



FUTURE MOUNT GAMBIER

VISION | PLANNING | INVESTMENT | GROWTH

Researched and developed by Kate Hill and Troy Bell.
Photographs: Kate Hill, Travis Fatchen and Ockert le Roux.

Mount Gambier is the second largest city in South Australia and the centre of the Limestone Coast region, with its own unique character, assets and geographic challenges.

With a population of 29,639 and catchment of 85,000 people, the city deserves its own strategic direction and State Government focus, **independent** of other South Australian regions.



This plan was developed in consultation with local experts, who understand the challenges and opportunities specific to their sector and know what effective action is required, now and into the future to create positive outcomes.

Any plan must be able to adapt to current events and reflect our changing lifestyles.

As the Member for the seat of Mount Gambier, I speak to people every day, from parents to officials to industry experts, about their vision for our city and ways they believe our region can grow and expand. Every idea, no matter how big or small, has merit.

As an advocate for Mount Gambier and its residents, my role is to work with our State Government to ensure our city has a collective voice at a state level.

This plan is designed to be a working document, a blueprint for the State Government to understand our unique challenges, encouraging collaboration and future planning with us, to ensure our city has every opportunity to grow and prosper.

I welcome your feedback at
mtgambier@parliament.sa.gov.au

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Troy Bell'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial 'T' and 'B'.

Troy Bell MP

SNAPSHOT MOUNT GAMBIER



Population
29,639



Median weekly
household income
\$1,087



Volunteered during
last 12 months
5,256



JobSeeker and
Youth Allowance recipients
1,567

Top Occupations

1

Forestry

2

Retail

3

Manufacturing

4

**Health care
& Social
Assistance**



Average age
40



Lone-person households
30.7%



Average household
2.3
persons

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

- › High liveability factors
- › Short commute times
- › Housing affordability
- › Improved airline accessibility
- › Open spaces and natural environments
- › Proximity to Melbourne and Adelaide
- › Excellent rainfall/soil profile for agriculture/industry
- › Regional relocation boom
- › Strong community spirit

VISION | PLANNING | INVESTMENT | GROWTH

Forestry Future Initiatives	\$20 million over 4 years
Housing for All Initiative	\$10 million over 4 years
Infrastructure Investment Fund	\$10 million
Sporting Infrastructure Fund	\$10 million
Tourism	\$6 million over 4 years
Freight Action Plan Priorities	\$5.5 million
Business Attraction/Retention Fund	\$5 million
Drug and Alcohol Services	\$3.1 million
Mobile Connect Project	\$3 million over 4 years
Mental Health Services	\$2.6 million over 4 years
On-Demand Public Transport	\$2 million
Skilled Workforce Attraction Package	\$2 million over 4 years
Waste and Recycling Initiatives	\$2 million over 4 years
Family Violence Services Funding	\$1.4 million over 4 years
Cross Border Commissioner	\$1 million over 4 years
Regional TAFE Board	\$800 k over 4 years
Creative Activation Fund	\$500 k over 4 years
TOTAL INVESTMENT	\$85 Million



FORESTRY FUTURE INITIATIVES

\$20 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

Forestry is one of the state's key economic drivers and major employer in the Limestone Coast, supporting more than 3,000 local workers directly and over 4,000 indirectly.

Spanning the border between Victoria and South Australia, the Green Triangle is home to one of Australia's largest commercial forestry estates and is a premier location for growing and processing wood fibre.

To support a world leading, local processing and manufacturing industry which is sustainable into the future, several key initiatives are required, including:

- › A Domestic First policy;
- › Fire protection;
- › Water capture/ reuse initiatives;
- › Training and development;
- › Farm forestry initiatives;
- › Code of conduct;
- › Value add/Manufacturing initiatives.



HOUSING FOR ALL INITIATIVE

\$10 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

One of the biggest concerns facing the region is the lack of affordable housing.

A housing boom has seen real estate skyrocket, pushing homes out of reach for first homebuyers and making rental properties scarce and unaffordable for many people.

Research is required to determine the backlog of maintenance on Housing SA properties and steps taken to address this continuing problem.

Service agencies are reporting the lack of affordable housing as their number one issue, forcing many into homelessness or insecure

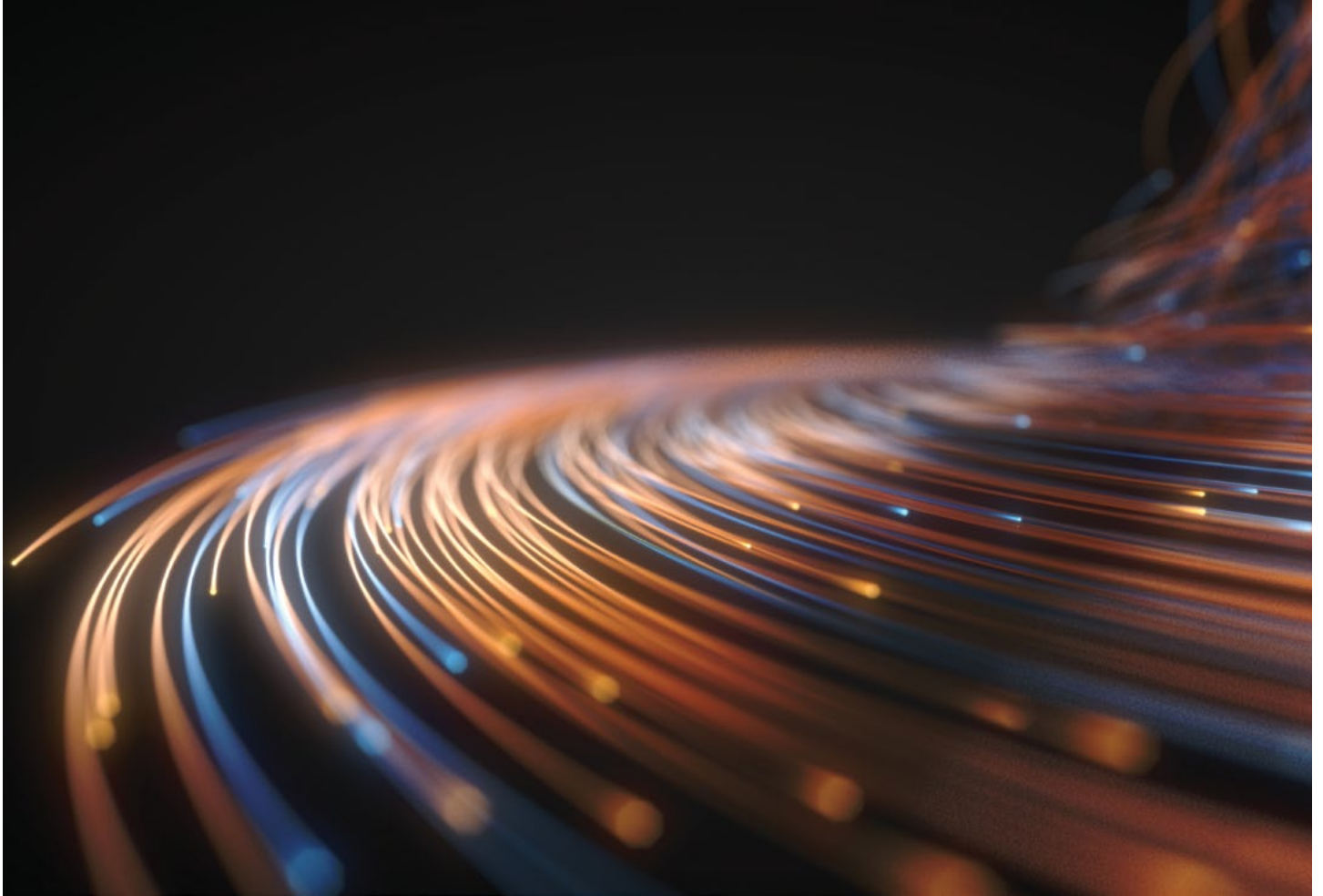
situations and resulting in a demand for crisis and emergency housing.

This is affecting a wide demographic including; older single residents, young people attempting to buy their first home, women in domestic and family violence situations, skilled professionals attempting to relocate to the region, pet-owners and residents affected by unemployment and other factors.

Resolving this issue requires a coordinated approach from

agencies and all levels of government and a multi-faceted approach, including:

- › Stamp duty incentives/low cost housing inclusion for all new housing estates;
- › Maintenance for public housing;
- › Emergency and crisis accommodation;
- › Short-term/contract housing for skilled workers.



INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT FUND

\$10 MILLION

Gas, electricity, water and fibre-optic cable are the crucial building blocks of the economy. This essential infrastructure powers businesses, enables trade and creates opportunities for communities, particularly in regional cities such as Mount Gambier and surrounding districts.

To attract industry to a regional area, critical infrastructure such as road access, power, water and fibre optic must be in place. An infrastructure investment fund would allow for our city to attract both businesses and industries to establish and operate.

For the city to attract major employers and business opportunities, modern, safe and reliable infrastructure networks are essential to realise business growth opportunities.

Initiatives could include:

- > Shared industrial hubs;
- > Warehousing;
- > Temperature controlled storage;
- > Intermodal feasibility study.



SPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE / TALENT DEVELOPMENT

\$10 MILLION

The city of Mount Gambier and the surrounding Limestone Coast region has a strong sporting culture, with multiple sporting venues currently in use. Located between the capital cities of Adelaide and Melbourne, the region is ideally positioned to host country championships, drawing from Victorian and South Australian sporting associations.

Currently, there are over 120 sporting clubs in our region which rely on community fundraising and government grants to equip and refurbish ageing club infrastructure. To assist these clubs, a sports fund of \$10million will be established with funding to be allocated by a board of local experts, matched dollar for dollar and with a strong focus on multi-use facilities.

Now entering its fourth year, the Limestone Coast Sporting Academy is a successful program identifying and developing talented regional athletes and providing pathways to state and national representation.

Funding of 200k p/a over four years would assist the academy to staff and establish programs to support talented local athletes to reach their full potential and provide the same opportunities offered in metropolitan areas.



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

\$6 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

Featuring unique natural assets, including sinkholes and crater lakes, our region has the potential to become one of South Australia's top regional tourism destinations.

To attract tourists to our region and encourage them to stay longer, we need a dedicated focus on paid tourism activities and services.

This focus includes the unlocking of private funding and encouraging entrepreneurial endeavours.

Maximising and leveraging our relationship with the South Australian Tourism Commission, our region needs a proactive tourism industry body which promotes and grows the city's visitor economy, including:

- › Product and tour development;
- › Marketing/promotion;

- › Masterplan for Valley Lakes precinct;
- › Event management/attraction incentives;
- › Indigenous tourism partnerships;
- › Nature-based tourism opportunities.

Successful events such as Fringe Mount Gambier and Generations in Jazz are run by volunteer organisations and require ongoing financial commitment to ensure their viability.



FREIGHT ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

\$5.5 MILLION

Collaboration between the South Australian, Victorian Government, local councils and businesses is needed to address the growing freight requirements for our region.

One of the key actions of the plan is targeting State and Federal Government funding for road improvements to address emerging capacity constraints for transport associated with the forest and freight industries.

Recent changes in these industries have led to new freight patterns emerging and a greater concentration of freight on particular corridors in South Australia, placing roads under pressure and creating a heightened safety risk.

Funding is required to support the First and Last Mile Strategy, which will identify potential bypass opportunities and also ensure the key local roads feeding into main arterial routes get the funding and maintenance required to provide efficient and safe freight movements.

BUSINESS ATTRACTION / RETENTION STRATEGY

\$5 MILLION

As the second largest city in South Australia, Mount Gambier is ideally positioned to attract new and established businesses as their base of operations.

Positioning the city as a desirable place to live and relocate requires collaboration with the City of Mount Gambier and District Council of Grant to maximise business growth opportunities. Developing an accessible information hub to entice potential operators is key with a strong focus on cost-of-living, career advancement, lifestyle and proximity to capital cities.

Maximising commercial real estate opportunities, creating accessible co-working spaces and strengthening existing business networks would assist in influencing organisations and investors.

A focus on value-adding offers significant opportunities for agricultural and forestry industries in diversification and employment, improving profitability and competitiveness and meeting export and domestic market requirements.





DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES

\$3.1 MILLION

The city of Mount Gambier, like all regional cities, faces ongoing challenges with substance and alcohol use and ongoing funding is required to ensure uninterrupted service delivery to accommodate demand and to retain experienced and qualified workforce.

The region requires ongoing prevention strategies combined with continuous service delivery specifically relevant to the community's needs.

Currently, residents requiring planned alcohol detoxification must travel to Adelaide due to no regional alcohol detoxification service. There is a need for two dedicated detoxification beds located within the Mount Gambier Hospital to provide medically managed alcohol detoxification.

The region's advocacy and health promotion organisation - Substance Misuse Limestone

Coast - requires ongoing financial assistance, in conjunction with local and federal government, to continue and expand their work, including education, early intervention initiatives and workforce training.

Two additional FTE drug and alcohol counsellors, including a youth-specific counsellor, are also required for the city of Mount Gambier, to complement existing services.

MOBILE CONNECT PROJECT

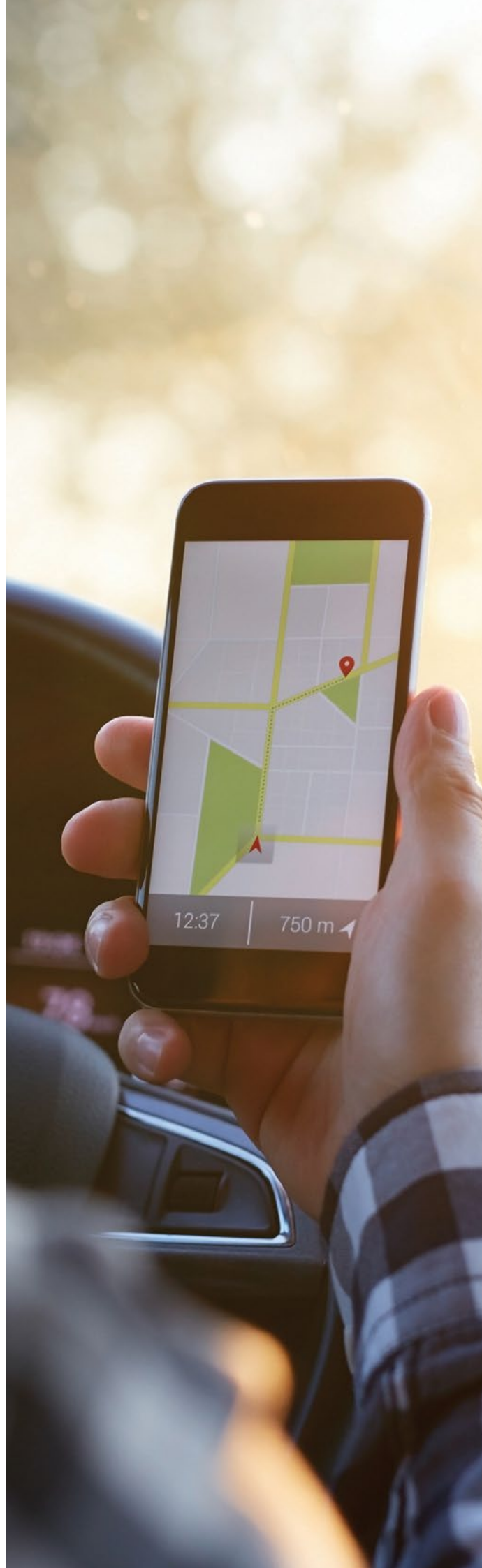
\$3 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

Mobile black spots currently exist along a number of main freight and commuter corridors into the city of Mount Gambier, including the Princes Highway, Glenelg River Road and Riddoch Highway – the main route to Adelaide.

Lack of adequate mobile coverage leaves drivers at risk, communities without connection and tourism opportunities missed.

Wi-fi access has been identified as an essential for self-drive tourists, yet the Southern Ocean Drive, advertised as one of South Australia's main touring routes for travellers, lacks this service along part of the route.

To ensure all routes are up to modern standards for Limestone Coast residents, transport providers and tourists, significant State Government investment is required, in partnership with the Federal Government, to identify black spots and ensure priority coverage.





MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

\$2.6 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

Ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of South Australians is paramount as we continue to recover from the pandemic.

In early 2021, a study conducted by Lifeline South East showed overwhelming support for a central mental health hub in the Limestone Coast, a free service to access face to face support, information and assistance in navigating local, state and national mental health services.

A region by region approach to funding allocation, in consultation with local experts is required;

Priorities for the city of Mount Gambier include:

- › Retention and recruitment strategies for skilled mental health workers; including psychologists/ counsellors;
- › First responder program trial;
- › A no-cost walk in community hub to refer onto existing services;
- › Subsidised counselling sessions;
- › Dedicated funding opportunities for non-government groups;
- › Early intervention programs, funded in conjunction with NGOs and community organisations.

ON-DEMAND PUBLIC TRANSPORT \$2 MILLION

South Australia has one of the lowest public transport patronage rates in Australia.

In the city of Mount Gambier, the bus service is operating on a 30-year-old model and has not been updated in accordance with new housing estates, major employers or tourism assets.

Bus SA, the peak industry body representing bus and coach services in South Australia, has recommended regional accessibility committees be established in several regions, including Mount Gambier, in their Moving People 2025 Agenda.

On-demand and ride-sharing services are replacing older public transport systems in major cities across the world, giving passengers the ability to track in real time and order to a point close to their location.

A review of the city's existing bus services is required to ensure any public transport services can adapt and meets the needs of a growing community.





SKILLED WORKFORCE ATTRACTION

\$2 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

A key pillar of a growing community is the attraction and retention of a skilled workforce.

For many years, the region has struggled with a shortage of skilled workers, in the health, education, trades and forestry sectors, as well as government agencies, private businesses and other key industries.

Short and long-term housing options to suit a range of demographics must form part of this strategy and also, the development of professional and social support networks.

A dedicated skilled workforce attraction package would be established to identify, train, recruit and retain skilled workers for our region, while promotional campaigns can position the city as the ideal place to live, work and play.

WASTE & RECYCLING INITIATIVES

\$2 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

Key infrastructure is needed to modernise and boost the city's ability to process and recycle waste, as export bans continue on unprocessed waste, plastic, paper, cardboard, glass and tyres from Australia.

A catchment area of 85,000 residents, including businesses and industries, creates a significant amount of waste.

An industry development fund to encourage new initiatives from organisations and individuals to deal with waste and recycling in a sustainable way with minimal impact on the environment will be established.

This fund would ensure Mount Gambier leads the state in waste and recycling initiatives.

Initiatives could include:

- › Ultra-high temperature furnace/Power generation;
- › Biochar/biomass;
- › Plastic recycling/Product development;
- › Liquid waste initiatives.





FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICE FUNDING

\$1.4 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

Domestic and family violence not only has a devastating impact upon victims and families but has wider repercussions across all levels of society.

Women experiencing violence require a safe place to stay after leaving unsafe situations but due to a severe shortage of affordable housing options, service providers are unable to relocate at-risk clients from crisis or emergency options to long term accommodation.

More social and community housing options for at-risk residents are required as a matter of urgency.

Based in Mount Gambier, the Limestone Coast Domestic Violence Service is the region's leading agency and requires two additional FTE staff to manage their caseload across the region. Also, the service has currently outgrown its facility and requires a permanent home to continue their work.



CROSS BORDER COMMISSIONER

\$1 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS

Establishing a Cross Border Commissioner role for South Australia is a priority, in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and state border closures.

Mount Gambier is in a unique situation, given its close proximity to the Victorian border and many residents work, live and travel across both states.

A Cross Border Commissioner would not only be able to advocate for South Australian residents but also to establish close working relationships with the Victorian and New South Wales Cross Border Commissioners to streamline processes and reduce red tape for residents and businesses.



REGION SPECIFIC TAFE BOARD

\$800K OVER 4 YEARS

The importance of TAFE to regional South Australia, including Mount Gambier, cannot be underestimated. Of the 80,000 students who study at TAFE SA, more than 25,000 are regionally based.

As a public education and vocational training provider, the accessible training that TAFE provides is often the only option for students seeking a trade in hairdressing, beauty or automotive. The courses tie in with local industries to provide apprenticeships and intersect with high schools and learning centres.

Each region has different needs and priorities depending on the industries and emerging industries specific to their region.

A locally appointed board, made up of industry and regional representatives, would act as a guide to ensure courses reflect the priorities of each region.

CREATIVE ACTIVATION FUND

\$500K OVER 4 YEARS

A vibrant arts and cultural sector is important to the social fabric of any growing city, increasing community connection and showcasing local artists and creatives.

However, the sector has been one of the most impacted by the ongoing pandemic, with events, performances and live music impacted heavily.

A Creative Activation Fund, with a local panel, could assist in identifying potential event and arts opportunities, help support existing arts organisations and also, provide opportunities for collaborations between individuals and groups.

Such a fund could also assist in attracting and retaining young artists, who often have to move to capital cities to take up opportunities, by offering opportunities and career progression.

Initiatives from the fund could include:

- › A public art trail for the city;
- › Long-term artist-in-residence program;
- › Arts courses offered through TAFE SA and UniSA Mount Gambier campuses;
- › Access to community gallery spaces;
- › Scope for Arts Prize/Festival;
- › Support for live music/tour opportunities.



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The information and statistics within the document has been gathered from a range of sources, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, City of Mount Gambier and industry experts.

All information is current as of June 2021.

MOUNT GAMBIER 2021-2025

Authorised by Troy Bell MP

24a Bay Road, Mount Gambier SA 5290

W: www.troybell.com.au

P: 0887 249944

E: mtgambier@parliament.sa.gov.au