

## Project 1.7 fact sheet: Collaborative planning for people navigating mine land transition: progress in Australia's Latrobe Valley (Stage 1)



Image: PollyannaR

### INTRODUCTION

The project aims to develop, by 2025, a shared vision for future land use of the mine lands of the Latrobe Valley, Victoria, as the region transitions to a future where its coal is not used for electricity generation and the lands are rehabilitated.

Stage One of the project involved initiating and deepening collaboration among state and local government, Indigenous, industry, and community organisations. The focus of collaboration was the co-development and evaluation of post-mining land use scenarios using participatory multicriteria analysis, by:

- reviewing regional development plans for the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland.
- reviewing previous studies of community values and aspirations for the Latrobe Valley.
- eliciting values of project participants that could be realised by the mine lands.
- designing and evaluating three alternative and contrasting land use scenarios.
- facilitating dialogue and deliberation during participant workshops.

## KEY FINDINGS

- The Bioeconomy and New Energy scenarios were strongly preferred over Business-as-Usual (BAU) by participants.
- Unless the community and responsible actors could help realise either of these scenarios, the region would be left with lower valued outcomes, as represented by BAU.
- The knowledge co-production deepened collaborative dynamics, allowing synergistic gains in principled engagement and shared motivation.

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## THE CHALLENGE

This project views collaborative planning as a means to bridge the gap that exists between individual mine closure plans and regional development strategies. To support collaborative planning, the study team developed a participatory process that was iterative, incremental, dialogic and adaptive (responding to strongly held concerns), and

oriented to place-based social values. Participants representing a core set of responsible actors were invited to work across the boundaries of their organisations. This was important to build a joint capacity, to subsequently invite and facilitate individual people in the Latrobe Valley community to deliberate in Stage Two.

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## THE OPPORTUNITY

Three exploratory scenarios presented alternative snapshots of the Latrobe Valley in 2050. Each consisted of contrasting, stylised combinations of future states, whose outcome in 2050 cannot be predicted:

- (a) the degree to which energy and energy-related industry are concentrated in the Valley,
- (b) the degree to which its regional transition is guided by principles of social equity, and
- (c) the degree to which transition is guided by principles of sustainable production and consumption (e.g., circular economy).

The project team translated the three exploratory scenarios into quantified post-mining land use (PMLU) scenarios by working with each mine operator, to determine which parcels (excluding mine voids) could, once rehabilitated, potentially support different types of PMLU. This included

eliciting information about site assets, constraints, and existing commitments (e.g., biodiversity conservation, recreation assets). Knowledge was co-produced between the study team and participants, for example, mine operators shared site-specific land suitability data; participants discussed their values; experts articulated particular visions for regional development. The team then conducted a multicriteria analysis (MCA) of the three PMLU scenarios, which involved scoping and defining a set of evaluation criteria, a rapid evaluation of the performance of each scenario against a set of 18 evaluation criteria, and visualising the performance of each scenario as a scatterplot of final 'utility scores', with each score corresponding to the evaluation criteria as weighted by one participant. A workshop was then held where participants took part in a group discussion and short deliberation about the relative performance of each scenario.

Assessing the quality of participant (and study team) interactions was based on an evaluation approach associated with the 'integrative framework of collaborative governance' (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015a). Survey data, meeting and

workshop notes, and personal communications to the study team were used to evaluate changes to principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action.

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## OUTCOMES

The research team developed a robust framework to support deliberation for future land use planning.

The collaborative governance platform contains information and knowledge from a set of core participants, including mine operators, Traditional Owners and government authorities and provides a basis for the formulation of preliminary post-mining land use scenarios that align with values held in the community and regional development actors.

Although there was no clear 'winner', participants strongly preferred the Bioeconomy scenario and the New Energy scenario over Business-as-Usual (BAU).

Compared to BAU, the two alternative scenarios provide a greater diversity and balance of land use that align with participants' values. However, participants also recognised that unless the community and responsible actors could help realise either of these scenarios, the region would be left with lower valued outcomes, as represented by BAU.

The participants' ability to produce and interact with such knowledge fed back to deepen trust and the capacity for joint action.

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## NEXT STEPS

The knowledge generated through Stage One will be used to inform a series of deliberations with distinct groups within in the Latrobe Valley community on their preferences and concerns for

the various land uses proposed. These deliberations will be undertaken with an Indigenous Community Reference Group, a Youth Design Summit and a Community Panel.

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## CASE STUDY PARTNERS

- Federation University
- CSIRO
- University of South Australia
- AGL
- Energy Australia
- Engie
- Loy Yang B Power Station
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority
- Latrobe Valley Authority
- Latrobe City Council

## REPORTING

View full Stage 1 report [here](#).

Haque, K. N. H., Reeves, J., Foran, T. 'Regional Development Aspirations for the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland: Setting the context for post-mine land use planning.' Report by CRC TiME.

Emerson, K., & Nabatchi, T. (2015a). Collaborative governance regimes. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

## FORMULATION OF VALUES-BASED PMLU SCENARIOS

