

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA LIMESTONE COAST

REGIONAL ROADMAP 2010 - UPDATE

JULY 2011

BACKGROUND:

The Limestone Coast Regional Roadmap is the principal strategic planning document prepared by the Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast Committee and was first compiled and printed for release publicly, in September 2010.

The Roadmap was compiled from consultation with regional stakeholders over a period of time and reflects the region, its communities and the economic, social and environmental characteristics of the Limestone Coast. It also contains a vision for the future and a strategic approach to achieve the objectives set out as the 11 key actions for priority attention and other outcomes more generally.

It is proposed that the Roadmap be a "living" document that is constantly under review and is changed to reflect the circumstances of the time. Given that the current version was printed in September last, this update or addendum will capture issues and opportunities that have arisen since that time and that a full review and compilation of the 2nd version of the roadmap will occur commencing late in 2011.

This update should be read in conjunction with the original Regional Roadmap.

KEY ACTIONS:

As contained in the current roadmap and are not required to be altered as a consequence of this update, they remain as:

11 KEY ACTIONS FOR PRIORITY ATTENTION

- ✓ Drive population growth to a vibrant and industrious 140,000 by 2030 through influencing the strategic regional development planning and policy settings of Governments.
- ✓ Develop regional leadership capacity to support, empowerment and motivation as a key regional development objective.
- ✓ Achieve targeted economic development outcomes to ensure jobs for an increased population.
- ✓ Increase the skills level across the region through better access and participation in secondary schooling, vocational training and higher education.
- ✓ Support the South East Natural Resource Management Board to deliver on their regional plan, whilst at the same time maximising available economic, social and environmental opportunities from our natural resource base.
- ✓ Pursue funding as a "mini metro" model for the Mount Gambier Hospital and support the cluster of health services in the region to increase access to GPs, specialist services, mental health and community health services.
- ✓ Fast track the implementation of the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan, including significant upgrade of the Princes Highway from Kingston through the Coorong to just south of Taillem Bend.
- ✓ Ensure the Limestone Coast is a high priority region for participation in the national broadband rollout and other telecommunications initiatives to achieve similar capacity and quality enjoyed by metropolitan Australia.
- ✓ Improve social outcomes by addressing the shortage of affordable housing options and removing the financial, physical, emotional and geographic barriers for citizen's accessing adequate aged care, dental, health and allied health and mental health care facilities in the region.
- ✓ Assist the District Council of Grant to achieve the upgrading of runways, taxiways and facilities at the Mount Gambier Airport to meet industry and regulatory standards associated with a modern, major regional airport.
- ✓ Ensure that maintenance and renewal of structures associated with the Upper and Lower South East Drainage Schemes is a continuing high infrastructure priority.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OR ACTIONS FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 2010 – JULY 2011:

POLICY RELATED:

Subject:	Action:
<p>Marine Parks: The establishment of Marine Protected Areas was identified in the Roadmap and we have since had the draft zoning and management planning processes being undertaken with the involvement of Local Advisory Groups. Draft zoning has caused concern among the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, together with issues associated with the impact on tourism and property values being raised by industry operators, land owners and Local Government. The response to government by the region has generally been that the proposed sanctuary zones are too large and pose a threat to the economic and social activities attached to our coastline. A more modest approach to conservation of the marine environment has been proposed, taking into account the uniqueness of the Limestone Coast marine environment.</p>	<p>Monitor the ongoing planning processes and continue to work with State Government and the community to ensure a mutually beneficial outcome.</p>
<p>Water Policy: The Natural Resources Management (Commercial Forests) Amendment Bill 2010 has been introduced into the South Australian Parliament. The Bill amongst other things, proposes legislation which will create a water licensing or permit system for the establishment of plantation forests, including the replanting of existing forests after harvest. There is the potential for this legislation to create uncertainty in the allowable area of land to be replanted after harvest, impacting on investment decisions in relation to the forest industry generally.</p>	<p>Seek to ensure that the legislation if introduced into law, does not adversely impact on investment in plantation forestry and subsequent timber processing in the region.</p>
<p>Acciona Wind Farm Development: A development application for the establishment of a 47 turbine wind farm near Allendale, south-east of Mount Gambier, was approved by the District Council of Grant and subsequently appealed by local landowners. The South Australian Environment and Resources Development Court, upheld the appeal on the grounds of the impact on the visual amenity of the location. The developer has indicated a possible appeal against that decision.</p>	<p>No action required on the part of the RDA although the final outcome may have further implications for proposed developments of a similar nature in this region.</p>
<p>Climate Change: It is too early yet to determine the exact potential impact on the region from a proposed Carbon Tax. The region may be well placed to capitalise on growth in existing plantation forestry and grazing industries, on the basis that the Limestone Coast is the only region in South Australia with net negative emissions. Further research and development into the existing industry base could be justified on those grounds, leading to new investment opportunities. Local Government is well tuned to the subject of climate change and is taking steps towards adaptation through planning and development considerations.</p>	<p>Pursue Research and Development funding to assist with expanding and making forestry and agriculture more efficient and sustainable industries.</p>

INFRASTRUCTURE:

<p>Penola Bypass: This project is a component of the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan and has been subject to appeal by the Penola Resident and Ratepayers Association, against the Wattle Range Council approval for the project. A recent decision in favour of the Council paved the way for construction to commence, although a further appeal is possible. The project continues to be a priority for removing heavy transports from the town's main street and with further growth in timber transports from the bluegum plantations, the need for an agreed position on the project is required.</p>	<p>RDA to pursue implementation of the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan, in collaboration with Selga, Victorian Shires and RDA Barwon South West.</p>
<p>Mount Gambier Airport: Work has commenced on resurfacing and strengthening runways, taxiways and aprons at the airport. Funding is being made available from the District Council of Grant and a recent grant of \$500,000 from the State Regional Development Infrastructure Fund has allowed this important work to proceed. Further funding is being sought by way of a contribution from the Commonwealth Government.</p>	
<p>Telecommunications: An application to the State Regional Development Infrastructure Fund for support towards the construction of a mobile tower at O B Flat, south of Mount Gambier, has received approval and a grant of \$250,000. The construction of the tower will improve mobile telephone coverage at the tourism and hospitality venue The Barn Palais, as well as providing better service to the surrounding district and the transport industry operating between Mount Gambier and the Port of Portland.</p>	
<p>Industrial Land: Stakeholders have advised the RDA of a need to plan for further industrial growth north of Mount Gambier and the requirement for appropriately zoned land for development. This advice is consistent with aspects of the Greater Mount Gambier Master Plan, a joint planning document of the two local councils and supported by Planning SA. Both issues could give rise to the need for future consideration and planning for a bypass or new freight corridor to the north of the City of Mount Gambier, possibly in the vicinity of the local airport.</p>	<p>RDA to work with local government on the planning for growth in the northern part of Greater Mount Gambier.</p>



FORESTRY:

<p>Forward Sale of Forestry SA Rotations: The South Australian Government in May, confirmed that it would proceed with a sale of up to three forward rotations of the softwood harvests from the Forestry SA plantations. The proposed sale has brought strong objection from the local community, amid fears that such a sale could result in large volumes of timber being exported without being available for local processing, resulting in job losses. An independent assessment of the proposed sale was conducted for the Government and concluded that the sale would have little impact on the region's economy. To undertake work with the community to address concerns and to develop conditions which could attach to a sale, the Government has appointed a Forest Roundtable, which has commenced working on developing advice for government on the sale as well as giving consideration to other matters more general to the longer term growth of the plantation forest and wood processing industries.</p>	<p>The RDA shall continue to support the Roundtable process and offer advice as required, in an attempt to ensure that any forward sale does not adversely impact on one of the region's most important industries and the employer of some 12% of the regional workforce.</p>
<p>Kimberly-Clark Australia: In late 2010, Kimberly-Clark announced that it would be closing down two of its older paper converting lines at the Snuggery plant near Millicent and that unless the pulp mill attached to the plant could be sold, it would also be closed down by December 2011. The first closure of converting plants would result in 170 job losses in May 2011 and a further possible 65 job losses if the pulp mill was subsequently closed. This news was difficult for the region, on top of the forward sale decision of government and has impacted confidence in the regional workforce and business communities. As a result of the announcement, the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments have jointly committed \$17 million towards a training and innovation fund, aimed at supporting displaced workers into training for new employment and to stimulate investment by local companies in new processes and business activities which have the potential to create new sustainable jobs. Part of the funding for innovation and investment is badged as SESAIF and is being administered by AusIndustry in collaboration with the South Australian Department for Trade and Economic Development.</p>	<p>RDA has two roles in this restructuring at KCA. Firstly, the Career Development Centre has been engaged to provide one-on-one career counselling and workforce development advice to affected workers. Secondly, staff of the RDA will be working with AusIndustry to support and assist local applicant businesses to develop a case for grant funding from the innovation and investment package.</p>
<p>Penola Pulp Mill: The proponent company attached to the proposed pulp mill development have been unable to attract investment partners and has been placed in receivership. At this stage the State Government planning approval for the development is still open, although that would now need to be subject to further negotiation with Government. Bluegum resource that might have been destined for a local pulp mill is now most certainly likely to be transported through to the Port of Portland for export, unless new local value-adding opportunities can be attracted.</p>	<p>RDA to continue to advocate for implementation of the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan. RDA to work with industry and investors to seek value-adding opportunities for regional bluegum resource.</p>
<p>Port of Portland: Hardwood (Bluegum) woodchips from both infield chipping operations and the new woodchip mill of South West Fibre at Myamyn in Victoria, have been exported out of Portland through the existing facility and one new woodchip loading facility recently constructed at the Port.</p>	

HEALTH:

<p>HEADSPACE: The Community Roundtable which addresses a number of social issues in the region, has been working towards making a further application for funding of a Headspace Unit for Mount Gambier. An earlier application in 2007 was unsuccessful, however the demand for increased services for childhood and youth mental health care and services is such that this initiative is now a priority for the Roundtable.</p>	<p>RDA to continue to be involved with and assist the Community Roundtable with the application process.</p>
<p>NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM: This new initiative of the Commonwealth Government in partnership with the States and Territories, will deliver increased focus on how health services are delivered and funded across Australia. The creation of the Medicare Locals network and the Local Hospital Networks, will be mechanisms for improving access to services at the local level as well as to ensure a more predictable funding arrangement with the Commonwealth moving towards increasing its direct level of involvement and funding.</p>	
<p>KEITH HOSPITAL: The Keith community has been engaged in discussions with the South Australian Government over proposed cuts to the budget of this community owned hospital. Those cuts relate to the funding of services outside of public beds and the accident and emergency functions of the hospital. A withdrawal or loss of the current level of state funding is claimed to put the operation of the hospital at risk of closure. Keith is located on the Dukes Highway in an area which has been the subject of serious road traffic accidents over many years. Concern for the continued operation of the hospital also extends to the coverage provided for the community more generally, which includes a large farming catchment and for the impact that a closure would have on the fabric of the community. Concern has also been expressed for the flow-on effect in relation to community growth, investment, the local school etc.</p>	<p>RDA to continue to support the Keith community by advocating for appropriate funding and delivery of health services for the Upper South East area in and around the Keith district.</p>
<p>AGED CARE: Stakeholders in the coastal regions of Kingston and Robe, continue to request longer term planning for adequate aged care facilities to meet the needs of the ageing population and those seeking to retire near the coast.</p>	<p>RDA support the Kingston Health Advisory Council to attract planning support to enable the accommodation needs of an ageing community to be met .</p>
<p>TEN YEAR HEALTH SERVICE PLANS: The South Australian Department for Health in conjunction with local Health Advisory Council's, has developed a range of 10 year health service plans for communities across the Limestone Coast Region. Those plans are currently being transformed into implementation plans based on communities of interest and how we can make the most efficient and practical use of local hospitals and other health care services. The value in planning in such a way has shown benefit recently with the Mount Gambier Hospital being granted just in excess of \$26 million to implement a range of infrastructure and service delivery changes which had been identified in the 10 year draft health plan for the city.</p>	<p>RDA maintain community links to ensure that the health care needs of the regions are included in planning processes and in fact are being implemented.</p>

TOURISM:

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TOURISM COMMISSION: Following many years of funding the tourism marketing of regional areas in partnership with local government and industry stakeholders, the SATC has embarked on a new model of delivery. The model effectively caused the closure of our regional marketing efforts, impacting on local employees and as such a review of the role and function of councils and industry in supporting tourism development, has been carried out. Centralised marketing will now be undertaken broadly by the SATC, with local input provided to ensure accuracy of data and content. At a regional level, stakeholders are requiring renewed effort into attracting tourism product and experience development, to be measured in part by the level of new investment and jobs created.

RDA work with the South East Local Government Association and Limestone Coast Tourism, to employ and support a project officer position which provides a contact for local industry stakeholders and which is focused on driving growth in experience and infrastructure development.



WATER:

AQUIFER STORAGE: Following a period of prolonged dry winters, land use change and irrigation activities, the Limestone Coast aquifer system was showing signs of stress in some areas. More recently, the 2009,10 and 11 years have seen a return to more average rainfall events and recharge is becoming evident. Experience from drier periods ensures that stakeholders continue to focus on the need for maintaining a healthy aquifer system and the idea of recharge, in partnership with exploring means by which natural and constructed drainage systems can be better utilised to capture and store excess water.

RDA work with the South East Natural Resource Management Board and the South Eastern Drainage Board, to assist planning and implementation of structures and systems which allows the region to capitalise on its natural water assets.

ARTS & FESTIVALS:

RIDDOCH ART GALLERY: The Mount Gambier City Council in collaboration with the Riddoch Art Gallery Board, is undertaking a major reconstruction of civic assets in the centre of Mount Gambier. Those assets include the current gallery and other buildings which are being transformed into a central civic space which will provide a focus for visitors and locals and which will include the redeveloped Riddoch Art Gallery. The Mount Gambier City Council has attracted funding from the Commonwealth to undertake much of the redevelopment.

EDUCATION:

<p>TERTIARY FACILITIES: The region continues to pursue increased access to university course delivery and currently in conjunction with the Mount Gambier TAFE campus, a number of course options exist and are opening up through the presence of The University of South Australia and Southern Cross University. Also co-located with the Mount Gambier Hospital, is the Flinders Rural Medical Training School. Stakeholders continue to push for more access for local regional students, increasingly however, it is seen that an opportunity exists for the region to attract and host international students and those from other parts of Australia. Most recently, Tenison Woods College in Mount Gambier has created a national academy for music students with in excess of 20 students now studying a variety of courses. Much of which has been based on and grown from the very successful “Generations in Jazz” event, held annually in Mount Gambier for the last 30 years.</p>	<p>RDA liaise with the education and training sector and with local government, to capitalise on opportunities to grow the business of attracting and housing students from outside the region.</p>
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

<p>Since the release of the Regional Roadmap in September 2010, there has been some strong interest continue in two specific areas of opportunity and they are reported hereunder. In addition to that interest and on a more general note, the regional economy in the main has been depressed and has not shown strong signs of recovery from the impacts of the Global Financial Crisis. Much of that impact at the local level was expressed through a depressed timber market for both structural timbers and woodchips for export to Chinese and Japanese markets. Equally, it is highly likely that much of our regional economy and that in other parts of Australia, have still not fully recovered from the impacts of prolonged drought. Production systems and the balance sheets of farming and other regional business enterprises are likely to still be in recovery mode.</p>	<p>On each of the three areas listed in this section, the RDA will continue to provide support and business advisory services to potential developers and existing businesses, to maximise investment and job creation opportunities.</p>
<p>HORTICULTURE: With a focus on the water supply in the Limestone Coast and the high cost of land in other horticulture and food production regions, this area is the subject of ongoing investigation for new investment. The potential for major glasshouse developments and field cropping is likely to see planning for new investment in those areas.</p>	
<p>RENEWABLE ENERGY: Aside from the ongoing interest in wind energy in this region, there is increasing awareness of the large plantation forest estate and the potential for woody bio mass to be available for producing heat and energy. There are also developments in wood fibre products such as domestic and industrial wood pellets for local and export markets. Studies into the availability of residues and waste woody bio mass materials have been undertaken for the specific purpose of assisting with information for potential developers.</p>	



PROCESS AND TIMETABLE FOR COMPLETE REWRITE OF THE REGIONAL ROADMAP:

It will be appropriate for the RDA Limestone Coast to commence the process of developing a new and updated “Regional Roadmap” to be ready for public release at the 30th of June 2012, to coincide with the release of Annual Reports and to be in readiness for the commencement of a new funding period.

This update has been prepared using material supplied by stakeholders following a review of the current Roadmap and by incorporating the operational and strategic intelligence of the RDA Board and staff members.

Issues and opportunities are constantly being monitored by the RDA, but in a more formal approach to the rewrite, we anticipate conducting a number of forums with community and business leaders, local government and other key stakeholders to ensure broad feedback on the performance against the current Roadmap and for advice on the future directions that the RDA should take in its role of facilitating regional development in the Limestone Coast region.

Forums will take the form of strategic gatherings of stakeholders in a range of environments so that interaction is informative, structured and where appropriate, quite informal.

The first of a series of planned forums will occur around the end of October 2011.