

Discussion Paper - Local Economy

Creating a vision for Bass Coast

Thinking about how our community, our towns and villages and our environment is changing, how often have you said, “Wouldn’t it be great if ...”? Well, now is the perfect time to share those thoughts with the rest of the Bass Coast community through Bass Coast Shire Council’s Guiding Bass Coast Towards 2030 Vision program.

What do you like most about living in Bass Coast?. What is so special that you would like it protected for future generations and what would you like to see changed? Tell us what drew you to Bass Coast and what keeps you here.

Council wants to develop a shared view with the community about what Bass Coast should look like in 2030.

As well, we will need to think about some of the national and global issues such as what do we need as our population ages, about the impacts of climate change and the impact of change in telecommunications. How can Council and community groups show leadership and influence other decision-makers in these areas?

It is important for as many people as possible to have their say. The more feedback Council collects, the better understanding Council will gain on what the community sees as essential to a sustainable and diverse Shire.

How does this help in the formation of the vision? Your ideas will be the starting point for developing a shared view of the long-term priorities for Bass Coast.

The priorities will be a key reference point for the Council, community and other levels of government in planning and decision-making.

Discussion papers have been prepared for a number of themes outlining challenges and opportunities. These aim to inform and encourage discussion and debate. The themes are: the environment, the built environment, lifestyle, local economy and leadership.

This paper focuses on the theme of Local Economy.

The Local Economy

Reflecting on our present – imagining our future

The natural beauty of Bass Coast Shire combined with high quality agriculture land, the blend of urban and rural atmosphere, the strong sense of community and its proximity to Melbourne CBD makes Bass Coast attractive for living, working or visiting.

There are diverse industries in the Shire including retail, tourism, construction, health and community services, agriculture, manufacturing and hospitality. Tourism and agriculture are the two major industries hence the major source of local employment.

While Bass Coast’s agricultural base has mainly consisted of dairy and beef farming, new industries are emerging. There has been a steady increase in a variety of horticulture and exotic animal husbandry. Examples include vineyards, flower production, and boutique agriculture. This trend is likely to continue. However, draught and global warming are threatening the agriculture industry. How will we ensure that Bass Coast’s high quality agricultural land is protected, managed and enhanced into the future?

An estimated 3.4 million visitors spend more than \$440 million in the Shire each year. Over 2100 jobs in the Shire are directly attributed to tourism and more than half of all businesses in the Shire rely on tourism for their income.

The holiday home sector is a significant economic driver in the Shire, with over 10,000 holiday homes, contributing 1.1 million visitors annually, and \$219 million in direct visitor expenditure. A recent study into the economic impact of tourism on the area revealed that 47 per cent of people who own holiday homes in Bass Coast intend to live permanently in their holiday homes in the future. 85 per cent of these said they planned to retire to Bass Coast. This presents enormous opportunity to develop service businesses that will meet the needs and wants of a growing community.

A recent preliminary community survey, Your Vision for Bass Coast, conducted by Council in November 2007, identified several challenges. These include:

- Ageing population causing a lower per capita income and economic productivity, discouraging long-term business investment;
- Low level of export activity;
- Employment opportunities are limited to primarily agriculture and tourism;
- Inadequate infrastructure making it difficult for businesses to operate efficiently; and
- Shortages of specialist medical and tertiary education professionals.

Please have your say about Bass Coast's local economy in 2030

Now Council is looking to take the process to the next step, with Guiding Bass Coast Towards 2030. Council is very interested in your point of view and wants your comments and feedback. Thought provoking questions include:

- Describe how you think Bass Coast's local economy should look like in 2030?
- How are we going to address the challenges of ageing population, unemployment and inadequate infrastructure?
- What are we going to do to keep the Bass Coast's economy thriving?
- How do we create an economic environment that increases our wellbeing and prosperity and at the same time sustainable?

There are a number of ways for you to have a say. They are:

- Call Ella at the Vision Information Desk on (03) 5671 2747 and provide your ideas over the phone;
- Complete and return a Guiding Bass Coast Towards 2030 survey available from all Council service centres;
- Complete the survey available on Council's website at www.basscoast.vic.gov.au.

Guiding Bass Coast Towards 2030 is for the whole community not just Council. Your feedback will ensure that the vision enshrines the views of the community, service providers and local businesses. It will reflect who we are now and what we want "our place" to look like in the future. It is therefore important that you participate in the process and voice your aspirations. Together we will shape the future of Bass Coast.

Further Information

If you would like more information please contact the Vision Information Desk on (03) 5671 2747 or visit the Council's website www.basscoast.vic.gov.au.