



The Limestone Coast region of South Australia

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Foreword

Regional development within the Limestone Coast is about supporting our local communities to improve their economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing by fully developing the potential of our region and our people.

Key elements underpinning our success will include cooperation between all spheres of government and our regional organisations, to support strategic activities utilising government programs and delivering services aimed at growing existing businesses and attracting new opportunities; value adding to the regional economy; fostering innovation; and supporting adjustment for change where required.

All three spheres of government have a significant interest in regional initiatives. In effect, while regional priorities need to be decided at the community/industry level, the role of local, state and federal government becomes one of providing integrated support. Within the Limestone Coast this constituted a significant challenge for both the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board, which is funded by the South Australian Government and the South East Local Government Association, representing its seven Member Councils and the South East Area Consultative Committee, funded by the Australian Government, to work with local government in a way that empowers and enhances the decision making of our local and regional communities.

Therefore in 2004 both organisations agreed to join forces to undertake an extensive, joint public consultation campaign across the region and develop an integrated strategic regional plan that identifies key regional issues and priorities for the continued growth of the Limestone Coast.

A team of members and staff were enlisted to oversee this process. Six community forums incorporating individual SWOT analyses and interviews with local government were held. A total of 189 business, community and government leaders were involved in these consultations. These forums also provided each organisation with an opportunity to clarify their respective regional development roles. A final stakeholder forum was held that discussed the key findings of the consultations and summarised key issues.

This plan is the result of that collaboration and provides a shared vision and an opportunity for both organisations to work collaboratively towards a range of industry development and community initiatives to improve economic performance, support business investment and growth and access to increased community services.

We look forward to delivering on the objectives contained in this Integrated Strategic Regional Plan and our organisations will report progress to the community, through our respective annual reporting processes.



Wayne McNally
Chairperson
SE Area Consultative Committee Inc



Bill Hender
Chairman
Limestone Coast Regional Development Board

Regional Profile

The Limestone Coast, South East of South Australia lies midway between the capital cities of Adelaide and Melbourne and covers an area of 21,376 square kilometres representing about 2% of the State's land mass. It supports a population of 60,260 people or 4.19% of South Australia's population, comprising 18,406 (30.59%) in the Upper South East and 41,854 (69.49%) in the Lower South East, (Census of Population and Housing, 2001, ABS).

There are seven council areas comprising City of Mount Gambier, District Council of Grant, Wattle Range Council, Robe, Kingston, Naracoorte Lucindale and Tatiara District Councils. The Region comprises the SA State electorates of Mount Gambier and MacKillop, and makes up part of the Federal electorate of Barker.

With reliable rainfall and abundant underground water the region has a history of plentiful agricultural production. Cropping in the north, with livestock grazing and forestry in the cooler, wetter south have dominated the regional land use. More recently rapid expansion of the wine industry and growth of horticultural crops has occurred.

With improved irrigation techniques, and increased demand for milk, large modern rotary dairy farms abound. The effective management of our water resources will naturally play an important role in further development and will have critical importance to the sustainability of our environment in the future.



Industry & Employment Characteristics

The South East has a diverse industrial base. The industries employing the largest numbers are Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing with 15.4%, Manufacturing with 13.3%, Wholesale/Retail Trade with 10.4% and Construction with 5.3% (Census of Population and Housing, 2001, ABS).

The Agricultural sector contains most of the State's forest plantations as well as contributing to employment in the Beef Cattle and Dairy Cows, Sheep (wool and meat), Cereal, Pasture and Oil seeds, Grape (viticulture) and Fishing areas. Our agricultural industry provides over 30% of the State's gross domestic agricultural product. Economic activity in the region is very diverse and underpinned largely by the following:

Forestry

The forestry industry has 133,000 hectares of plantation valued at \$1.2 billion, the industry has an expected growth rate of 2% per annum.

Consisting of mainly softwood, the South East plantations represents 85% of the State's forest area. Annual exports of softwood chip exceed 1,000,000 tonnes.

Forestry and Wood Processing is the single largest industry employer in the region, directly employing around 4,000 people, or 12.5% of the regional workforce. Growth in hardwood plantations has now reached over 35,000 hectares and is a resource which will be the focus of future value adding and/or export activities.



Agriculture

The agricultural industry generates approx \$400 million per annum (excluding forestry, fishing and aquaculture). Around 2,640 primary producers farm 1.7 million hectares throughout the region. Primary international export markets include South East Asia, Japan and the Middle East.

Farm diversification is practised by primary producers to include horticulture, livestock, cropping and forestry, thus maximising sustainable production and managing risk. Major agricultural industries include:

- Meat, Dairy & Wool - generating in excess of \$250 million per annum
- Broad Acre Farming - major crops include seed pasture, cereal, wheat
- Horticulture & Floriculture

Viticulture

The Limestone Coast has world recognised vineyards at Coonawarra and Padthaway. Growth in this industry is being realised at Bordertown, Naracoorte, Mount Benson, Kingston, Robe, Beachport, Cape Jaffa and Mount Gambier.

The region currently has around 13,000 hectares of vineyards, which represents over 20% of the State's viticultural area. Current value of production is almost \$200 million farm-gate. The region produces 10% of national grape crush accounting for some 20% of Australia's premium wine production.

Fishing/Aquaculture

The Limestone Coast fishing industry is based in the coastal port towns, and is based on rock lobsters. Port MacDonnell has a fleet of 80 representing the largest rock lobster fleet in the southern hemisphere, and is known as Australia's Southern Rock Lobster Capital.

The region's rock lobster quota of 1,880 tonnes generates \$50 million per annum. The majority of product is exported to South East Asia, China and Japan.

Other commercial species include shark, abalone, octopus, king crabs and fresh water yabbies, with commercial aquaculture enterprises growing barramundi, atlantic salmon and ocean trout. Recent growth in the atlantic salmon sector and planning approvals for abalone farms are expected to provide two of the largest growth areas in regional aquaculture. It is also expected that increased

research and development will occur in the rock lobster industry, with a view to increasing output value and looking at diversification.

Tourism

The Limestone Coast has more visitation than any other rural area in the State. Tourism directly generates \$140 million per annum, and employs in excess of 2,000 people.

The region hosts 25% of the State's B&B accommodation. A major driving destination, 500,000 visitors per annum spend an average of 2 nights accommodation visiting nature based, heritage/culture and wine areas within the region.

Retail

The Retail sector is well represented with a large shopping centre at Mount Gambier and smaller establishments in other towns. Mount Gambier is a large regional centre and people travel from western Victoria as well as from the south east of South Australia to shop in the area.

The region is well served by a large and highly efficient road transport industry, with national connections and easy access to the regional Port of Portland.

Diversity in our economy and many years of growth has underpinned the establishment of a large service industry, which includes construction, engineering, financial and professional services.

The South East has a labour force of 35,338 with an unemployed pool of 1226 representing an unemployment rate of 3.59% (Source: DEWR Small Area Labour Markets, June Quarter, 2004).

Within the South East the Indigenous population of 667 represent 2.8% of the State (Source: ABS, 2001 Census). The unemployment rate of 6.91% is two times greater when compared with the rest of the region of 3.59% (Source: DEWR Small Area Labour Markets, June Quarter, 2004). Manufacturing has the greatest representation of indigenous in employment with 16.69% of the total number, followed closely by Retail at 11.4% and Health and Community Services at 10.9% (Source: ABS, 2001 Census).

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Executive Summary

This integrated strategic regional plan is the result of the South East Area Consultative Committee and the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board joining forces to undertake an extensive public consultation process to identify key regional issues and explore further opportunities for community and regional development in the Limestone Coast region of South Australia.

As part of the consultation process the communities' strengths were enthusiastically discussed and local opportunities highlighted at 7 regional development forums held throughout the region during March 2004.

The diversity of the region's primary industries, natural resources and attractions maintains our competitive edge, providing many opportunities to support the development of businesses that will expand, increase value added processing and build tourism product and experiences.

However, there are a number of ongoing issues that need to be addressed in order to capture these opportunities. There is strong community consensus throughout the region to address the following issues:

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- **Inadequate infrastructure** - not keeping pace with business development needs
 - **Skills and labour shortage** - cannot source enough seasonal workers, tradespeople, professional staff, health and education staff to meet demand
 - **Housing shortage** - exacerbates the skills and labour shortage in growth areas
 - **Increase regional marketing to attract new businesses and residents to the region** - important to support initiatives that encourage population growth
 - **Lack of understanding of the regional job opportunities** - education and training must be linked to industry needs - increase access to local jobs for our unemployed and disadvantaged jobseekers, indigenous Australians and young people

In moving towards an integrated regional plan it has been important for both SEACC and LCRDB to agree on shared goals and develop strategies that seek to maximise opportunities and address key regional issues. This plan details those common goals and outlines regional strategies that both organisations will pursue over the next three years. Underpinning this strategic regional plan will be annual business/action plans prepared by each agency that will clearly articulate responsibility for the progression of individual or joint actions.

This document provides an example of how a region can harness strategic alliances and foster collaboration to build a cohesive and effective approach to planning and implementing regional development activities.

Throughout the consultation process, it was apparent that the Limestone Coast communities, value the 'triple bottom line' approach. The work of the SEACC and LCRDB will reflect those views to ensure positive economic, social/cultural and environmental outcomes.

A Snapshot of Regional Issues

issue 01	INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE	<p>Electricity - capacity, reliability and access to 3 phase Telecommunications (mobile phone coverage and Internet access speed) Road network - Main roads and local roads - Border Road No operating rail system Aged care facilities Attrition of community services Public transport Timeframes for Planning approvals Waste Management</p>
issue 02	SKILLS AND LABOUR SHORTAGE	<p>Low unemployment Lack of tradespeople / skilled professionals Lack of labour during peak production periods</p>
issue 03	HOUSING ACCOMMODATION SHORTAGE	<p>Affordability Availability Limited rental stock Lack of investment</p>
issue 04	NEED FOR POPULATION GROWTH	<p>Ageing population Young people leaving Lack of recreation & cultural activities</p>
issue 05	LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF REGIONAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES	<p>Education and training linked to industry needs Industry imperative to promote breadth of career paths Promotion of New Apprenticeships</p>
issue 06	INCREASE REGIONAL MARKETING	<p>New investment Tourism opportunities Worker attraction</p>
issue 07	THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO VALUE ADD TO LOCAL PRODUCE & NATURAL RESOURCES	<p>e.g. agribusiness, aquaculture, dairying, food processing, timber processing, wind farming and products to maximise the tourism experience</p>

what are the impacts?

Major barrier to growth
 Lost opportunities
 Uncertainty
 Region cannot compete for some opportunities
 Future planning required for expansion of Blue Gum harvesting

Cost of importing professional staff from outside the region
 Reduced choice for employers
 Lost opportunities
 Constraints on business
 Major barrier to growth

Hard to attract seasonal workers
 Hard to attract professional staff
 Hard for first home buyers & casual workers to purchase homes

Can demonstrate a business case to attract services and new investment
 Lack of available workforce

Exacerbates skills and labour shortages
 Loss of youth

Potential for lost business opportunities
 Population growth

Heightens the need and anxiety that infrastructure issues need to be addressed in order to capture these opportunities before they are lost to other regions or overseas



Vision for the Region

"The Limestone Coast will evolve into a dynamic, sustainable regional economy in which diverse industries are competitive in a global marketplace and well-tuned to the environment and to people's needs."

SEACC and LCRDB will bring together key business, regional and community representatives to identify priorities and opportunities for employment and regional growth. We will be an active advocate for the region within the parameters of the Charter, Role and Core Functions that apply to our respective organisations. For the next three years, we will focus on building effective partnerships to:

- *Improve the business climate* of the region by supporting the viability, sustainability and growth of new and existing businesses
 - *Achieve sustainable employment growth* by ensuring our region has an available and appropriately skilled workforce to meet the current and future needs of business and industry
 - *Diversify the regional economy* by strengthening regional infrastructure and service delivery capacity to meet future industry and social growth demands
 - *Increase awareness of the Limestone Coast* to foster regional economic and community growth through marketing and promotional activities
 - *Foster community development* by supporting and strengthening local community capacity for the benefit of the region
- Facilitate Whole-of-Government responses to opportunities in our communities throughout the Limestone Coast.
 - Contribute to regional development in line with Government determined policies and programmes.
 - Ensure all processes and decisions comply with Corporate Governance requirements and are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Performance Indicators

By the year 2007, the Limestone Coast region will have:

- Our role, in the achievement of these goals, will be to:
- Be a key facilitator of change and development in the Limestone Coast.
 - Provide a vital link between all tiers of Government, business and the community.
 - Provide a range of business orientated services to facilitate investment, job creation and export earnings.

- A coordinated approach to marketing and promoting the region to prospective businesses and new residents;
- Increased investment and employment through new value adding business opportunities;
- Measurable population growth; and
- Measurable increased export earnings.

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Goal 01: "Support the viability, sustainability & growth of new & existing businesses"

Major Issues:

Many opportunities exist to value add to local produce and build on our natural resources. Business growth is being hampered by a lack of infrastructure in the areas of electricity (both capacity and three phase), road networks, telecommunications, rail links and public transport. Skills and labour shortages are widespread which is further exacerbated by a lack of available and affordable housing in many parts of our region.

Strategies:

Provide local support to assist the progression of worthy applications under Regional Partnerships or other Government programs that support new business investment, assist business expansion and aid the retention of existing businesses

Provide a regional advocacy role and where necessary make appropriate comment and lobby to mitigate the impact of barriers and regulations on business operations

Maintain awareness and understanding of the impact of key natural resource and environment issues on business development throughout the Limestone Coast

Deliver business advisory services and information on relevant Government support programs aimed at assisting business & employment growth, across all sectors including indigenous Australians, women, mature age, youth and people with disabilities throughout the Limestone Coast region

Assist the development of an appropriately skilled workforce

Enhance and develop access to both traditional and alternative business finance sources

Support and encourage individuals who wish to establish a new business or to expand an existing business by providing information, advice and opportunities for skills development, networking and mentoring

Undertake activities to support product development, value adding to regional produce and access to new markets (including export), for regional businesses

Work in partnership with SELGA Member Councils to achieve business development outcomes by planning for appropriate land, infrastructure and resource availability.

Goal 02: "Ensure our region has an available & appropriately skilled workforce to meet the current & future needs of business & industry"

Major Issues:

Combine business expansion and development opportunities with low unemployment, a regional rate of 3.59% (DEWR Small Area Labour Markets, June Quarter 2004) and labour and skill shortages will prevail. For a number of years business and industry have highlighted difficulty in filling vacancies for skilled and at times unskilled labour during peak seasonal demands.

Our region, like so many others has an ageing population and many of our young people leave the region to pursue higher education and careers. Our population is stable exhibiting low growth. Against this we see many of our industries (timber, dairy, meat, transport) reporting difficulty in attracting suitable young people to the many jobs that are available.

Strategies:

Actively promote migration programs to attract skilled workers into the region

Act to promote job opportunities in regional businesses and industries to encourage people to relocate or migrate to the region

Inform education, employment and training providers of new and emerging employment and business opportunities to ensure programmes address the employment and training requirements of industry

Foster a culture change - that worthwhile careers are available in the region

Identify and implement innovative programmes to address skills and labour shortages

Encourage and actively promote Government employment and training programmes to overcome skills and labour shortages eg New Apprenticeships, Job Network and South Australia Works

Monitor and respond to the workforce and skills needs of regional business and industry

Encourage the availability of increased access to post secondary and higher tertiary level education opportunities within the Limestone Coast region eg industry focused education and training 'Centres of Excellence'

Actively encourage decentralisation policy as it relates to Government services and industry growth

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Goal 03: "Strengthen regional infrastructure and service delivery capacity to meet future industry and social growth demands"

Major Issues:

Infrastructure demands have not kept pace with business development. Access to housing (particularly rental), electricity, access to new natural gas supplies, telecommunications, no operating rail system, roading infrastructure especially related to timber harvesting and haulage, aged care facilities, attrition of community services, public transport, delays in planning approvals and waste management are continually cited as major barriers to growth, leads to uncertainty and an inability to compete for some opportunities.

Strategies:

Identify opportunities for joint private/public sector developments eg road, rail, waste management & housing

Continue to provide feedback to Government on pertinent regional infrastructure issues that could influence policy development and investment

Support and utilise regional GIS and associated planning capabilities for strategic development purposes

Support regional cooperation and coordination to achieve best possible regional outcomes

Develop business cases to support prioritised regional infrastructure requirements

Encourage and support alternate transport systems to meet social and employment needs

Build regional capacity by promoting and supporting the use of and access to improved IT&T systems and services

Goal 04: "Foster regional economic & community growth through marketing & promotional activities"

Major Issues:

Regional strengths include location, scenic coastline, premium wine areas, Naracoorte Caves - a World Heritage listed site, and natural attractions together with fertile land, good climate, water availability, employment opportunities, affordable housing (relative to major population centres) and quality of life.

Marketing the strengths and competitive advantages of our region is seen as essential to build a business case to attract new investment and skilled personnel and their families to the Limestone Coast. Greater community appreciation is needed to promote the plethora of career opportunities that currently exist within our regional industries.

Strategies:

Prepare a coordinated regional promotion and marketing strategy to attract new business, residents and skilled jobseekers to the region

Support Limestone Coast Tourism to increase tourism product development and promote the region

"Greater community appreciation is needed to promote the plethora of career opportunities.."

Raise awareness within the region about existing and future opportunities for careers and employment

Compile relevant information and promotional material for specific industry growth opportunities



Goal 05: “Support and strengthen local community capacity for the benefit of the region”

Major Issues:

The three tiers of Government recognise the important role that communities can play in finding solutions to local issues.

Developing community leadership, supporting the retention of banks, community and health services, building recreational and cultural pursuits to reduce the exodus of young people and support population growth are vital to smaller town survival. It is also important to acknowledge the high cost to large provincial cities, such as Mount Gambier in maintaining services that support the region’s population.

Strategies:

Enhance regional coordination and leadership

Support and encourage community planning and leadership initiatives

Advocate for social infrastructure such as childcare, support for families, support for the aged and disabled

Encourage a culture of philanthropy to support the establishment of the Stand Like Stone Foundation, which will become a vehicle for sustained longer-term grant making for community projects

Build community capacity in grant writing skills to increase access to programmes that support business and community vibrancy

Disseminate information to the community about Government policies and programmes, in particular business and employment initiatives eg Regional Partnerships, South Australia Works

Encourage and support volunteer effort and promote the community, economic and social benefits gained from volunteering

This project is supported by funding under *Regional Partnerships*, an Australian Government initiative in regional Australia and the State Government, through the Office of Regional Affairs and the South East Local Government Association.



An Australian
Government initiative



Department of
**Trade and
Economic
Development**

South East Local
Government Association



ACCs

The Australian Government's
Regional Development Network



Regional
Development Board Inc

(South East, South Australia)