

Projects

Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan

Delivering a clear pathway to more efficient, sustainable freight outcomes across a growing regional economy.



LOCATION

Victoria

CLIENT

Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR)

POLICY AND STRATEGY

Background

The Mallee region is a nationally significant economic area, generating approximately \$8 billion in gross regional product and supporting a diverse and expanding freight task driven by agriculture, manufacturing and emerging industries.

The region is experiencing strong growth in freight volumes, underpinned by expanding horticulture and grain production, alongside the emergence of mineral sands and other new industries. This growth is placing increasing pressure on the region's transport network, which faces challenges relating to rail capacity, road condition and network efficiency.

The Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) identified a need for a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the current and future freight task, and the most efficient pathways to move this freight to market. This work was commissioned to support the Mallee Regional Partnership in shaping coordinated investment, policy and planning decisions.

Our role

NineSquared was engaged to deliver a detailed investigation into the Mallee freight task, focusing on identifying least-cost, sustainable freight pathways and practical actions to improve freight productivity across the region.

Our approach combined data analysis, freight modelling and extensive stakeholder engagement to build a comprehensive view of the region's freight system. This included developing a detailed baseline of current freight movements, forecasting future demand to 2033, and assessing how emerging industries—particularly mineral sands—could reshape freight flows.

We undertook a freight pathway analysis to understand how goods move within, into and out of the region, identifying key bottlenecks and constraints across both road and rail networks. The work highlighted the significant role of rail in supporting efficient, lower-impact freight movements, as well as the risks associated with declining rail mode share, including increased heavy vehicle movements, higher costs and environmental impacts.

Building on these insights, NineSquared developed a set of clear, actionable recommendations for the Mallee Regional Partnership. These included:

- Maintaining and improving the share of freight moved by rail
- Supporting the uptake of safer and more productive heavy vehicles
- Enhancing capacity and competition at ports and intermodal terminals
- Coordinating planning for major new freight-generating industries
- Strengthening the freight data evidence base to support decision-making

The study provides a robust platform for future freight planning and investment, equipping government and industry stakeholders with practical, prioritised actions to improve supply chain efficiency and support sustainable economic growth across the region.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, find one of our experts at ninesquared.com.au/people