both highlight the importance of inner-city apartment style and townhouse accommodation. There are a number of suitable inner-city allotments suitable for development and would bring enormous opportunity and character into our inner city and provide an immersive experience for athletes and officials.



Accommodation will also be required for the many visitors and associated service personnel including international media. There are opportunities for temporary accommodation, 'pop-up' camping sites for travellers and new permanent Hotel accommodation.

Legacy:

- Inner city urban renewal featuring medium to high density multi-storey apartment style accommodation to complement both Ballarat's heritage architecture and reflect and cater for our growing city and population

- Additional and diverse housing stock to address our housing needs, including for those most vulnerable
  * catering for essential workers, singles, couples and small families
  * combining affordable, social and privately owned accommodation

- Additional Hotel accommodation and up-graded camping facilities.

VISITOR ECONOMY

The regional tourism economy supports a significant workforce, is a major contributor to our gross regional productivity and delivers substantial social outcomes for Ballarat and western Victoria.

Ballarat's premier attraction, Sovereign Hill, is a major driver of community and economic growth, contributing more than $260m per year and supporting 1665 jobs. The Games can accelerate the next stages of the 20-year Master Plan, greatly enhancing the visitor experience of this world-class, cultural institution.

Legacy:

- Sovereign Hill's new arrival centre and exhibition space as per the Master Plan Stage 1b, leveraged through Regional Tourism infrastructure funding

- Further developments of existing tourism and cultural attractions, including the recognition and celebration of our First Nations people

THE MARATHON

Marathons have a special place in this community following Steve Moneghetti's performance at Commonwealth Games. Winning Gold, Silver and Bronze at the Games, Steve has secured a place in Games history. In recognition of Steve's contribution to athletics, a running track around Lake Wendouree has been named in his honour. This track is well-known by the international distance running communities.

Ballarat is a compact regional city with extraordinary natural beauty and incredible Indigenous and colonial heritage. Its wide boulevards and mostly flat landscape make it the ideal location to host an international Marathon that will be highly conducive to elite athlete performance.

Legacy:

- The broadcast vision of Ballarat for the duration of the women's, men's and para-marathon's will be an amazing show-case that will inspire visitors to the region years after the Games have finished.

CITY ACTIVATION

The Games will provide the impetus for a great deal of civic and community pride.Bringing our city and region to life for the duration of the Games and in the lead-up, will show-case regional Victoria to the world.

Live sites will give city the opportunity to celebrate social inclusion and community connection and demonstrate the diverse and multicultural region that we are.

We are excited by the prospect of a strong cultural program to run in conjunction with the Games as an opportunity to celebrate local artists we have within the region and their great talents.

Legacy:

- A new civic space, 'Federation Square' style precinct, Lydiard and Camp Street site, incorporating the Post Office, the Mining Exchange, the Art Gallery and Alfred Deakin Place. Such a space should include elements of weather proofing to enable year-round events, exhibitions and displays

- Public ITC connectivity and infrastructure.

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WORKFORCE

The Games will be as much about human capital as it is about facilities, sport, arts and culture. Workforce development will be a key area of focus in the lead up to the events, including the training of volunteers and building the skills and capacity of our health, service, tourism and hospitality industries.

The Games will be an opportunity for Social Procurement and the inclusion of local content in their development and delivery. There is a capacity to expand the Social Enterprises that currently exist in the hospitality sector including through organisations like *A Pot of Courage* and *Ground Up*.

BRI Industries and *McCallum Disabilities Services* are two further examples of current Social Enterprises capable of delivering workforce training and services for the Games.

Federation University and *Federation TAFE* also have great capacity to deliver workforce training and throughout regional Victoria with campuses in Ballarat and Gippsland.

As a COVID recovery initiative, the State Government has invested in Industry Strengthening and the continuation of this support will ensure businesses can continue to enhance the customer service capabilities of their staff, who in many cases, will be the first point of contact for visitors coming to the region. As it is likely that school holidays will be scheduled during the Games, there will be an opportunity to tap into student volunteers.

Legacy:

- Investment in local training opportunities, secondary, higher education, TAFE and others
- Development of Social Enterprises for training and delivering services.

HEALTH

The Games will take place during the major re-development of the Ballarat Base Hospital (BBH). Consideration and planning will be required to ensure the local health services can continue to operate efficiently during the games period.Consideration must be given to the capacity of the Emergency Department, emergency transport including airlift services, staffing, 'business as usual' health services, allied health services and games specific health care provision.

The Games provides an opportunity to accelerate the BBH re-development, with specific priority to the facilities and services that will best support the Games, whilst not detracting from the provision of health care for the wider community.

Legacy:

- Accelerated and prioritised work as part of the BBH re-development

COLLABORATION IS KEY

A 'local organising capacity' or a Local Organising Committee (LOC) is required. An LOC will work in close collaboration with the Office of the Commonwealth Games, DJPR, the CGOC and all other key stakeholders to ensure the most effective and efficient planning, delivery and operations for the games

- Appropriate resources should be allocated to ensure the unique regional voices, local capacity and regional nuance is captured
- An LOC in each region will be best placed to work with the Games organisers to engage with business and community to maximise the significant capability of local content, solutions, intelligence, needs and opportunities.
- LOCs would operate as part of the CGOC organisational and governance structure.

COMMUNITY

The Games are an opportunity to create a great sense of community pride

- We want Ballarat and the region to be recognised not only for its rich heritage but for its vibrant community
- We want to be proud of our region's capacity to deliver a great games and 'show-off' to the world
- We want to ensure that all sectors of our community have an opportunity to be involved including our multicultural community, and First Nations people. The preparation for and the Games provide an opportunity to engage in the important conversations around truth telling, reconciliation and treaty
- Local community organisations, including multicultural groups, will be an important resource for volunteers.

It is important to engage our community throughout the planning process and ensure consideration is given to the impact on our residents in the lead up to and during the games. This will happen with early and frequent engagement with peak bodies such as the Committee for Ballarat with access to a broad audience of business and the community. Such engagement will ensure the Games are a positive experience for the athletes, officials, visitors and our regional community.

The 2026 Commonwealth Games are a unique opportunity for our beautiful City and region to shine. There will be many visitors who come, some will choose to return and some will choose to make this region their home.

Above all, the games will be an opportunity to promote our community and our sense of pride; in the games, our region, our nation and our people.

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