

Shaping tomorrow's landscapes: the evolution of regional rehabilitation planning in Victoria's Latrobe Valley

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Abstract

The Latrobe Valley in Victoria, Australia, is in the middle of a major regional transition with the staged closure of thermal power stations and associated brown coal mines. Rehabilitation challenges extend beyond individual sites and require coordinated planning to maximise positive long-term environmental, social and land use outcomes.

Governments, industry, traditional owners, researchers, community representatives and other stakeholders are collaborating to proactively shape post-mining landscapes. In 2020 the Victorian Government released the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy (LVRRS) to guide rehabilitation of the brown coal mines at a regional scale. Since its release, the LVRRS has been subject to regular review and update to reflect emerging knowledge, contextual and regulatory developments, and implementation experience.

This paper outlines the evolution of the LVRRS since 2020 and how an adaptive, regional-scale approach to rehabilitation planning can support clearer objectives, improved stakeholder support and increased confidence in long-term outcomes. The Latrobe Valley experience offers insights relevant to other jurisdictions managing large-scale mine closure and legacy rehabilitation challenges.

Keywords: mine rehabilitation strategy, mine rehabilitation planning, mine closure planning, Latrobe Valley brown coal mines, regional transition

1 Introduction

How can governments plan for regional mine rehabilitation in a dynamic, evolving context characterised by technical uncertainty? While policies and strategies are released at a point in time, the broader context and environment around them continue to evolve beyond their publication. Information and knowledge informing policy advances over time, and key assumptions may be validated or change. Often policies and strategies themselves play a role in shaping this knowledge and context, as in the case of the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy (LVRRS). The LVRRS, released in 2020, set out the Victorian Government's policy and guidance to ensure that the Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang coal mines in the Latrobe Valley are safely and sustainably transformed (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions [DJPR] 2020). This paper tracks the evolution of the LVRRS since 2020 and how an adaptive, regional-scale approach to rehabilitation planning can respond to changing circumstances while supporting clearer objectives, improved stakeholder engagement and integration, and increased confidence in long-term outcomes.

1.1 Background

The Latrobe Valley is on Gunaikurnai Country in the Gippsland region of Victoria, Australia, located approximately 150 km east of Melbourne. Coal mining has shaped the Latrobe Valley for well over a century, catalysing a significant transformation of the region's landscape and driving major industrial and societal change in Victoria throughout the 20th century. Today the Latrobe Valley is a region in transition. Home to

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many regional communities including Moe, Morwell and Traralgon, the region is also host to the Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang coal mines. These 3 large-scale open cut mines are progressively closing as the state transitions from coal-powered energy towards a renewable energy future. The transition presents rehabilitation challenges that extend beyond individual mine sites, requiring coordinated regional-scale planning to maximise long-term environmental, social and land use outcomes.

1.2 Hazelwood mine fire inquiry and the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy

The 2014 Hazelwood mine fire drove fundamental changes to regional-scale strategic planning for the closure and rehabilitation of the Latrobe Valley coal mines. The fire, which burned for 45 days over February and March, was caused by embers from nearby bushfires and had significant impacts on communities in the Latrobe Valley, particularly Morwell and surrounding areas. A key outcome in response to the mine fire was the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry (HMF I) and subsequent publication of the HMF I Victorian Government Implementation Plan (2016). The HMF I Implementation Plan (Government of Victoria 2016, p. 75) recommended the development of the LVRRS 'to guide regional level planning for mining operations, rehabilitation, mine closure and post closure, taking account of the interconnectivity between the three mine voids.' The HMF I Implementation Plan (Government of Victoria 2016, p. 77) set out the approach for the LVRRS as 'a living document that will be progressively updated with new information and expert knowledge as it becomes available.'

Over 2016–2020, extensive regional studies informed the development of the LVRRS, including a regional geotechnical study, a regional water study, community and stakeholder engagement, and a draft preliminary land use vision. This work investigated regional stability and fire risks associated with coal mine voids, the ongoing volume of water required to maintain mine void water levels, the minimum length of time required to fill mine voids with locally sourced water, and future land use opportunities post rehabilitation. An overall finding of this work concluded:

'A waterbody-based rehabilitation approach could achieve safe and stable landforms for the Latrobe Valley coal mines through largely passive controls, noting that active controls may still be needed to produce, fill, maintain and monitor levels and quality of water and/or other resources in the void into perpetuity to maintain safety and stability.' (DJPR 2020, p. 11)

The inaugural LVRRS was published in June 2020, setting out the Victorian Government's long-term strategy for:

- the safety, stability and sustainability of coal mine land and any adjacent land
- the planning for the Latrobe Valley region in relation to the rehabilitation of coal mine land and any adjacent land, and the relationship between each mine void
- the development of a plan for the monitoring and evaluation of coal mine land after rehabilitation of that land is complete.

The LVRRS (DJPR 2020, p.8) set out a vision that 'The Latrobe Valley coal mines and adjacent land are transformed to safe, stable and sustainable landforms which support the next land use' to be delivered by achieving 6 outcomes:

1. People, land, environment and infrastructure are protected.
2. Land is returned to a safe, stable and sustainable landform.
3. Aboriginal values are protected.
4. Community is engaged, and their aspirations inform the transformation.
5. Long-term benefits and future opportunities to the community are optimised.
6. An integrated approach to rehabilitation and regional resource management is adopted.

These outcomes are further supported by a set of implementation principles to guide rehabilitation planning for each Latrobe Valley coal mine in a regional context, including (but not limited to):

- Mine rehabilitation should plan for a drying climate. Rehabilitation activities and final landforms should be climate resilient.
- Any water used for mine rehabilitation should not negatively impact on traditional owners' values, environmental values in the Latrobe River system or the rights of other existing water users.
- Traditional owners should be involved in rehabilitation planning, assessment and decision-making.

The commitment to an iterative, adaptive approach set out by the HMFI Implementation Plan is embedded in legislation. Under section 84AZO of the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* (Government of Victoria 1990), the LVRRS must be reviewed every 3 years from its publication in June 2020. The Victorian Minister for Energy and Resources may update the LVRRS at any time, independent of the review requirement. This legislative framework is key to ensuring an adaptive approach that enables the LVRRS to evolve alongside changes in knowledge, policy, community expectations, economy and other relevant considerations.

1.3 The Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy and managing uncertainty

The LVRRS was published in a time of relative uncertainty regarding key technical questions around the feasibility of mine rehabilitation, including questions around geotechnical, hydrogeological, water quality and hydrological factors. The Hazelwood Mine Fire Board of Inquiry (2016, p. 114) found that 'the pit lake option is currently the most viable rehabilitation option, [however] considerable further investigation is required, as new knowledge could result in an alternative preferred option.' This is reflected in the LVRRS (DJPR 2020), which does not prescribe final landforms and recognises that 'there are social, cultural, environmental and economic factors that may change the feasibility of rehabilitation options available at future points in time, including significant uncertainties associated with climate change and water availability.'

The following implementation actions set out in the LVRRS (DJPR 2020, p. 30) have sought to address these knowledge gaps and provide stakeholders with greater confidence around the future direction of mine rehabilitation:

1. Provide guidance on the use of climate change scenarios for water resource planning for mine rehabilitation.
2. Develop new declared mine regulations.
3. Guidance on potential water sources and access arrangements for mine licensees to undertake rehabilitation.
4. Further assess the feasibility of alternative water sources that could be used for mine rehabilitation.
5. Identify alternative/contingency rehabilitation options to manage land stability and fire risks if sufficient water is not available.
6. Support the Integrated Mines Research Group.

The LVRRS' implementation principles also highlight how, given uncertainty and rehabilitation and mine closure planning as a risk-based process, the LVRRS supports the management of key regional risks. The LVRRS (2020, p. 17) notes that 'based on...historical mine instability events, it is clear that active controls and regulation practices cannot guarantee that major ground movements or coal fires will not occur in the future.' As such, the LVRRS includes the following implementation principles, noting that 'post-mining landforms should present the lowest reasonably achievable risk to public health and safety, both within and beyond the mine boundaries, at the time of relinquishment and into the future' (DJPR 2020, p. 17):

- Fire risk of rehabilitated land should be no greater than that of the surrounding environment.

- Ground instability and ground movement risks and impacts during rehabilitation and in the long-term should be minimised as far as practicable (DJPR 2020, p. 8).

2 2023 Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy review and amendment

The first review of the LVRRS, completed in June 2023, led to a significant development in direction for the strategy. Three years after the publication of the LVRRS, changes in the regulatory and energy transition context, alongside an improved knowledge of rehabilitation options, created a considerably different context from the assumptions underlying the original strategy:

- The Regional Water Study, prepared to inform the development of the inaugural LVRRS, originally estimated that filling all mine voids completely up to their crests could require up to 3,000 gigalitres of water (DJPR 2020).
- In 2021 EnergyAustralia announced that the Yallourn Power Station would be retired in 2028, brought forward from 2032.
- AGL announced in 2022 that Loy Yang A power station would close earlier than planned, from 2048 to 2035 [Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) 2023].

These contextual changes had considerable implications for rehabilitation planning, including smaller-than-projected mine voids and reduced estimated volumes for water required to fully fill mine voids, and brought-forward timing for mine rehabilitation. Following the 2023 review, the Victorian Government released the LVRRS Amendment in October 2023. The Amendment (DEECA 2023), published as an addendum to the LVRRS, updated the strategy to reflect updated knowledge from studies completed as part of the implementation of the LVRRS and the updated context for mine rehabilitation since the publication of the LVRRS.

The updated approach set out in the LVRRS Amendment 2023 sought to better facilitate regional rehabilitation planning by refining policies and processes for mine licensees' rehabilitation planning and providing advice on applying the regulatory framework for rehabilitation of declared mines (DEECA 2023). A key evolution in the approach of the LVRRS Amendment was the inclusion of new conditions to ensure that water access for mine rehabilitation does not impact upon entitlements of existing water users and values, recognising the need to manage the future risks of a drying climate.

Overall, the LVRRS Amendment sought to provide improved clarity on the state's position, improving the ability for mine operators to plan for the end of mine life and final rehabilitation activities. In turn, the Amendment has led to improved certainty on rehabilitation outcomes, approaches and costs across all 3 Latrobe Valley coal mines.

2.1 Progress on Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy implementation actions

A key strength of the LVRRS is a set of clear implementation actions to measure and drive progress on rehabilitation planning. Delivery of the LVRRS's implementation actions has served to increase the knowledge base for rehabilitation pathways, supporting greater certainty around the possibilities for mine rehabilitation.

2.1.1 Action 1: provide guidance on the use of climate change scenarios for water resources planning for mine rehabilitation

The LVRRS Amendment (DEECA 2023) highlights the release of the Guidelines for assessing the impact of climate change on water availability in Victoria by the Victorian Government in November 2020. The guidelines set out scenarios for assessing the impact of climate change on water availability, supply and demand across Victoria, taking into account changes in temperature, potential evapotranspiration, rainfall, run-off and groundwater recharge. The guidelines have been adopted by the Victorian water sector to inform water planning activities across the state. In December 2020 the Victorian Government also held workshops

to support the application of the guidelines by mine licensees when preparing their declared mine rehabilitation plans (DMRPs) (DEECA 2023). The guidelines and workshops support mine licensees to undertake mine rehabilitation planning that builds on the existing evidence base of potential future water availability across a range of possible future climate scenarios (DEECA 2023). The guidelines were later updated in 2025 to refine this guidance in response to changes including greater data, advances in analysis methods and tools, scientific advances and evolving user needs (DEECA 2025).

2.1.2 *Action 2: develop new declared mine regulations*

The Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) (Mineral Industries) Regulations 2019 were amended in 2022 to require more detailed information for declared mines on mine rehabilitation planning, supporting more effective and transparent decision-making, monitoring and community engagement (DEECA 2023).

In 2025 ministerial guidelines for preparing DMRPs were released to assist licensees meet their obligations for safe and sustainable rehabilitation of mine land, providing guidance on assessing and managing risks, designing effective rehabilitation plans, setting clear closure criteria and post-closure planning.

2.1.3 *Action 3: guidance on potential water sources and access arrangements for mine licensees to undertake rehabilitation*

DEECA (2023) has completed further analysis and identified the type of conditions that could guide how water from the Latrobe River system is allocated and accessed for the purposes of Latrobe Valley mine rehabilitation at Yallourn and Loy Yang. To develop these conditions, DEECA engaged with a working group experienced in the operations that understands the values in the Latrobe River system.

Placing conditions on access to water for the purpose of mine rehabilitation can link water availability for mine rehabilitation with prevailing climatic conditions more closely, ensuring that any surface water accessed for mine rehabilitation will not diminish the water entitlements of existing water users and values in Gippsland in line with these broader policy aims. Put simply, more river water could be available for mine rehabilitation during wet periods and less during dry times. This would help mitigate the expected future impacts of a drier climate future and climate variability.

These conditions could collectively support a total volume of surface water taken for mine rehabilitation up to the average annual historical volume taken for power generation. The type of surface water access conditions identified through the analysis include:

- restricting take to the wettest months of the year (June to November)
- a threshold to prevent winter-spring baseflow in the Latrobe River from being diverted
- a limit on annual releases from Blue Rock Reservoir
- a maximum period of water access for mine rehabilitation purposes of up to 30 years from the initial supply date at each mine or until 2065, whichever is earlier.

This guidance refines the LVRRS principles to guide rehabilitation planning for each Latrobe Valley coal mine in a regional context and can be used by mine licensees to inform preparation of their DMRPs. The specific conditions for any future water access will be determined by the Minister for Water, following a mine licensee's application for access to water for mine rehabilitation as part of the statutory process (DEECA 2023).

2.1.4 *Action 4: further assess the feasibility of alternative water sources that could be used for mine rehabilitation*

In 2024 DEECA commissioned a high-level report on sourcing manufactured water for mine rehabilitation, providing mine licensees and the community with a shared information base on potential concepts for sourcing manufactured water for mine rehabilitation, if required by a mine licensee. The analysis confirmed that while a manufactured water supply for mine rehabilitation is feasible, it remains complex and expensive.

Securing a manufactured water supply would require significant further feasibility and other detailed assessments, which would remain the obligation of the mine licensees if implementation of a DMRP is required.

2.1.5 Action 5: identify alternative/contingency rehabilitation options to manage land stability and fire risks if sufficient water is not available

DEECA completed an investigation into keeping the mine voids dry, confirming this would require hundreds of millions of tonnes of suitable fill from new quarries over many decades to stabilise the mines and to cover the coal for adequate fire protection. Ongoing engineering controls of dry voids would be needed. The investigation concluded that partially or fully filling mine voids with water provides the greatest likelihood of maintaining long-term stability (DEECA 2023).

2.1.6 Action 6: support the Integrated Mines Research Group

DEECA has supported the Integrated Mines Research Group by supporting Federation University to undertake specific stability studies on the effect of water quality on brown coal strength, as well as investigation of coal cover stability and long rehabilitated slopes in Latrobe Valley brown coal mines.

DEECA also partners with the Cooperative Research Centre for Transformations in Mining Economies (CRC TiME), supporting research into collaborative post-mining development planning for the Latrobe Valley and climate change risks to soil covers in rehabilitated Latrobe Valley coal mines.

3 The Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy in 2026

At the time of its second statutory review in June 2026, the LVRRS is again in a significantly different context to its publication in 2020 and the release of the 2023 Amendment, with many of the knowledge gaps identified during the development of the LVRRS now addressed. The LVRRS and LVRRS Amendment have significantly clarified regional technical issues and regulatory processes, supporting a clearer direction for mine rehabilitation.

In October 2025 the Victorian Government released ministerial guidelines for the preparation of DMRPs. ENGIE and EnergyAustralia have submitted draft DMRPs for the Hazelwood and Yallourn mines, respectively, setting out detailed plans for the mine voids to be transformed into water-filled pit lakes. In December 2025 the Victorian Minister for Water approved an application by AGL for a bulk water entitlement for rehabilitation of Loy Yang mine. The conditions for this entitlement are consistent with the conditions set out in the LVRRS Amendment, and any use of water for mine rehabilitation will be subject to other approval requirements (see LVRRS for further detail). Each mine licensee may also be required to prepare an environment effects statement for the Minister for Planning in accordance with the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Government of Victoria 1978).

3.1 Contextual changes since 2023

Future iterations of the LVRRS will have to consider key contextual changes since the last review of the strategy. Some of these contextual changes could represent potential opportunities for strategic planning around regional economic transition and post-mining land uses.

3.1.1 Traditional Owners

3.1.1.1 Healing Wurruk after coal

In September 2025 Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) released Healing Wurruk after Coal, a position statement outlining Gunaikurnai principles, rights and priorities for the remediation of coal mines in the Latrobe Valley. The position statement sets out GLaWAC's priorities for coal mine rehabilitation as:

1. sustaining Yarnda (water), the lifeblood of Country
2. protecting and restoring our cultural heritage
3. caring for Country beyond the mine void
4. creating a lasting legacy for the Gunaikurnai
5. resourcing Gunaikurnai leadership today (GLaWAC 2025).

A key principle of the LVRRS (DJPR 2020) is that ‘Traditional Owners should be involved in rehabilitation planning, assessment and decision-making.’ This principle recognises that ‘the rehabilitation of the Latrobe Valley mines and surrounding land parcels should involve the GLaWAC and consider its Whole of Country Plan.’

3.1.1.2 Treaty

In 2025 the Statewide Treaty between the Victorian Government and First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria was signed, with official commencement from 12 December 2025. The LVRRS Amendment (DEECA 2023) states that the Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that the LVRRS is responsive to Victoria’s Treaty outcomes.

3.1.2 Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority

A key change has been the wrap-up of the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority (MLRA) and the transfer of its functions into Resources Victoria (DEECA) in March 2026, in response to the recommendations of the Independent Review into the Victorian Public Sector (Silver 2025) (Silver Review). The MLRA and its precursor, the Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner, was created in response to the HMFI, which recommended that an independent body be established to oversee and coordinate rehabilitation planning and implementation for the Latrobe Valley mines (MLRA) (Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority n.d.). The LVRRS (DJPR 2020, p.31) set out specific roles and responsibilities for the MLRA in relation to the LVRRS. These responsibilities include:

- developing and maintaining a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of rehabilitation planning activities
- monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the LVRRS in accordance with that monitoring framework
- carrying out strategic audits of public sector bodies and declared mine licensees in relation to the implementation of rehabilitation planning activities and the LVRRS
- providing advice and recommendations to the minister in relation to both the LVRRS and the rehabilitation plans of licensees
- providing information and education to the Victorian community about the LVRRS
- monitoring and evaluating the risks posed by geotechnical, hydrogeological, water quality or hydrological factors for declared mine land in relation to public safety, the environment and relevant infrastructure
- monitoring and reporting, in accordance with the monitoring framework, on:
 - implementation by public sector bodies and Latrobe Valley licensees of the regional rehabilitation strategy
 - the effectiveness of the regional rehabilitation strategy.

Future iterations of the LVRRS will have to consider the implications of the wrap-up of the MLRA, including responsibilities around monitoring and evaluation, community engagement and management of coal mine land post rehabilitation.

3.1.3 *Regional transition and land use context*

The Latrobe Valley is in the middle of a broader economic and structural transformation. Successful rehabilitation is essential to maximising outcomes and enabling active participation in this transformation. Strategic planning will have to take into account opportunities and implications relating to land use, community and local industry.

3.1.3.1 *Net Zero Economy Authority*

In 2024 the Australian Government established the Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEa) to support workers and communities through the net zero transition. The NZEA has identified the Latrobe Valley as a priority region and is undertaking work to support the area's economic future, including analysis on potential opportunities to leverage its renewable energy and agricultural capabilities (NZEa 2025). Currently, the NZEA is supporting the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to develop regional workforce transition plans as well as undertaking assessments to determine whether support is needed for power station workers under the Energy Industry Jobs Plan.

3.1.3.2 *Energy transition*

The *Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Act 2024* (Government of Victoria 2024) brought forward Victoria's long-term target for net zero greenhouse gas emissions from 2050 to 2045. The Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP), released in 2025, sets out the Victorian Government's long-term strategic plan for transmission and renewable energy zone development in Victoria. The proposed Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), located between Morwell and Sale, covers the majority of the Hazelwood and Loy Yang mining licence areas but does not include the Yallourn mining licence area. The proposed REZ is located near the existing 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission network around Loy Yang, with the VTP (VicGrid 2025) noting the region's good wind resources and significant existing transmission infrastructure from coal-fired power.

3.1.3.3 *New industry growth*

Alongside the growth of the renewable energy sector, the Latrobe Valley is seeing the growth of new industries that will shape future land use.

In January 2026 Keppel Ltd announced its plans to build a 720-megawatt data centre at Hazelwood in the proposed Gippsland REZ (Pope 2026). The Victorian Government's AI Mission Statement *Victoria: AI-Driven Business-Ready* (Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions 2026), released in January 2026, envisions Victoria as an emerging data centre hub. The Mission Statement highlights the need for a coordinated approach to balance timely access to land, water and energy with the security and sustainability of Victoria's water and energy supply.

The Latrobe Magnesium project is a magnesium demonstration production plant located in Hazelwood North in the Latrobe Valley. The demonstration plant, which converts fly ash (a byproduct of coal power generation) to magnesium metal, is highlighted in Victoria's Critical Minerals Roadmap. If commissioning of the demonstration plant is successful, Latrobe Magnesium plans to build a 10,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) Australian Magnesium Commercial Plant (Australian Trade and Investment Commission 2026).

3.1.3.4 *Regional development*

The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF) was established in 2002 under the *Regional Development Victoria Act 2002* (Government of Victoria 2002) to support the development of rural and regional Victoria. In response to feedback from community consultation on water access for coal mine rehabilitation, in December 2025 the Victorian Government announced that all water access revenue received from AGL's bulk water entitlement for Loy Yang will be paid into RJIF for the benefit of the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland.

In February 2026 Latrobe City Council endorsed its Economic Development Strategy 2025-2031 (Latrobe City Council 2026). The draft strategy notes the opportunity for mine rehabilitation to return the land to

productive use that supports economic diversification, as well as the potential to create an iconic attraction and add value to the region (Latrobe City Council 2025).

The Victorian Government has supported CRC TiME's Collaborative planning for post-mine land use project in the Latrobe Valley. The project's final report, published in August 2025, captures aspirations that emerged from deliberations by more than 100 people, including First Nations and young people. The study found that there is community support for:

'...future land uses on the mine land consistent with the areas of competitive advantage for the Latrobe Valley region including new energy generation, biodiversity enhancement, novel food and fibre production and non-polluting industrial development...[as well as]...many aspects of enhanced liveability, such as sustainable and affordable housing, enhanced connectivity of landscape, accessibility through public and active transport, a prioritisation of cultural and arts spaces and diverse recreation opportunities.' (Reeves et al. 2025)

3.1.3.5 Housing

Plan for Victoria, released in February 2025, sets out the Victorian Government's long-term strategic plan for the state. The plan sets out a housing target for each local government area across Victoria, with a target of 13,000 new homes for the Latrobe City area built by 2051 (Department of Transport and Planning 2025).

4 Future opportunities

What are the post-mining opportunities in the Latrobe Valley going forward? The region faces a range of possible futures over the coming decades with the gradual closure of the mines and the transition to interim and post-mining land uses. The LVRRS continues to play an important convening role and vehicle for discussion, supporting a coordinated policy approach and regulatory clarity, and providing confidence to stakeholders. These outcomes, particularly improved regulatory clarity and certainty, are crucial to enabling investment in post-mining land uses, both in the interim and post relinquishment. There may also be future opportunities for the LVRRS to support further studies, continuing its role in shaping the knowledge base for regional rehabilitation.

Alongside the LVRRS there are many efforts and initiatives that outline visions and opportunities for the future of the Latrobe Valley region. The Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan (GLaWAC 2015) sets out the Gunaikurnai vision for Country, including the goal of healing Country. Gippsland 2035: Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan, developed by the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) in collaboration with industry, community and education providers, outlines a shared vision for the region which includes a thriving economy, appealing local jobs and employment pathways, and education and training pathway options to link to future employment (LVA 2023). The Victorian Government's 2022 Gippsland Regional Economic Development Strategy identifies medium to long-term strategic directions for the Gippsland region's economic development, including maximising the role of the food and fibre sector, pursuing opportunities emerging from energy industry transition, and supporting growth and diversification in the visitor economy. Latrobe City: Our Transition (2023), published by Latrobe City Council, sets out a community vision for 2031 and identifies key transition actions including supporting affected industries, attracting new industries and enhancing liveability.

The LVRRS Draft Preliminary Land Use Vision (DELWP 2019) envisioned a transformed future Latrobe Valley that is highly liveable, has a major role in energy production and transmission, and is a key part of Victoria's food bowl, among other outcomes. Shaping the region's post-mining landscape, to support its social, economic and environmental transition will require continued collaboration across governments, industry, traditional owners, researchers, community representatives and other stakeholders. This is in line with the outcomes set out by the LVRRS (DJPR 2020) that 'community are engaged, and their aspirations inform the transformation' and that 'Traditional Owners should be involved in rehabilitation planning, assessment and

decision-making'. The LVRRS, with its regional-scale focus, offers an opportunity to connect ongoing policies, projects, programs and stakeholder views into a holistic, integrated strategic plan for regional rehabilitation.

5 Conclusion

A decade on from the 2016 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Implementation Plan, which identified the need for a strategy to guide regional rehabilitation planning for the Latrobe Valley, the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy (LVRRS) has evolved from its initial core focus on addressing critical technical knowledge gaps towards enabling a clearer pathway for mine rehabilitation. Over time, the LVRRS has evolved based on emerging knowledge, contextual and regulatory developments, and implementation of tangible, measurable actions. The 2020 LVRRS and 2023 LVRRS Amendment have supported a risk-based approach to uncertainty and significantly improved clarity for stakeholders on expected rehabilitation outcomes, technical approaches and regulatory processes across multiple Acts.

The context has continued to evolve in the 3 years since the last amendment to the LVRRS. With improved clarity around the future possibilities for physical rehabilitation of the region's coal mines, there is increasing scope for future iterations of the LVRRS to guide planning for post-mining land uses to support the region's broader transition. In this context, adaptive frameworks are essential to respond to ongoing uncertainty and change. Overall, this adaptive approach has been, and will continue to be, critical to stakeholder and community confidence as the Latrobe Valley transitions towards its post-coal mining future.

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