



Media Release

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G21 gears up for COVID recovery

G21 is preparing for the role it will play, in concert with all levels of government, business and other bodies to help the region emerge from COVID-19.

G21 CEO Elaine Carbines said the Board and staff at G21 were devastated by the impact the pandemic was having on families, businesses and the most vulnerable in our regional community.

“Surviving the COVID-19 reality has been challenging for us all. But transitioning back to a new type of normal will potentially be even more challenging,” Ms Carbines said.

“People have been scarred. Businesses crushed. Jobs lost. Lives irreversibly changed.

“However, as painful as that experience has been for many of us individually, and as a regional community, there are positives to build upon.

“Our region’s community fabric is strong. Our business community is resilient. Our people are resourceful and innovative. Governments have provided unprecedented assistance.

“The region has the necessary foundations to rebuild strongly provided we work together.”

The [G21 Board](#) has assumed its regional planning and coordination role, identifying the needs and opportunities across the community for what, potentially, will be a long recovery process.

Coordination of regional effort is key, and that’s where G21 and its [eight community-based Pillar working groups](#) will make a unique contribution.

The 300-plus professionals from across the regional community who volunteer their expertise are identifying within their specialised subject fields the community’s needs, post-COVID-19.

G21’s long-established and trusted grass-roots approach to regional coordination and planning has never been more important.

Pipeline of projects

“G21 has a well-researched suite of regional needs and priorities to focus our advocacy work for future investment,” Ms Carbines said.

“Our [Priority Projects](#) include a number of infrastructure projects that are ready, or near ready, for investment. Each would stimulate significant jobs for our region to help as we emerge from COVID-19 hibernation.

“More frequent rail services between Melbourne and Geelong logistically can’t happen without track duplication and grade separations at key roads, to remove the bottleneck south of Geelong station.

“The Morrison Government has committed more than \$700 million towards duplicating the line in 2023-24, but has since offered to bring the expenditure forward.

“The Andrews Government must now accept this offer to allow this important project to proceed immediately.

“The Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area is still rapidly growing. It will accommodate 60,000 people when complete.

“Essential infrastructure must not be delayed any longer. Stage one of Barwon Heads Road duplication needs to begin now. Stage two funding should be allocated and brought forward.”

Other proposed growth areas in the region also need essential road and services infrastructure, involving joint government and private sector investment.

The proposed Northern Geelong Growth Area at Lovely Banks will accommodate 48,000 residents, while the Western Geelong Growth Area towards Batesford will accommodate 64,000 residents. The Bannockburn Growth Area will see approximately 6,500 new homes.

“The very welcome recent news from GeelongPort that the Spirit of Tasmania will make Corio Quay home from 2022 will lead to development opportunities on a new terminal, freight facilities and other works,” Ms Carbines said.

“The Spirit of Tasmania will provide a significant boost to the region’s visitor economy which is vital to the region.

“The [City Deal](#) for Geelong and the Great Ocean Road will play a massive role in our region’s economic recovery,” Ms Carbines said.

“The funding agreement for the \$370 million City Deal was officially signed earlier this month by all three levels of government.

“The infrastructure and projects delivered through the City Deal will be critical to rebuilding the visitor economy, generating local employment and encouraging people to visit the G21 region.”

City Deal projects include construction of a \$171 million Convention and Exhibition Centre on Deakin University’s Geelong Waterfront campus car park, the Revitalising Central Geelong Action Plan, tourism infrastructure projects along the Great Ocean Road and the Shipwreck Coast, and redevelopment of the Queenscliff Ferry Terminal.

“Future stages of the Green Spine, as part of the Central Geelong Action Plan, should be brought forwarded, especially extending the Green Spine along Malop Street through to Johnston Park,” Ms Carbines said.

“Although hard-hit financially by the impacts of Coronavirus, Deakin University will be important to the region’s recovery. We are fortunate to have the entrepreneurial and innovative university based in our region.

“Under the City Deal, Deakin receives \$7.6 million for the expansion of its Future Economy Precinct at the Waurin Ponds campus. The investment will drive the growth of emerging advanced industries building on the University’s strengths in advanced manufacturing, biotech, renewable energy, robotics and high-value agriculture.”

Employing locally

Significantly, the City Deal agreement adopted the [GROW](#) (G21 Region Opportunities for Work) principles of using local suppliers and workers for projects wherever possible to maximise the economic and social benefits to the region.

“G21 was instrumental in not only securing the City Deal but having social procurement measures recognised. It is now more essential than ever that employment opportunities are created for our community which has been hit by huge job losses,” Ms Carbines said.

The state government recently released modelling by the State Treasury that unemployment across Victoria would likely reach 11 per cent in the September quarter; double the current figure.

“We know that disadvantaged pockets of the G21 region, such as Corio, Norlane, Colac and Whittington, often experience unemployment double the state average. Unemployment in the 20 to 30 per cent range would be a recipe for entrenching social disadvantage for years, even generations, for those areas.”

Founded by G21 and the [Give Where You Live Foundation](#), GROW brings together philanthropic, business, government and community organisations to create job opportunities in areas that have the highest levels of joblessness and persistent disadvantage.

“Employers across the region must support one another as we emerge from the COVID-19 hibernation. GROW exists to facilitate local entities’ spending on local suppliers to create local jobs where they are most needed,” Ms Carbines said.

“The work of GROW has never been more needed in the region than now.”

Other initiatives such as the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network backed [Geelong Careers](#) job services website will help position the region well for recovery.

Community wellbeing

“Those least able to weather the COVID-19 storm are the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our community,” Ms Carbines said.

“[G21’s Health and Wellbeing Pillar](#) and the G21 Primary Care Partnership have significant roles to play as forums for the important work of community support agencies and government service providers across the region.

“A recent temporary state government reprieve from funding cuts to [Victoria’s Primary Care Partnerships](#) has allowed G21 to continue to provide those services to the region in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

“We trust the state government will recognise the need to fund that work to continue beyond this year.

“We are confident that the people in the G21 region will stay strong as we all work through the COVID-19 challenge together, as the region always has in times of adversity.

“As always, G21 will be playing its part for the region.”

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