

LANDMARK POSTCODE

3377



Challicum Hills Wind Farm, Ararat
Picture courtesy of Pacific Hydro

LOCATION: Ararat
2 hours North West of Melbourne

POPULATION: 8,000

INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, health and community services, manufacturing, retail, tourism and corrections

CLIMATE: Temperate
Summer 11.6°C – 26.6°C
Winter 4.1°C – 10.8°C
Annual rainfall 615.4 mm

Ararat turned 150 this year but old age hasn't wearied this rural city. If anything, the former gold mining town is busier than ever reinventing itself.

After a century and a half of booms and busts, Ararat is forging a bright future as a provincial hub and lifestyle destination for city dwellers looking for a "tree change".

Nestled in the foothills of the Pyrenees Ranges, Ararat enjoys the distinction of being the only Australian town founded by the Chinese. In 1854 a party of Chinese prospectors discovered the Canton Lead, the world's richest shallow alluvial goldfield, while trekking overland from South Australia. The gold didn't last but the surrounding fertile countryside continued to yield riches for wool and cattle producers. Ararat prospered for over a century as an administrative hub and regional service centre.

The city suffered a severe downturn in the early 1990's when the manufacturing industry slumped and several government institutions closed, including the psychiatric hospital and the

railways. About 1000 full time jobs were lost and the city's population fell by ten per cent.

But Ararat fought back and is growing strongly again.

There is renewed optimism in the commercial sector and a new business has opened every week during the past 18 months. More than \$50 million in construction has been given the go-ahead this year, including a multi-million dollar retirement living complex, two supermarkets and a truck stop and roadhouse redevelopment on the city's outskirts.

The hospital has just been rebuilt with a new nursing home facility and the local prison has expanded.

Landmark's Greg Kerr says Ararat is enjoying steady jobs growth. Its proximity to Melbourne combined with good schools and health services are attracting young families as well as retirees.

Ararat is on one of Australia's busiest freight routes, the Western Highway, linking Melbourne and Adelaide. The spectacular Grampians National Park is 40 minutes away and Victoria's southern beaches an hour by car.

The city enjoys the economic spin-offs from the well-established regional wine industry and is home to the Australian College of Wine.

Chinese heritage and goldmining is celebrated in several museums and J Ward, the former psychiatric prison, is now a popular tourist attraction.

Among its many sporting facilities, Ararat's racecourse was one of the few Victorian tracks open for business during the drought due to a recently installed recycled water system.

Renewable energy is a growing industry with increasing numbers of wind farms being developed across Victoria's south-west and the local council is hoping to capitalise on that growth by setting aside land for a specialised eco-friendly businesses.

Greg says the housing market represents value for money compared to the capital city markets. The building forecast is for 50 new houses a year for the next ten years and 90 blocks have sold in town in the past year and a half.

"There's no doubt the city has reinvented itself, there's a positive vibe which people feel as soon as they arrive."

For further information contact:

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PROPERTY GUIDE:

Residential: 3-4 bedroom brick home on 800 sq m block, \$250 – \$300,000.

Lifestyle: 4 acres with large home at Great Western \$300,000

Larger acreage: Up to \$1500 an acre depending on location.