

Regional Communities Consultative Council

# CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE DRAFT REGIONAL STATEMENT

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**RCCC**

REGIONAL COMMUNITIES  
CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

November 2013

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## **A message from the Chair of the Regional Communities Consultative Council**

In December 2012, the Minister for Regional Development released a Draft Regional Statement for South Australia. The Statement highlights the essential contribution made by regional South Australia to the State's economy and outlines a framework for prosperity for regional communities to drive forward change from the bottom-up.

The Minister tasked the Regional Communities Consultative Council (RCCC) to undertake targeted consultation with regional communities on the Draft Regional Statement.

We believe we were well placed for this task – the RCCC is an independent advisory body, established by the Government of South Australia to make recommendations to the Minister for Regional Development on ways in which the government and communities can work together to strengthen the capacity of communities to respond to local issues and opportunities. We have spent many hours in regions over recent times and have great connections into regional communities. Also as regional people ourselves, we understand what it means to live, work and raise families in regional South Australia.

The Draft Regional Statement is the first opportunity for the three levels of government, government departments and regional communities to have a baseline for use in regional engagement and policy making. Getting to this point has taken many years of sustained effort from many people across South Australia. The Draft Regional Statement marks the start of a new journey and provides a good foundation from which we can move forward together.

We are proud to present this report, which contains the reflections we heard about the Draft Regional Statement.

Throughout the consultation process we heard (and experienced) enormous passion emerge from regional people about the potential that resides in each region of South Australia. Community, business and local government representatives shared their hopes and dreams for their communities and towns, and indeed for the entire state. We also were honoured to talk in depth with regional people about the challenges that regional communities are facing now, and the challenges they are bracing for in the future.

We thank regional people for their active participation in this process – and look forward to supporting regions and government in ensuring the Draft Regional Statement comes to life.

**Peter Blacker**  
**Chair**  
**Regional Communities Consultative Council**  
November 2013

## Part 1 Snapshot of findings

### Executive Summary

Regional people welcome the Draft Regional Statement and the opportunity it provides. Regional communities are committed to working with government in a productive way, to enhance the potential that resides in their towns, businesses, resources and importantly their spirit!

The collection of ideas throughout this report reflect participants own words, captured in regional workshops, submissions and survey responses conducted by the RCCC on behalf of the Minister for Regional Development. It outlines the significant challenges facing government and regional communities, and also the myriad of opportunities ahead.

Regions were comfortable with the concept of the Draft Regional Statement being the start of a new conversation, however they did not want to lose the rich history of knowledge and experiences that government and communities have about each other.

*“...regions want improvement, strengthened connections and a clear line of sight to the future”*

The consultation process to obtain feedback on the Draft Regional Statement unearthed the following priorities for regional people:

#### *Commitment and Action*

Regions clearly defined this as their overwhelming priority, and highlighted their hopes that the Draft Regional Statement would open the way for locally led development in regional South Australia.

#### *Partnerships and Collaboration*

Partnerships and Collaboration were highly important to regional participants. They valued the collaborations that already worked well, and reflected on experiences that did not. Regional people felt the Draft Regional Statement provided a perfect opportunity to build and improve in this area.

#### *Regionalisation and Local Leadership*

Regions expressed the need and the will to drive regionalisation into the future, and believe that regionalisation and local leadership contribute greatly to the resilience and sustainability of regional communities.

#### *Coordination and Alignment*

Regional people can feel very confused by and disconnected from government initiatives. Regions expressed a need to better understand linkages and connectivity of government agencies, plans and initiatives which would enable them to participate more fully in the initiatives of government, and align their own regional work better with government's work.

Regional people want to see action and local leadership models emerge, that put the future firmly in the hands of regional communities. Regions are looking forwards and are anticipating that the Draft Regional Statement will become the catalyst for the start of a new future.

## Context for Change

The South Australian Government believes creating the conditions in which regional businesses can thrive and grow in order to create jobs and incomes is of fundamental importance. People live, work or conduct business in regional South Australia for a wide variety of reasons. For those involved in activities such as agriculture, wine and food production, tourism and mining, regional South Australia is where the opportunities exist. But for many it is a lifestyle choice. People value the sense of community they experience, their unique culture and generational links.

The Government recognises that regional communities want to build on their economic foundations, social vitality and environmental assets to create opportunities and to improve their quality of life. The Government recognises that regions face a variety of challenges to their on-going prosperity and vitality. Some of the challenges are region-specific and need region specific responses and others are common across all regions.

The Draft Regional Statement is designed to be a baseline document – which highlights the opportunities and challenges for the regions in South Australia. The Draft Regional Statement is not a plan, or a strategy, however it is hoped that it will provide a sound basis for further action in the future.

In community workshops conducted by the Government through the Community Engagement Board and the RCCC in the last few years, people in communities right across regional South Australia took the opportunity to voice their concerns and identify their aspirations.

The RCCC heard the community speak of the importance of family, safe communities, high quality education and health services, care for the elderly, and secure employment opportunities, especially for young people, are shared objectives by everyone in South Australia. For businesses too, there were common interests, particularly the need for an appropriately skilled workforce, adequate enabling infrastructure and a policy environment that supports entrepreneurship and innovation.

*“In all regions, South Australians seek a sense of belonging and connectedness”*

A region’s strength and vitality depends on recognising and building on its history and heritage, on growing its artistic and cultural assets, on promoting sports and recreation as contributors to healthy, connected communities and on promoting participation in all aspects of their social life by people and families. Regions see diversification as important to reducing their susceptibility to the consequences of on-going structural economic change, to achieving critical population mass and continued population growth, and to providing young people with satisfying and reliable job prospects that encourage them to stay or move to regional areas.

Developing the strength and diversity of regional economies while preserving the States’ natural beauty and environmental assets, and increasing the role of renewable energy sources, were promoted as important to both present and future generations.

It is the collective hope, of all regional communities that the Regional Statement is the catalyst for positive change.

## Engaging with Integrity

The RCCC was committed to listening and engaging with integrity throughout this process, while ensuring timely feedback was collected and passed onto the Minister for Regional Development reflecting community responses to the Draft Regional Statement.

Over 200 people contributed to the process with feedback obtained from local government, community groups, Regional Development Australia (RDA), agency staff and small business owners. Over a period of 6 weeks in early 2013, regional workshops were held in the regions of Eyre and Western, Far North, Barossa, Light and Lower North, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island, Limestone Coast, Yorke and Mid-North, Murraylands and Riverland and one in Adelaide for convenience for participants. Input was also sought through submissions, web surveys and a detailed 'checking back' process.

While feedback was predominately focussed on economic development, there were insights and input from the social and environmental sectors which the RCCC sought out. It is recognised that there were some gaps in the participation of some sectors of the community. It is the aim of the RCCC to extend this process deeper into regional communities throughout the course of their work in the future.

Some principles which directed the consultation approach for the RCCC were:

- **Connecting with targeted regional community leaders** – those people who have, and continue to make significant contributions to the State.
- **Being comfortable to listen to what regional people wanted to tell us**, while still gathering responses to the Draft Regional Statement.
- **Constantly checking back with the community** – a process was undertaken following each regional workshop where notes were emailed back to the community using a 'is this what we heard you say' approach.
- A commitment to practically **applying the Government's newly released Better Together Principles** of Engagement.

As often occurs with participative processes, we heard more than the things we set out to hear. Whilst regions were keen to talk to the RCCC and to give us honest responses to the Draft Regional Statement, they also brought to the discussion their pressing needs – and shared with us the challenges facing regional communities.

We recognised at an early stage, that we needed to listen and discuss their needs, before they were able to talk with us about ours.

As a result we were able to capture:

- Reactions and responses to the Draft Regional Statement.
- Insights into regional issues of importance.

Whilst the focus of this report is on reactions and responses to the Draft Regional Statement, we have also incorporated the insights we gained, in an attempt to better connect regions with Government in a more productive way.

## Part 2 – Feedback on the Draft Regional Statement

### Overview

Under direction from the Minister for Regional Development, and with an optimistic outlook, the RCCC set out to discover people’s reactions to the Draft Regional Statement. We wanted to know what they felt about the Draft Regional Statement – what they liked and disliked. Importantly we also wanted to know how it could be improved for the Draft Regional Statement to be more meaningful for them.

We also set out to put the challenge back to them – and offer up ideas and concepts that would enable some of those issues to be addressed in the Regional Statement. We were curious to discover what they were willing to contribute to the development of regions – what they had in their ideas bank, and what they were already doing.

Our observation is that regional communities welcomed the Draft Regional Statement extremely positively, and with some suggested changes would welcome it as a baseline document. They saw the Draft Regional Statement as being an important step in developing an ongoing positive relationship with Government. They also focussed their responses around seeing the Draft Regional Statement result in action.

### Responses to the Government’s 7 Strategic Priorities

Throughout the engagement process, participants reflected on the Government’s Seven Strategic Priorities, in fact they became a great conversation starter with each regional workshop. The priorities are:

- Every chance for every child.
- An affordable place to live.
- Creating a vibrant city.
- Safe communities, healthy neighbourhoods.
- Growing advanced manufacturing.
- Premium food and wine from our clean environment.
- Realising the benefits of the mining boom for all South Australians.

(Source: [www.saplan.org.au/strategicpriorities](http://www.saplan.org.au/strategicpriorities))

Overall regions responded positively to the Government’s Seven Strategic Priorities – there was a good understanding about them, and importantly about their intent. Regional communities also commended the Government in setting priorities – and accepted that in challenging economic times that priorities were appropriate.

Overwhelmingly regional participants offered commentary around their need to see actions on the ground – and not simply words on paper.

*“Regions can relate to all seven priorities – regional attention is on what work/investment occurs underneath them”*

Some discussions unfolded during workshops which suggested an eighth priority, or at least a secondary layer to each priority – that is clearly about the regions.



A sense of frustration was evident in many places where the focus and attention (by government) on Adelaide is constant. In contrast, some regions spoke of the obvious importance and value of the Adelaide urban area – and recognised the connection between Adelaide and the regions through critical regional assets such as tourism, mining and food production.

*It was shared amongst all regions that the 7 Strategic Priorities should reflect a strong regional perspective – and place value on the regions equal to the value placed on Adelaide.*

## Themes

During the workshops, in the written submissions received and throughout the web survey, common ideas or themes developed. These themes emerged as central to the success of the Draft Regional Statement.

They were the common answers to the question:

**“What would make the Draft Regional Statement more meaningful to you?”**



We believe that these themes provide a useful and productive structure for this report – and also highlight focus areas for the improvement of the Draft Regional Statement. Regional people expressed their hopes that the Regional Statement would reflect these ideas – they suggested that these were foundational in order to ‘grow sustainable regions’.

## Theme: Commitment and Action

Overwhelmingly, this theme attracted the majority of discussion – with all regions commenting on the need for commitment and action multiple times in the workshops, submissions and survey responses. We experienced a high degree of energy and interest in seeing tangible actions on the ground, as a result of the Draft Regional Statement. This was also expressed as exasperation and frustration at the lack of action and results experienced in regions.

*Regional people want to see things happening in their towns and communities.*

Importantly there was also a very deep and respectful understanding of the economic challenges facing the Government at the moment, and recognition of the impact on all South Australians, including regional communities:

*“We recognise that budgetary decisions are extremely difficult due to numerous competing priorities, however, it will take action for the State Government to prove its credibility and commitment to regional South Australia”*

Regional people were very pragmatic and realistic – and did not expect instant and enormous change in their regions. However they did remark that the Draft Regional Statement provided the impetus to signal a change, and a commitment to take action in the future. Some of the ideas that emerged were:

Commitment and Action – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
Being bold & having a determined vision	The Draft Regional Statement should be a bold statement – vision and long term commitment to action. <i>“the regional statement needs to be more than a limited summary of what government departments are doing now”</i>
Commit to regions, and to working with regions	It is as important to commit to the way in which government and regions work together – the Regional Statement provides that opportunity. <i>“The Draft Regional Statement is an opportunity to describe the spirit in which government intends to have a presence in regions – and the way regions intend to work with government”</i>
Confidence and hope – believing in the future	Commitment to action is the only thing that will give regional people and investors’ confidence for the future. <i>“The regional statement also does not include a statement of commitment regarding the State Government investment in strategic regional infrastructure, State Government needs to provide a significant financial contribution to regional infrastructure provision”</i>
Regions shared a sense of frustration regarding the lack of action – they believe their needs should be well understood by government by now	It’s time to have a plan – and see real action. There is a desire to see a clear way forward and have a commitment to implement change.

Commitment and Action – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
Being upfront about the current climate of the economy	It was noted that the regions are experiencing reductions in resources whilst the Draft Regional Statement is promoting regions.

### Improving the Regional Statement - Commitment and Action

The following ideas emerged from the engagement process – and were offered to the RCCC with much passion and energy...!

Improvement	This could be achieved in the Regional Statement by...
There is a lack of commitment – even to building partnerships in the regions	A commitment statement would both strengthen and enhance the Draft Regional Statement. This would describe the spirit in which the regions work with government, and vice versa <i>“...trust and openness between the State Government and the Regions, are the two most important areas to partner together to benefit regions”</i>
Lack of action	The Draft Regional Statement needs to be a call to action – commit to 10 year strategies that are realistic and achievable. Regions want actions, not plans. They want to see resources and investment allocated to regions. <i>“The Victorian regional investment model is a good example –Riverland Futures also a good example – need to take proactive action to ensure regions are not ignored/forgotten”</i>
Lack of regional priorities	Regional Action Plans could be developed for each region – around the style and feel of the Regional Roadmaps developed by the RDAs. These action plans would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Describe the government/region opportunity.</li> <li>○ Defines the programs/works for each region.</li> <li>○ Short time frame – 1-3 years.</li> </ul> Critically, these would <i>“be developed in a collaborative way, led by locals”</i>

Improvement	This could be achieved in the Regional Statement by....
Start with something, even if it's only small	Regions talked of their desire to see one strategic investment project announced for one region, every year. These would be key projects (i.e. an Adelaide oval scale project for each region). These could be proactive infrastructure investment projects – which kick start activity and wider social development in regions. These would also build and promote confidence in regions by community, industry, investors and governments.
Regions taking responsibility	Regions could develop a commitment statement to strengthen and enhance a state wide partnership. This could also be part of the Regional Statement.

### Summary: Commitment and Action

Regions clearly defined this as their overwhelming priority, and highlighted their hopes that the Draft Regional Statement would open the way for locally led development in regional South Australia.

Regional people want to see:

- A firm commitment in the Regional Statement from the Government, that they intend to invest in regional development and prosperity;
- A commitment statement that outlines the spirit in which the Government will make critical decisions about the future of regional communities;
- Tangible actions, on the ground, in their regions. They just want to see investment and activity, and progress on the ground;
- A Regional Statement that also outlines regional commitment to action – that shares responsibility. It would be constructed by regional people, so that communities and governments have confidence in regionally led initiatives.

## Theme: Partnerships and Collaboration

There was enormous goodwill and positivity in the regions about the potential of the Draft Regional Statement. Regional people want the Draft Regional Statement to clearly define and determine the partnerships and collaborative approaches that will see the future potential of each region fulfilled.

Regional people told us that the Government’s Seven Strategic Priorities ‘lent themselves well’ to regional collaboration and partnership building, and regions were willing to work with Government on these priorities, and looked forward to the opportunities this provided to build on what was already happening in regional communities, centres and towns.

*“we hope this is a ‘building on’ and not a re-building...”*

Regional people reflected on the strength of existing partnerships and collaboration and highlighted many positive collaborations that have benefitted their regions. They were grateful for any opportunity to explore collaborative possibilities with government – to strengthen and enhance the relationship.

Partnerships and Collaboration – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
It’s a great start	Regions want to establish and maintain productive and positive relationships with the Government. Many people said that the Draft Regional Statement is a good start, and that it was great to be finally, front of mind. <i>“I’m really pleased to see acknowledgement of the contributions that the regions make to the state...it’s really great to have a Draft Regional Statement”</i>
Strong, working relationships that can withstand challenges	Partnerships between state and local government are critical to advance the whole of the state – where each needs to value and respect the roles of the other. Regions talked here about aligned, collaborative approaches – where local government and local leadership worked towards achieving the aspirations of the state, but that they were able to design the best interpretation of the way forward that worked for them, in their region. <i>“We want a gritty and meaningful collaborative, regional approach to the complex challenges of our time”</i>
Use genuine and meaningful engagement and communication	Collaborative partnerships need to be built on good communication and engagement practices. <i>The Draft Regional Statement needs to have a demonstrated level of collaboration.</i>

Partnerships and Collaboration – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
Use an appreciative approach to determining future investment, not a problem solving approach – focus on what each region does well	<p>Regions need the support of the Government to be unique and focus on <i>“what they do well”</i> so they can adapt, flex, innovate and thrive. Pitching regions against each other, and approaching regions as having the same uniform needs was highlighted as an area to exercise extreme caution.</p> <p>Alongside this, there were some people who felt that the Draft Regional Statement highlighted boom and bust regions, which did not help in pursuing a truly collaborative regional approach.</p>
Federal and State Governments need to partner and collaborate better too	An interesting insight in a couple of regional workshops was a missing link between Federal and State Governments. There needs to be a clear and uncluttered definition of what the partnership/collaboration would look like at its best.

### Improving the Regional Statement - Partnerships and Collaboration

Collaboration and partnerships are central for success. Suggested improvements for the Draft Regional Statement gathered from participants were:

Improvement	This could be achieved in the Regional Statement by....
Need better quality partnerships with government	Highlight the value of collaboration between Local Government and State Government - set some principles that guide good collaboration and engagement.
Need to enable local partnerships and collaborations	Position Regional Development Australia as the ideal agency to pursue collaboration at a local level.
Use language that gives South Australians confidence that regions are considered as equals	Change the word ‘Statement’ to commitment, or some other word which welcomes dialogue, lends itself to a partnership approach and promotes equality and unity. The Draft Regional Statement is written ‘about’ regions and not ‘for’ or ‘with’ regions.
Be clear and upfront about who is investing in regions	Suggested to remove references to specific funding programs in the Draft Regional Statement as it is misleading, given that most regional funding comes from the Commonwealth. These references also ‘age’ the document.

## Summary: Partnerships and Collaboration

Partnerships and Collaboration were highly important to regional participants. They valued the collaborations that already worked well, and reflected on experiences that did not. Regional people felt the Draft Regional Statement provided a perfect opportunity to:

- Better articulate the way in which government will forge and strengthen regional partnerships and collaboration through a set of principles that are shared and understood;
- Open the door to exploring 'new partnerships with old partners' – repairing, moving forward together and honouring each other's contribution;
- Building collaborative relationships that flourish in times of plenty and are robust throughout challenging times;
- Ensuring that government's commitment to partnership and collaboration is evident in everything it does – a consistent approach;
- Highlight the partnerships and collaborations that set the benchmark – using regional examples to highlight what works;
- Ensuring that regions understand and are also committed to strong, effective and productive partnerships, and using the Regional Statement to reflect that.



## Theme: Regionalisation and Local Leadership

Empowering regional communities to determine and pursue their own future was a pivotal theme in each and every regional workshop, and was backed up in submissions received and web survey responses.

Regions believed that they have the talent, expertise and capacity to embrace ‘regionalisation’ and forge their own futures. Similarly, all regional participants offered passionate views about ‘centralisation’, and expressed concern at the trend to centralise away from regions during times of downturn.

Regions have the tools (ability, will and skills) to determine the future of their towns and communities, and they want government to recognise this. There is an obvious crossover with this theme and the partnerships and collaboration theme.

*“I believe that continued public engagement throughout the life of the statement is the key to developing the type of community ownership and ultimately the level of uptake within local communities needed to achieve real outcomes”*

Regional participants were also very clear about the supportive and enabling role of government in a local leadership approach (recognising that regions would also need to align their priorities with those of the state) and driving forward regional initiatives with state-wide and national benefits/outcomes.

Regionalisation & Local Leadership – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
Local responses to local issues.	The Draft Regional Statement should foster a culture in SA where the community feels valued, supported and enabled to grow and thrive. It should embed a default position of trusting regional communities/leadership to make important long term decisions that impact on their future.
Regional/local decision making	By enabling a culture of ownership and responsibility (pushing decision making back out to the regions where it is felt) regional participants believe that this will achieve integration and commitment, whilst also ensuring solutions are enduring.
Getting the model right to give local leadership the best chance for success	A local leadership model must be innovative, flexible and adaptable. This model centres on supporting & networking, cohesiveness, linking opportunities, trust, relationship building, deliberation/dialogue, devolved decision making.  <i>“At its heart, a local leadership model would focus on what regions do well...”</i> and how we can do more of it, better.

Regionalisation & Local Leadership – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
<p>Focus on holistic, whole of community, instead of specific projects or initiatives</p>	<p>All regions talked of the reason why government projects and initiatives are important, and this reason was ‘people’.</p> <p>In Port Augusta we heard “... <i>the current opportunity for us is to focus on what we think is the priority, ‘Every Chance for Every Child’...</i>” This comment was supported unanimously in each region, considering there was not a high representation of participants from the social services sector.</p> <p>Each region wanted to make sure that any investment in the region delivered holistic, triple bottom line benefits to regional communities.</p>
<p>Smart use of human capital</p>	<p>There was a desire expressed to better build on the human capital regions have – using what we have at our disposal locally to address regional challenges and respond to regional opportunities. Participants felt that regions were trying to do this and some regions provided robust examples of how they have created the environment for this to flourish (i.e. Limestone Coast has in place an intergovernmental group that meets quarterly).</p> <p>Linked with this was a lack of engagement with young people: “<i>Young people in all regions of South Australia are the community of today and the leaders of tomorrow, and many are passionate about constructively contributing to society in a positive way. South Australia’s Government needs only to provide opportunities for young people to participate in such critical decisions to realise the value that is held within today’s youth</i>”</p>
<p>Centralisation vs. Regionalisation</p>	<p>Concern was raised in most of the workshops about whether the intent of the Draft Regional Statement was potentially at odds with the actions of government.</p> <p>Regional Development Australia was a common talking point and regional participants were divided about their suitability to be the local leadership body. Some were strong advocates for the Regional Development Australia model, others were curious to explore other mechanisms. Experiences and stories varied greatly from region to region. The common theme that emerged around this topic was that a locally designed and robust approach to local leadership was the answer. “<i>The regional statement needs to include an overview of the important role of the Regional Development Australia Committee’s in the planning and implementation of regional development projects</i>”</p>

Regionalisation & Local Leadership – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
<p>Relevance to regional communities and towns</p>	<p>Size and scale was important, and this was reflected in conversations about the fabric and vibrancy of regions. Participants talked at many workshops about the need for large thriving towns, but also the richness and diversity that small communities offer to a region. Conversations also occurred about how regions connect with other regions – and also their connectivity and reliance on Adelaide.</p> <p>Many regional workshop participants talked of large regional centres in Victoria and New South Wales – although opinions were divided on the benefits and impacts of pursuing the development of these centres that serve the needs of regional people, particularly given the size of Adelaide in comparison to Melbourne or Sydney.</p> <p>On the flip side, participants expressed concern whether the Draft Regional Statement, in its current format would be as relevant or as useful to securing the future for South Australia’s more smaller regional communities and towns.</p>

## Improving the Regional Statement – Regionalisation and Local Leadership

The RCCC heard the community express a need to be supported and enabled to find local solutions to local challenges. They valued and needed the State Government (and others to contribute) however they wanted to lead, and be at the centre of the process.

Improvement	This could be achieved in the Regional Statement by....
Local Leadership	<p>The Draft Regional Statement should be built on the premise that the best people equipped to make regional decisions are regional people.</p> <p>Whilst it might not determine the best local leadership model, this is an important principle to express in the Draft Regional Statement. <i>“Why isn’t there a chapter for each region?”</i></p>
The Draft Regional Statement should be a catalyst document for growth.	<p>It was highlighted in a number of regions that the current Draft Regional Statement does not adequately set aspirations for the future of regional centres. Some participants requested that the Draft Regional Statement be the catalyst for growth, similar to the 30 year Plan for Greater Adelaide or ‘G21’ in Geelong. This would give Regions the opportunity to add value, and also secure the future of very small, vulnerable communities and townships.</p>
The Draft Regional Statement needs to include the human layer - social services, not-for-profits, human/social capital.	<p>The development of the Draft Regional Strategy needs to connect better with the not for profit sector – need some more contribution from people who have expertise in this sector.</p> <p>Distribute the wealth – if we had regional plan (with commitment) the community could ‘bolt on’ and offer to value add – walking together.</p>

### Summary: Regionalisation and Local Leadership

Regions expressed the need and the will to drive regionalisation into the future, and believe that regionalisation and local leadership contribute greatly to the resilience and sustainability of regional communities.

The opportunity that presents itself with the Draft Regional Statement is for:

- A commitment to installing local leadership models wherever possible;
- A commitment to empowering regional people to be at the centre of Government decisions that impact on them;
- A commitment by regional people to work with government within a local leadership framework to achieve outcomes that balance the needs of governments and regions;
- Recognition of the skills, expertise and capacity that resides within regional South Australia to contribute and co-design futures.

## Theme: Coordination and Alignment

A common remark in each region was about collaboration and alignment within government – and this was highlighted as a potential threat or risk to the success of the Draft Regional Statement.

There was a strong and shared desire to have agencies *“...connecting, collaborating and working with community in a respectful way”*

*“Unfortunately, and from experience, many State agencies see meetings, consultations, and ‘conversations’ as outcomes but in actual fact these are only a means of hopefully achieving an approach, but not an outcome”*

This theme attracted a variety of experiences – stories of where it’s working well, and where it is not. Commonly, all regions believed there was a consistency required that had not yet been achieved. They hoped the Regional Statement would focus government departments on what’s important and required in each region, that it would become the ‘regional bible’.

Coordination & Alignment – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
<p>Understanding and knowing how government is connected to each other.</p>	<p><i>“How do plans interconnect – and importantly how is our participation/input shared with government in the development of those plans”</i></p> <p>The coordination of government effort/activities needs to work better on the ground, for Regional communities to be able to apply their limited capacity and resources effectively. Some regional participants reflected on the benefits of agency staff co-located in a regional hub. Others simply wanted connections made between high level strategic documents – that help them understand the whole of government approach.</p>
<p>Having good linking systems within and between government agencies – in the regions and also in Adelaide.</p>	<p>Regional participants are very enthusiastic about seeing government agencies that talk to each other and share information, intelligence and link projects. Frustration was expressed <i>“...we keep telling you this...”</i> and <i>“....don’t you talk to each other...”</i>, which highlighted the need for better systems that link agencies with each other. In their words, regions were <i>“fed up”</i> with the many seemingly unlinked consultative processes underway. They are experiencing a sense of ‘engagement fatigue’.</p>

Coordination & Alignment – what’s important to Regional People	Brief Description of issue
<p>Lengthy delays in significant planning processes and coordination of service delivery</p>	<p>Across a number of regions, participants recalled issues where significant plans and projects had taken a long time to get underway. There was a shared sense of exasperation at the slow pace of government planning processes, and the impacts that has in slowing progress and sometimes missing significant opportunities. One issue discussed in many regions was the infrastructure planning process – which is taking a long time.</p> <p><i>“The planning process of government is slow, approvals take forever, can’t seem to get to the right people”</i></p> <p><i>“Developers or new industry are not going to wait 3-5 years for planning amendments to be determined (generally through lengthy agency consultation) and will take their business elsewhere (often interstate)”</i></p>
<p>Engagement with integrity – built on trust and a sensitivity to regional ‘personalities’.</p>	<p><i>“Stop telling us what is best for our region, and start listening to what we need and our solutions to ensure positive outcomes”</i></p> <p>There was a strong theme expressed in all input around the way in which engagement occurs. Some regional workshops reflected on some great engagement processes, while others had more negative experiences. Regions wanted engagement that was linked up (see remarks earlier in this table) and also engagement that was meaningful and <i>“had integrity”</i>. It was understood by the RCCC that the varied experiences around the quality of engagement either enhanced or put at risk the relationship between government and regional communities. <i>“We want government to work with community in a respectful way”</i></p>

## Improving the Regional Statement – Coordination and Alignment

Regional people openly shared their good and bad experiences in working with government, and highlighted the potential for the Draft Regional Statement to be a catalyst for change, particularly in how regional people are engaged in government initiatives.

*“Consultation with the people at the ‘coal face’ of public policy decisions is essential, as people and communities are willing and able to make a valuable contribution to society and public policy”*

Improvement	This could be achieved in the Regional Statement by....
Linking high level strategic plans and priorities	<p>A clear map that shows the linkages between SASP, the Regional Statement and Regional Agency plans (i.e. DPTI, NRM etc.).</p> <p>Reflect the alignment and connectivity of Government plans and projects in the Draft Regional Statement – and highlight where there is no obvious alignment (i.e. as an opportunity, focus area).</p>
Link regional initiatives and projects within the regions.	<p>The Regional Statement could set the tone (using principles or such) that would ensure agencies collaborate better between themselves – to better use resources and have better, holistic regional outcomes. This will result in more streamlined alignment of agency effort and initiatives in the regions. It will also achieve high ownership of regional collaboration. This would also have significant cost-saving, efficiency benefits.</p> <p><i>“Better state government agency collaboration in the regions – hubs, cross collaboration, an approach that is designed/bespoke for each unique region, by the region”</i></p>
Referencing plans	<p>Caution was expressed in referring to plans that are in draft form, and have not yet been released. A particular example was the reference made in the Draft Regional Statement to the infrastructure plan which had not yet been released in the Regions.</p>
Better quality engagement – consistency in the way in which government engages with communities	<p><i>“community engagement principles are absent in this document – (i.e. promise to the public). The Draft Regional Statement must clearly outline the desired level of community ownership in regions’ futures”</i></p> <p>Make specific reference to the Government’s Better Together principles in the Draft Regional Statement.</p> <p>An appendix to the Draft Regional Statement could also be useful for explaining the particular nuances in engaging with regional communities. An extension of that could be ‘insights’ into the particular local systems/preferences in each region – as a guide for government agencies in planning their approaches.</p>

## Summary: Coordination and Alignment

Government can loom as a large and complex beast to many regional communities, and it was observed that regional people can feel very confused and disconnected from government initiatives.

Aside from the country/city divide (which regions enjoyed the opportunity to reinforce!), regions expressed a need to better understand linkages and connectivity of government agencies, plans and initiatives (programs and projects). This enhanced understanding, they felt, would enable them to participate more fully in the initiatives of government, and align their own regional work better with government's work.

Important to regional people were:

- Clarity on how government links with each other, and how it intends to link with regions (ie engagement principles);
- Coordinated approach for agency work, that recognises regions at the centre – respects processes, efficient use of time;
- Promise to address in the long term processes which 'block' innovation and progress (ie planning regulations, timely approvals etc).

## Concluding Remarks from the RCCC

The RCCC express it's thanks to regional South Australians for their contribution and insights into this process.

Whilst this report has been written predominately for government, we also expect that it will inform the efforts of regional bodies, and provide themes that they can incorporate into their plans. We are hopeful that productive and insightful policies and initiatives will emanate from this work at both state and regional levels.

It is also our expectation that regions will rise to the challenge, and continue to commit to and build productive relationships with government. We see the Regional Statement as an opportunity for renewal and remain confident that true dialogue will ensue.

The consultation process has sparked our interest and curiosity in exploring challenges in more depth, particularly in the social and cultural areas. We are enthusiastic to pursue this with regions as a next step, to ensure this dimension is adequately reflected in the Regional Statement as it evolves.

We believe that the Regional Statement will inform our ongoing work, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue the Draft Regional Statement consultation has offered us. We welcome the opportunity to work with agencies of government, as well as with regionally centred groups to move the Regional Statement forward. We look forward to seeing the Regional Statement finalised, and achieving positive outcomes for the Regions.

From the members of the Regional Communities Consultative Council.



## Part 3 – Regional Issues of Importance

### Overview

Anytime an engagement process is undertaken with people, it is an opportunity to hear the breadth and depth of the issues that are important to them. So it was for this engagement process – where the team were fortunate to hear firsthand many of the regional issues important to regional people. Whilst not the central focus of this engagement process, to regional people, these issues amplify the importance of getting the Draft Regional Statement right. The Draft Regional Statement provides regions with an opportunity to work alongside government, in growing sustainable regions.

This chapter lists the common themes that emerged as regional issues of importance – and also showcases any ideas or solutions that were offered up by participants. This data offers up to date information and insights that may assist government and community to build the regions they desire.

### State-wide Themes

The issues below were expressed multiple times and have been collated as regional issues of importance:

Theme	Insights – in participants words
Quality of life, social fabric, social infrastructure	<p>Uncertainty is more visible - and this is now having significant social impacts. Greater level of uncertainty in the regions than at the time of the SASP consultation due to BHP Billiton announcement. Implications for schools, services etc. in these towns. Mining is not the 'be all and end all'.</p> <p>Regions have numerous social issues – need to be address at early learning, at home before schooling starts.</p> <p>Not focused on social problems - and where they start (in the family!). We need to be focussing on the real underlying problems, not just the things government can control easily. We want a gritty and meaningful collaborative approach to the complex challenges of our time.</p> <p>Focus on the family, the individual first. Get the social stuff happening and prosperity and development will occur. Without this, we will always continue to have the issues we experience today. <i>“ we need to stop the destruction of communities and build our social and economic fabric”</i></p> <p>Social infrastructure needs more emphasis; it’s not picked up well enough particularly around policing, recreation and health.</p> <p>Government need to acknowledge consequences of decisions they make and the impacts on communities.</p> <p>Need a focus on families and home life - it's the core start (or end) of why regions thrive (or don't).</p> <p>Grants accessed by community and sporting groups to date have facilitated significant investment in community infrastructure. There is a strong need for the continuation of grant programs for community /sports and recreation projects to assist local government in long term provision of services and</p>

	facilities.
Theme	Insights – in participants words
The provision of Infrastructure & Energy - includes green technologies.	<p>Communication should be an urgent priority - for the region to grow and attract new business and investment in the region, communication infrastructure is critical.</p> <p>SA is not demonstrating infrastructure commitment to the regions while funding such projects as Adelaide Oval. Funding commitments are disproportionate to where the income is generated (50% of revenue from regions but infrastructure is being funded in City).</p> <p>We need investment in power and gas supply.</p> <p>Green energy and water recycling incentives are required for businesses (commercial, industrial and agricultural) to combat rising power and water costs that are increasingly putting pressure on business profitability across the board.</p> <p>There is enormous potential in the Eyre and Western Peninsula in the areas of new industries, manufacturing, mineral processing, renewable energy, however, the infrastructure to support such developments are severely lacking, i.e. electricity, water, gas, airports and sea ports.</p> <p>Transport – need improved public transport across the regions and linking to Metro.</p> <p>Sports infrastructure.</p>
Supporting Agriculture, Primary & Food Production, value adding	<p>High landholder debt – means that small businesses are vulnerable and the industry as a whole is threatened.</p> <p>Agriculture – the government was focused on mining sector at the expense of agriculture but then as key mining projects stalled, government talked agriculture again but didn't bring any commitment. Regions are 'doing it' at the local level but with no support from government.</p> <p>Premium food and wine from our clean environment – need to clarify what this means – we produce a lot of food in SA but it would not all be considered premium. Does it mean that non-premium is not important - this priority should be about food security.</p> <p>We do not maximise value-adding in the grain industry.</p>

Theme	Insights – in participants words
<p>Innovation, Research and Economic Development</p>	<p>Very little funding is being provided by the State for regional projects and infrastructure development. What the regions need most of all is project funding support to move from planning to implementation so that essential projects can be realised.</p> <p>Programs are required that provide assistance for existing businesses to grow (advice, export and (new) market development incentives, professional development and training, business planning, innovation etc. As well as that provide incentive to grow (grant funding, payroll tax concessions, land tax concessions etc.).</p> <p>Economic activation programs (inbound investment attraction, growing local businesses, and regional business attraction) are needed urgently. There should be an economic Development Framework.</p> <p>There is also an opportunity to trial place-based models for investment in regional economic development and employment growth at a large scale and in a growth corridor.</p> <p>Tourism – re-develop industry, it will have social flow-ons.</p>
<p>Youth - the future</p>	<p>As generation’s progress, the key asset of regions, and the key to regional sustainability, is the young people who grow up there. Through investing now in youth, youth services, youth development and youth engagement, regions and government can partner to ensure that the regions retain their youth, particularly their ambitious, driven and inspired youth.</p> <p>Regions often struggle with the constant ‘loss’ of youth to metropolitan South Australia, or even interstate, particularly when young people are disengaged from their community or not provided with the opportunity to succeed and flourish locally.</p> <p>Communities need to work together to build a stronger network and a larger ‘youth’ population. Through consultation with young people in regional areas and by bridging the communication barrier with neighbouring regional areas, community involvement will be increased.</p>
<p>Enabling Growth and Development to occur</p>	<p>We need improved planning processes to reduce the bureaucracy that currently exists around the whole of the planning system.</p> <p>There are legislative constraints that limit developments that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Infrastructure – there are 3 major growth areas identified across the regions with expected high population growth but no infrastructure plan to support that growth.</p> <p>The Government needs to assist in the development of physical and social infrastructure. Only by assisting directly and indirectly in these areas will the population in the rural/regional areas increase, this will encourage a</p>

	<p>flow on to achieving the other strategies.</p> <p>Statutory and urban planning is an issue – Mount Barker fiasco is repeated across regions at varying levels.</p> <p>Councils have to jump through a number of hoops to achieve Development Plan Amendments – This constrains council’s ability to react to community needs.</p> <p>Affordable place to live: should include an affordable place to do business.</p>
<p>Growing advanced manufacturing</p>	<p>Not just about mining (electronic, medical, defence) – should be growing advanced ‘economies’.</p> <p>This is also relevant to regions on small business scale – best prac/advanced, needs the NBN, viticulture, food production, value adding (includes Premium Food and Wine).</p>

## Region by Region Snapshots

Each region is unique in the challenges and opportunities that it experiences. The pages below offer a region by region overview of their issues of importance.

Regional snapshots have been provided from the seven regions plus Adelaide. These regions are:

- Eyre and Western Region.
- Far North Region.
- Barossa, Light and Lower North Region.
- Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island Region.
- Limestone Coast Region.
- Yorke and Mid-North Region.
- Murraylands and Riverland Region.
- Adelaide Region.

Each regional snapshot reflects data gathered at regional workshops attended by individuals from the local community, online survey and submissions. They also reflect conversations held with the facilitator Emily Jenke during the checking back process, where some people opted to expand on their contribution.



### Eyre and Western Region

(8 Workshop attendees)

Critical infrastructure – the Eyre and Western region feels ignored about its critical infrastructure requirements – power, water, gas, airports, railway and sea ports. The region highlighted that when a region has good infrastructure in place, it diminishes the obvious disadvantages of distance. They believe government is hampering their ability to prosper by not investing in critical infrastructure. It is expressed that government needs to provide a significant financial contribution to regional infrastructure provision.

Water – water resources are a time bomb for the Eyre Peninsula region, with particular urgency expressed around the lack of a sustainable and efficient supply for residential and town requirements. The region has requested a significant government contribution to secure water needs beyond 2025.

Housing– affordable housing is an important issue on the Eyre Peninsula with an appetite to explore sustainable, renewable and smart housing development across the region.

Research & Development – frustration expressed at the lack of investment for research and development in the primary production sector.

Ageing workforce/population – this priority is about ensuring the workforce of the future is skilled, ready and capable.

Development and planning controls – frustration evident about a perceived mindset government around control which limits prosperity. Regions request the government to work towards clearing the path and making development simpler for regions to navigate.

The role of the RDA – The RDA was highlighted as of critical importance to Eyre and Western communities, as it undertook a vital high level strategic approach to the region. Submissions and remarks in workshops implored the state government to continue supporting Regional Development Australia boards.

### Far North Region

(12 Workshop attendees)

Health and wellbeing – the importance of the family unit, and social wellness was expressed as critically important to this region. More than anywhere, this region described significant social and community challenges for which they need support.

Strategic funding opportunities – this priority is about reducing the competitiveness between and among regions and a request to apply a more cohesive approach which ensures all communities achieve their aspirations

Improved planning processes – reducing bureaucracy and red tape and ensuring good governance is in place.

Sustainability – of power, water and gas resources. The region is keen to be exploring more sustainable options early.

Duplication of services – this region has expressed a need to have better coordination across government so that government is easier to access for its community.

### Barossa, Light and Lower North Region

(10 Workshop attendees)

Supporting regional development – securing and reinstating programs that focus on business development that will underpin regional economic prosperity and sustainability. Aligns with request for reinstatement of RDIF program which was built around incentives.

Sustainable development with a holistic focus – ensuring that planning and development do not impact on character and history by having good, robust and strategic governance in place, supported by policies and regulations. Inclusive of NRM, community development

Future looking infrastructure – again, this emerged as a priority. Particular needs in this region are around green energy, agribusiness support, broadband access, health facilities and sport and recreation infrastructure to support the community. This includes looking at how our region can be clever, and use existing facilities innovatively.

Primary health care – keeping people well is a better investment than providing hospital services – public cost is extreme

Education – focus on access and virtual education. – Importance of the right communications infrastructure.

### Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu & Kangaroo Island Region

(7 Workshop attendees)

Sustainable regions – stimulus that creates critical mass and leads to innovation and positive change. This priority also was reflected in remarks around clean, green industry opportunities supported by responsive infrastructure.

Agriculture and food production – feel more support need by the state government, doing it alone. Concerns expressed that government were benefiting from our success in promoting premium food and wine, and limited support. As a priority we need support and a plan in place around food security.

Infrastructure & Housing – three major growth areas within and near our region, but little/no infrastructure planning in place to support this growth. Again a priority around critical mass, and linked to population size and diversity.

Transport – continues to be a priority. Linked to sustainable living and healthy communities. Also a priority for heavy transport routes that support primary production across the region.

Regional decision making – applies to statutory planning and urban planning. This priority was about reducing red tape and allowing local leadership (council/local government) to respond to community need. Another similar remark was made about considering regions in a ‘like’ sense, instead of geographically – regions could be communities of interest and connected virtually. This would amplify opportunities for all and not discriminate.

### Limestone Coast Region

(24 Workshop attendees)

Sustainable agriculture – an opportunity was expressed around strengthening the education base of sustainable agriculture in the region – where it became a hub for learning and for showcasing

balanced food production. The region also discussed value adding and creating opportunities for growth and diversity in the sector. Keen to see the region developed as a food bowl, and building on the strengths of the size and scale of Mt Gambier.

Infrastructure – for this region, distance is a challenge. The region is keen to see transport opened up with perhaps a second airfield or a rail line – that can encourage development, fundamental to large scale growth.

Research and Development – important that the future is sustainable. Getting smarter about managing and embracing change.

Health services – still not adequate and as important as ever.

Managing population growth – a priority discussed at length, was the multicultural population explosion happening in the region without adequate support. Concern was expressed that new arrivals had arrived in the city without anyone being aware. Opportunities to build greater social/community cohesion through a myriad of linkage programs (new arrival, jobs, housing, multicultural awareness etc).

### Yorke and Mid North Region

(16 Workshop attendees)

Transport – routes for heavy haulage which supports industry. Transport was also a priority for the community to support education, health and to address social cohesion and isolation issues.

Access to education and training – Clare community expressed a frustration that they are too far away from education to make it achievable to commute – however supportive infrastructure is not sophisticated enough to make use of virtual technologies.

Regionalisation was identified as critical, with centralisation being described as being toxic to regions. Opportunity to provide more regional opportunities and to facilitate better coordination, integration and streamlining of government processes.

Children – creating a community that is family friendly, and support the growth and development of children and families is important to the region.

Renewable and sustainable energies – gas and oil identified as the new future opportunities in the region. This was linked to increasing competitiveness and driving forwards the region – grabbing onto opportunities to strengthen regional centres.

### Murraylands / Riverland Region

(19 Workshop attendees)

Education – this priority was about access to education virtually that helps to keep people in the region – once they go they never return.

Tourism – priority was to invest in redeveloping the industry, especially in the Riverland to ensure the communities can benefit from the tourism dollar. Opportunity to better promote the potential of regional communities and to change the image of drought into one of hope and prosperity.

Infrastructure – energy, water, and digital infrastructure were raised as a regional priority. Concern expressed at them not being invested in, and the risks to the regions of that outcome. This was marked as a high priority for this region.



Economic growth supported by local leadership – this was a high priority for this region. The participants in the workshop reinforced that they need to develop local solutions to complex problems, and have the support of government to do so.

#### Adelaide Region

(11 Workshop attendees)

Better connectivity to the regions – learning from each other instead of being pitched against each other.

Strategic planning – priority to have a 30 year plan for the entire state, or for each region.

Innovation – better linkages and finding creative ways to share diminishing resources. Leveraging considered a priority to explore at every opportunity to consider how we can get more with less.

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