



Regional Australia Raise Your Voice

SEGRA 2012 Communiqué

Prepared by the *SEGRA 2012* National Steering Committee
With particular acknowledgement to
Kate Charters (Convener) and
Assoc. Professor Peter Waterman

Introduction

The *Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA)* national conference brings together regional development practitioners, business, elected government officials, managers, policy advisors and academics with a passion and commitment to regional Australia. As always, *SEGRA* provides an excellent source of inspiration for ideas and acts as a much needed ‘meeting post’ for practitioners.

This communiqué brings together some of the key issues, discussions and proposed policy actions raised at the conference.

The *SEGRA* program comprised of plenary sessions in which a host of stellar speakers urged delegates to look at the ‘blue sky’ opportunities for regional development. Delegates were spoilt for choice with over 40 practitioners speaking in the concurrent sessions and whose presentations demonstrated locality based responses to the range of challenges regions confront.

Held at Terrigal, Central Coast NSW, *SEGRA 2012* focused on ensuring that regions leverage maximum benefits from regional growth. It examined how people living and working in regional Australia act to maximise end-to-end value from the economic activities in their region and to ensure ongoing legacies are derived from regional economic activity and growth. Practitioners noted that in order to maximise development outcomes and leverage sustainable growth, the right mix of community resources, human capital, strategic partnerships and linkages must be met. This communiqué captures many of the ideas shared and developed at the conference.

Specifically, the material in this communiqué draws on key note presentations by leaders in the fields of economics, innovation, technology, education, Indigenous economic development; case study presentations delivered by practitioners and researchers; robust discussions that took place in conversation pits and from the “Regional Australia Raise Your Voice’ closing plenary sessions where key issues for today and the future were canvassed by all delegates.

Now in its 17th year, *SEGRA* is recognised as Australia’s most credible independent voice on issues affecting regional Australia. *SEGRA* is unique in its commitment to regional Australia at economic, social, environmental and governance levels with a focus on practical application and transferable knowledge. It is from this base that *SEGRA* seeks to propose policy actions that are multi disciplinary and cross sectoral.

The communiqué is organised around five themes:

1. Securing Sustainability
2. Economic Imperatives
3. Growing Capacity
4. Regional Catalysts
5. Achieving Regional Outcomes

SEGRA is once again setting the agenda on regional issues in Australia.

1. Securing Sustainability: innovation, communications, technology and land use

➤ Innovation

Innovation ... is not coming up with new products or processes, but “discovering” that a certain good, already well established in world markets, can be produced at home at low cost. (Rodrik, 2004)

❖ Key Messages

i. Innovation can mean:

- the creation of better and more effective ways of doing things;
- different ways of thinking about how problems are ; and
- different approaches to problem solving.

Innovation is an experimental discovery process which is evolutionary rather than planned. It can involve significant and substantial positive change, or equally justifiably when it is slower, incremental change.

- ii. The pathway to innovation is often in fits and starts of breakthroughs and successes and is often only obvious after the event. To this end entrepreneurs who commercialize innovation frequently carry high levels of risk and uncertainty about costs and benefits.
- iii. Government policies on taxation, education, industry, employment and technology have a marked influence on the process and outcomes of new and established businesses in relation to innovation and entrepreneurship. Formal government funding of entrepreneurship however is often vexed as entrepreneurship is counter intuitive to government activity and falls outside the traditional funding arrangements. Businesses that follow entrepreneurs are in fact capitalising on the knowledge and investment of innovators and entrepreneurs.

(In Taiwan)...there has been a \$65 million government investment program to develop a world-class orchid industry. The government pays for a genetics laboratory, quarantine site, shipping and packing areas, new roads, water and electrical hook-ups for privately-owned greenhouses, and an exposition hall - in fact everything except for the cost of the greenhouses. It also provides low-interest credit to farmers to help them build the greenhouses. (Rodrik, 2004)

❖ Discussion

To encourage innovation, governments and other economic development promoters need to understand start-up motivation and entrepreneurial self-efficacy beliefs. There also needs to be greater regionally based knowledge on how to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation and embed these into policy and practice. For example, very few entrepreneurs are motivated to actually grow their venture. Economic development strategies are needed to create and/or formalise linking mechanisms between entrepreneurs and successful business operators.

Regions are working to develop better capacity (change mindsets) to encourage and enable collaboration between business networks (including government business relations). However, collaborations between research and industry do not just happen. There needs to be a knowledge broker or translator between research and industry and this is a space that needs to be filled if regional economic growth is to be sustainable.

Government policy needs to allow for the fact that early failures and adaptations will be inevitable and enable an appropriate time frame to transition from idea to formal business. This will require recognition of the value of the knowledge creation stage and more flexible regulation to enable experimentation during development.

❖ Policy Actions

Innovation policy should be conceived as a process of discovery, required because the creation and exploitation of new ideas by entrepreneurs is by nature radically uncertain. Jason Potts et al. (Hasan Bakhshi, Provocation 14: April 2011)

1. *Establish policies that directly target and support innovation champions and entrepreneurial spirit at a regional level by:*
 - a. Providing funding which allows for research, development and testing at the business level;
 - b. Identifying and encouraging future nascent entrepreneurs, new entrepreneurs and existing entrepreneurs by promoting and supporting employer sponsored entrepreneurs;
 - c. Fostering the use of practical tools and processes to enable businesses to implement new ideas;
 - d. Promoting incentives to encourage and promote regional leadership and collaboration.
- i. *Embed the principles of innovation into the range of policy instruments that impact upon sustainable regional development in Australia, specifically by establishing:*
 - a. Policy settings that not only encourage but expect (and actively resource) regions to think, plan and act innovatively, including cross-regionally.
 - b. Designated funding for community-industry engagement by regional universities and a greater role for universities in driving and supporting the direction of regional development.

- c. Policy settings that allow for innovation dividends to be maximised from regional Australia, with the purpose of increasing regional economic bases in the knowledge economy (and reduce drawdown of natural assets).
- d. Greater engagement amongst regional SME's and other actors in the innovation system, including R&D and venture capital providers.

The regional innovation and regional policy literature is overwhelmingly of the view that bottom up or place-based policies are more effective than subsidy based exogenous interventions that have had very mixed results. (Perrem, 2012)

Speakers

The Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP, Minister for Climate Change, Industry and Innovation, *The Importance of Innovation and Collaboration in Driving Regional Growth*

John Johnston, Managing Director, Pyxis Pty Ltd, *Growing Regional Innovation Companies into Global Markets* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Dr. Susan Kinnear, Senior Research Officer, Centre for Environmental Management, CQ University Australia, *Profiling Rockhampton's Regional Business Cohort: identifying opportunities for innovation clusters* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Dr. Ashish Malik, Lecturer, Newcastle Business School, University of Newcastle, *Connecting Work Design and Regional Ecosystems: fostering innovation in high-technology firms* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Prof. Jason Potts, Senior Lecturer, School of Economics, University of Queensland, *Why Innovation Policy Is Regional Development Policy* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Prof. Andrew Vann, Vice-Chancellor, Charles Sturt University, *The Role of Universities in Unleashing Rural Ingenuity* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Conversation Pit: Innovation Champions Program

Dr. Anton Kriz, Senior Lecturer, Newcastle Business School, University of Newcastle [\[Presentation\]](#)
Panellists: Courtney McGregor, PhD Student, University of Newcastle; Caroline Veldhuizen, Senior Research Fellow, Central Coast Research Foundation [\[Presentation\]](#)

➤ Communications Technology - NBN

NBN is the most important policy that regional Australia has had for decades, perhaps since railroads opened up much of the country. The NBN, if completed as designed, will essentially give regional Australia a better trading environment than the metros, as our costs of business are lower than most metro and suburban areas. This is therefore game changing for wealth creation in the regions. 2013 in other words will be a telecommunications battle between the city and bush. It's really as simple as that. Droll perhaps, oversimplified maybe, but at the present sadly very true. (Abrahams, n.d.)

❖ **Key Messages**

- i. Increased availability to the net and associated technology in regional Australia will have profound impacts rapidly overtime on industries, businesses and individuals and their collective experiences in immediate and larger geographic and socio-economic contexts. There will also be associated changes in expectations.
- ii. Communications technology is requiring organisations and individuals to firstly understand and engage with technology, and secondly to develop the capacity to cope with rapid, volatile and discontinuous change.
- iii. Different kinds of thinking are emerging due to technologically related changes driving transformation. As a society, we are increasingly operating in a virtual world. This situation is leading to changes in the nature of service provision and delivery as well as shifts in the importance and demands for services.
- iv. The emergence of crowd sourcing and independent networked networks enables rapid knowledge and information exchange, together with associated shifts in access to power and influence. Costs for setting up are minimal and provide a platform for users to interact and discuss their views.

❖ **Discussion**

...acting on the developmental potential specific to the network society requires a combination of initiatives in technology, business, education, culture, spatial restructuring, infrastructure development, organisational change, and institutional reform. It is the synergy between these processes that acts as a lever of change on the mechanisms of the networked society (Castells, 2005)

Social media technologies allow information to be disseminated more widely, quickly and easily than most traditional communication mediums. This speed and ease brings new possibilities to coordinate information and build alliances that provide opportunities and imperatives for different ways of doing business.

There is enormous potential for businesses in regional Australia through the roll out of the NBN. However, there needs to be a greater:

- awareness of applications e.g. teleworking within business is patchy and will severely affect the capacity for uptake;
- understanding of how NBN can and will combine with other technologies and how these will benefit regional Australia;
- exploration of the known values of NBN and their relevance and applications to value add to products, to regions and locality; and
- range of strategies for overcoming the difficulty of material supply and support in regional areas.

Individuals and organisations in responding to the rapidly changing technological environment will need different organisational and management skill sets in order to evolve and reorganise in response to the rapid changes. There will be increased emphasis on being collaborative learning organisations. Organisations will also need to understand and be able to respond quickly so that risks and failures are mitigated early.

The vast majority of Borders employees are not qualified to work at Amazon.”
- Marc Andreessen (Andreessen, n.d.)

❖ Policy Actions

1. *Increase attention to the opportunities of social media communication in regional Australia to inform government policy and practice as it impacts on regional Australia by:*
 - a. Constructing less formal knowledge transfer environments to allow jointly supported ambitions of stakeholders to be explored, formulated and actioned; and
 - b. Supporting the establishment of ‘virtual communities of practice’ in a range of regionally based issues.
2. *Greater application of institutional arrangements that operate in an increasingly powerful networked world at local, regional and national levels including initiatives by:*
 - a. Optimising web based citizen engagement opportunities;
 - b. Representing regional groups in decision–making and planning forums on matters that impact upon the well being and development of regional communities and businesses;
 - c. Fostering the evolution of public policy processes that allow for greater diversity in application relative to place-based needs and aspirations; and
 - d. Improving coordination of hard and soft services across all levels of government to optimise service delivery.
3. *Increasing the capacity of all citizens (particularly those in regional Australia) in the use and application of the NBN and other technology through regionally based:*
 - a. Projects to identify current gaps and existing barriers to digital technology use by businesses and community organisations across regional Australia;
 - b. Technology application awareness raising programs; and
 - c. Funding to enable start up access to software and hardware and for training in application of technology to business development rather than on technology features.

Speakers

Brad Howarth, Freelance journalist, speaker and author of A Faster Future, *Being Clever is No Longer Enough* [\[Presentation\]](#)

John Johnston, Managing Director, Pyksis Pty Ltd, *Growing Regional Innovation Companies into Global Markets* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Asha Titus, Research Academic, Centre for Social Research in Energy and Resources, University of Newcastle, *Understanding Online Climate Publics: mobilising and contesting energy futures* [\[Presentation\]](#)

➤ Land use

❖ Key Messages

- i. Innovative use of land resources in regional Australia can come from a range of stimuli. For example, National Parks in rural and regional NSW have been demonstrated to provide a positive economic stimulus to rural and remote areas by:
 - boosting investment in housing development (in regional areas) or business activity (in rural and remote economies);
 - broadening the economic base; and
 - conferring increased social and economic resilience to local communities.
- ii. The Central Region of Councils in South Australia has joined together with the local Regional Development Australia and Regional Natural Resource Management Boards to develop an integrated climate change strategy that identified the social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities across the whole region. The project gave a common starting point for incorporating climate change information and vulnerability consistently into community and economic development, emergency management, infrastructure, asset management and environmental management plans and a set of clear actions to pursue with partners organisations.

❖ Discussion

With the right investment, agriculture can achieve the same sort of transformation as has been seen in mining and resources. Undoubtedly, it is vital that good agricultural land is identified and retained for that purpose (food and fibre are dominant economic drivers).

The key legislation and infrastructure to support intensive farming needs to be included in all future land use planning thereby ensuring that green industry solutions are given a high priority in regional Australia, particularly given the availability of green field sites.

❖ Policy Action

1. Greater investment in Australia's agricultural potential through:

- a. Identification and protection of key agricultural areas;
- b. Minimising of ad hoc fragmentation of rural land;
- c. Preservation of large broad acre farming land;
- d. Matching land capability and agricultural forms;
- e. Research into flexible and high productive cropping.

2. *Integration of planning and management for water and land resources to ensure nature conservation outcomes by:*
 - a. Strong local ownership and coordination of governance;
 - b. Research and development into sustainable farming practices in particular soil structure maintenance; and
 - c. Provision for rehabilitation of degraded land.

3. *Strong focus on vertically integrated product and service offerings from farm gate to plate through development of:*
 - a. Flexible transferable in place workforces skills;
 - b. Infrastructure and legislation for getting product to market;
 - c. Investment and trade capacity at the local regional level; and
 - d. Specific assistance to enable growers to target overseas markets which are attractively large but challenging.

4. *Ensure key legislation and infrastructure to support intensive farming and 'green technology' is embedded in all future regional and urban land use planning and development decisions by:*
 - a. Lobbying for Council of Australian Government support for national policy for the retention of high quality rural and peri-urban arable land for intensive high-value commercial food and fibre production;
 - b. Harmonising statutory land use planning mechanisms within and between jurisdictions;
 - c. Optimising the policy and practice input from inter and intra-governmental natural resources management mechanisms (such as catchment management groups); and
 - d. Promoting the adoption of 'green technology' to enhance horticulture, farming and grazing yields.

Speakers

Mike Clarke, Senior Development Officer, Agricultural Resource Risk Management, Northern Agricultural Region, Department of Agriculture and Food WA, *An Innovative Approach to Managing Competing Land Use on Unproductive Soils in the NE Wheatbelt of Western Australia* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Elizabeth Heagney, Senior Economist, Economics Services and Reform Section, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Co-presenter: Mladen Kovac, Chief Economist, Office of Environment and Heritage, Regulatory Economics Group, *National Parks in Regional and Rural NSW: what do land acquisitions mean for local councils and communities?* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Kelly-Anne Saffin, CEO RDA Yorke/Mid North; Co-presenter: Anita Crisp, Executive Officer, Central Local Government Region of Councils SA, *Assessing Climate Vulnerability: a practical, low cost and collaborative approach* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Dr. Greg Picker, Associate Director – Environment, AECOM, *Looking at Climate and Carbon in the Regions: finding the silver lining* [\[Presentation\]](#)

2. Economic Imperatives

❖ Key Messages

Regional Australia needs to be looking closely and objectively at what else will drive economic growth in coming decades. Past experience tells us that this is a task for now and not to be put off until it becomes an absolute necessity to do so. Without doubt it is an economic imperative to position the nation to take advantage of changing international markets. Likewise, it is an imperative to understand and respond rapidly to changes in domestic conditions and market forces. Economic thinking needs to move beyond the quarry and farm mentality of previous decades and into how we can proactively and innovatively capitalise on the nation's 'natural advantages' in a highly competitive world.

The rise of Asia has already been a big benefit to Australia particularly in the initial 'commodity hungry' phase. To date, the benefit has been more obvious in mining regions, and rather less so for farm and tourism-dependent parts of this nation. Arguably, the next phase of Asia's rise will spawn massive markets in everything from goods (such as protein rich foods) to services (such as education, tourism and financial services). A key message is that this will provide significant opportunities for Australia. However, there will also be significant challenges in that Australia's comparative advantage will be less dramatic than it was in resources.

There is a significant disparity in terms of the ratio between investment and employment opportunities in Australia between the line north west of Brisbane to Adelaide and south East of the Brisbane to Adelaide line. Deloitte Access Economics (2011) report that North West of a line between Brisbane and Adelaide: 20% of employment, 53% of investment projects whereas South East of the same Brisbane – Adelaide Line: *80% of employment but only 47% of investment projects.*

A key message from the foregoing is that long term economic success in Australia needs to be measured in both its aggregate performance and by measuring economic and jobs growth across all of our regions and localities. The Regional Australia Institute Competitiveness Index will assist in measuring each region to determine whether it is performing to its full economic potential and what are the drivers and obstacles.

❖ Discussion

The conversation in regional Australia needs to be around the sorts of policy settings regions need in place to facilitate the shared outcomes of high, sustainable productive agriculture that results in economic benefits for the local region and Australia as a whole. This particularly needs to be considered in the context that food security has been identified as a number one priority especially for Asia into the future.

This in turn raises the questions such as:

- How might sustainable, economic development within regional Australia be compromised or leveraged advantageously by overseas investment?

- What are the ideal policies and policy instruments to use and in what circumstances (e.g. taxation treatments of investment, funding costs, commercial returns, capital gains, depreciation, passive investment, dividend)?; and
- Where, when and on whom do these imposts fall?

❖ **Policy Actions**

1. Strengthen the capacity of regional Australia to engage with Asia at a strategic level through greater understanding of:

- Commercial contract frameworks for doing business with Asia;
- Legal and regulatory requirements for doing business with Asia; and
- The foreign investment policies of Australia.

2. Develop regionally and local based mechanisms to support local businesses making investment in their own regions such as:

- Utilising the networking opportunities provided by Regional Development Australia;
- Drawing on the strengths and reach of national, state and territory departments of commerce and trade;
- Garnering the support of peak industry bodies and encourage their active participation in and support of regional and local initiatives;
- Working closely with local Chambers of Commerce and regional economic development bodies.

Speakers

Chris Richardson, Director, Deloitte Access Economics, ***Regional Trends and the Economy: what next?***

[\[Presentation\]](#)

Andrea Woods, Assistant Director, Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre, Australian Bureau of Statistics, ***Co-presenter: Juliet Hester, REDD Project Manager, Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre, Australian Bureau of Statistics; Regional Indicators and Whole of Economy Measures: a discussion of regional economic data in Australia*** [\[Presentation\]](#)

3. Growing Capacity to Support Regional Development

❖ **Key Messages**

i. Small to medium enterprise development

Desert Knowledge Australia and Outback Business Networks are internationally recognised enterprises that seek to develop business opportunities in remote regions. Key pillars to the success of these initiatives include the following:

- Linking to business opportunities – income generating or cost saving;
- Connecting with potential business collaborators;
- Connecting to potential new suppliers and customers;
- Timely access to information, professional development to meet business needs; and
- Referrals to business support services.

Outcomes to date include managing common pool resources; clustering in fragmented regional areas and turning social enterprises into corporate enterprise.

ii. Infrastructure

The Outback Way is a locally directed project that has been working since 1997 towards upgrading the 2,800km from Laverton to Winton. In that time, they have invested \$20m into upgrading the road and rolled out a \$487k tourism package. This infrastructure project is unique in that decisions are not parochial - they are about the whole project. Specifically, the initiative involves seven local governments, three state/territory jurisdictions and the Federal government as well as many associated agencies. *The Outback Way* is inclusive, collaborative and holistic by nature - enabling results and ongoing passion for the project.

Outcomes to date include:

- 1,100km sealed road;
- 1.700km is being upgraded to a sealed road to improve connectivity;
- Delivers economic opportunities for transporters, pastoralists, tourism operators and tourists;
- Roadhouses and community businesses;
- Delivers social benefit for 39 indigenous communities along the entire route; and
- Improving the continuity of health, education and fresh food.

iii. Regional employment futures.

The *'Health & Community Service'* sector is the largest employer in Australia and it is also one of the fastest growing. This industry sector has sustained significant levels of growth over the past decade and is predicted to grow 24.9% nationally over the next three years. In short, more than double the rate of growth for all industries. Health and Community Workforce Council (2012) report that this growth will see the sector being responsible for one quarter of the new jobs created in Australia in the period 2015-16.

iv. Attraction and retention of a regional workforce

Arguments have been presented that a good regional workforce strategy is focusing on entrepreneurship and innovators, rather than jobs. Thus, there needs to be positive recognition of the opportunities for regional careers and developing regional career aspirations e.g. the work of the Rural Doctors Association in the attraction and retention of medical practitioners in regional Australia.

Regional Australia has significant proportion of highly mobile residents. Business practices need to respond to this and find ways of maximising regional participation of the mobile skilled workforce. There is ample evidence that there are significant opportunities to keep commuter workforces in the region e.g. by providing regionally based serviced office space.

v. Education and skills development

There are a lot of high quality professional and technical people in rural and remote regional Australia. This resource needs to be fully identified, drawn-out, acknowledged and enabled by providing a combination of professional development programs, up skilling opportunities and enabling mechanisms for transporting skills across industry sectors (e.g. mining, agriculture, local government and construction).

Regional universities are well based to develop human capital and resources and contribute to educational opportunities, economic prospects and community capabilities of people living in non-metropolitan Australia. Without doubt, this resource needs to be optimised and funded to meet the challenges of industry restructuring, changing climatic and associated environmental conditions and the desires and aspirations of people now living or wanting to live in regional Australia.

We are a university of the land and people of our region. True to the character of regional Australia we have gumption, we have soul and we collaborate with others.
Prof. Andrew Vann – Charles Sturt University

❖ **Discussion**

Strong cases have been presented arguing that it is important that regions develop an overarching framework for business and workforce development that includes small towns through to larger centers. Workforce knowledge and data to support ongoing evidence-based planning and development was seen as a high need. Resources need to be allocated for a community development approach to sustain integrated service delivery.

The high costs of accommodation relative to quality and availability in much of regional Australia is recognised as being a major issue in attracting key governmental, retail and support service providers. For example, governments used to provide housing for teachers and medical staff, and perhaps high quality government housing for government employees is worth consideration. Several small shires and larger regional councils have purpose built accommodation for permanent professional staff and travelling skilled service providers. Similarly, regions are building fully equipped GP and/or medical specialist rooms to service providers on a sessional basis.

Retail and other commercial employees are poorly catered for in the high rental cost 'resources regions' and this is a major impediment to community stability. This situation is a major challenge and must be dealt with in a coordinated and integrated way by all tiers of Australian government in collaboration with the private sector to ensure that regional disparity is not exacerbated. To this end, government and industry collaboration is an essential element to building and maintaining a viable climate for business development. Experiential learning has shown that solutions need to be developed, tested and implemented locally to ensure strong participant support and ownership, leading to ongoing sustainability.

Access to in situ professional development and technical training is important. Australia-wide access to quality regional education is still difficult. Post-secondary education services are located in major regional centers. Additionally, access to e-learning is viewed as a critical gap that in this technological era should be easy to fill if there is the political will to do so and the funds to deliver the services.

Resources industries tend to be focused more on production rather than innovation and this is a lost opportunity. Kalgoorlie Boulder has a long history through its School of Mines for exporting mining expertise around the world. However, it is recognised that the strength of the institution is being eroded as more courses and programs are moved to the Bentley Campus of Curtin University in Perth. Likewise, Desert Knowledge Australia is looked to for its expertise on Desert lifestyles and has strength by the breadth of its representation in regional centres.

Competition from metropolitan based institutions and international on-line university programs is providing an impetus for a paradigm shift in the way regional universities operate. The emerging competitive situation needs to be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. Regional institutions have a Federal policy driven initiative to better articulate programs with secondary schools and VET bodies and build strengthening strategic partnerships with other regional universities. This situation (if handled deftly) can only benefit regional Australia.

❖ **Policy Actions**

1. Design policies in a way that implementation and funding recognise and supports government and industry collaborations by developing:

- Systems based understanding of individual enterprises within the broader regional economy and how they can respond to dynamic change;
- Strategies to support an enterprise's capability to adapt faster; and
- Mechanisms to enable industry based organisations to make change happen by building on the work of RDA and Local Government Authorities.

2. Establish new program structures that provide for multiple entry and exit pathways along an articulated continuum involving the upper secondary school system, the TAFE sector and the University sector that can:

- Operate through innovative management mechanisms such as Credit Project Teams;
- Facilitate the negotiation process to review existing credit transfer agreements and create new articulation pathways for students moving from the TAFE to the university sector;
- Identify and promote exit points within undergraduate degree programs that enable students to gain a VET sector qualification; and
- Strengthen the working relationship between all education sectors to develop critical mass in terms of comprehensive course profiles leading to awards.

3. *Conduct employer needs analysis and capability workshops to increase the integration of educational services with a focus on:*

- Professional development through university and VET sector programs;
- In-house industry based professional development and technical collaboration with educational institutions;
- Up-skilling and transferable skills and cross-industry skilling, particularly prevocational skill sets (mining, local government and agriculture); and
- Optimising the use of regional educational infrastructure.

Speakers

Mike Crowe, Director, Desert Knowledge Australia Outback Business Networks, *Working Across Borders to Build SME Networks in Remote or Fragmented Regions* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Jillian Albrecht, Manager, Recognition and Pathways, Customer Support Services, The Hunter Institute of TAFE NSW, **Co-presenter:** Lisa Campbell, Project Officer for Higher Education, Recognition and Pathways Unit, The Hunter Institute of TAFE NSW, *Learning to Articulate - The School, TAFE and University Experience* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Sean Gordon, Chief Executive Officer, Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, *Aboriginal Engagement in the Real Economy* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Neil Jacobsen, GM, Regional Workforce Development and Strategy, Agrifood Skills Australia, *Make It Work: what's making it work* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Vicky Meyer, Policy and Products Coordinator, Business Development Unit, Health and Community Services Workforce Council, **Co-presenter:** Carmel Marshall, Diocesan Planning and Development Manager, Centacare Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton, *Planning for a Sustainable and Responsive Health and Community Services Workforce in Regional Queensland* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Jenny Hoysted, Associate, Workforce Planning Australia, **Co-presenter:** Rowena Allen, Chair, Hume Workforce Development Committee, Local Government VIC, *Regional Workforce Planning in the Hume Region: a case study* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Dr. Susan Kinnear, Senior Research Officer, Centre for Environmental Management, CQ University Australia *Perceptions of Innovation in Regional Australia: views from SEGRA delegates* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Caroline Robinson, Director, Solum; Wheatbelt Business Solutions, *Beyond the Farm Gate* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Margaret Goody, Director & HR Specialist, Akyra Strategy and Development, *The Perfect Storm* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Christine Doan, Founder, Sustainable Malanda, *Sustainable Malanda: a case study of economic re-invigoration of a rural town in decline through triple bottom line methodology* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Dr. Aharon Factor, Lecturer, Faculty of Higher Education, Swinburne University of Technology, *Environmental Revolutions: Australia's SME's and their Supply Chains – a mind method investigation of the greater Melbourne Region* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Conversation Pit 2: Optimising Multipliers from Regional Development

Peter Brown, Business Development Manager, NSW Trade & Investment, Central Coast **Panellist:** Sean Weier, Team Manager, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Conversation Pit 3: Keeping it Local: coordinating local and regional development funding

Assoc. Prof. Geoff Cockfield, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Business, University of Southern Queensland
[\[Presentation\]](#)

Panellists: Paul Niederer, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Small Scale Offerings Board (ASSOB)
[\[Presentation\]](#); Chris Pursehouse, State Community Strengthening Manager NSW, Bendigo Bank
[\[Presentation\]](#)

4. Regional Catalysts

❖ Key Messages

i. Social Procurement

Social enterprises contribute to social innovation, increase social inclusion and cohesion and encourage resourcefulness, participation and cooperation. There are enormous opportunities to tap into social enterprise in regional Australia.

Social enterprises are directly involved in producing goods or providing a service to a market. Specifically, they seek to be a viable trading operation utilising fundamental business principles. Profits are reinvested in the venture or used for the benefit of the community. These enterprises have social objectives such as job creation, training or the provision of local services. Additionally, they have ethical values including a commitment to local community capacity building. Finally, they operate within a structure based on participation by stakeholder's model. Positive benefits include:

- diverse and unique partnerships with all three tiers of government, major regional NGOs, businesses and related representative groups, local community groups and community members;
- local employment and training outcomes;
- increased utilisation of community facilities;
- community programs and activities funded through enterprise income; and
- increased community engagement.

ii. Regional Planning and Design

Public policy specific to regional planning and design is critical to the overall sustainability of economic and social outcomes for Australia. Public policy in this area enables private, governmental and not-for-profit organisations to operate in ways that maximise regional values. Also, such policy influences the fundamental planning and design around land use, communication and transfer patterns. However, this presents a number of challenges including:

- decisions about the allocation of resources across space and time;
- the presence of unpriced values;
- external costs and benefits;
- possible interaction with other policy areas; and
- governance issues.

iii. Information for Evidence Based Decision Making

The *Regional Australia Institute* (RAI) presented its current initiative which is to develop a single resource that measures the factors contributing to competitiveness and identifies opportunities for regional development. The RAI Regional Competitiveness Index consists of ten themes and 66 indicators of regional potential. As such, this provides a common framework for communication and comparison between Australia's 560 non-metropolitan, local government areas and state and federal policy makers. The Index will allow regions to identify other regions with similar characteristics to learn from or collaborate with. The Index will also allow regions to identify the areas of opportunity and development priorities for developing the region.

AEC Group Ltd launched its newest freely available resource the SEE Index. *SEE Regional Australia - A Nation in View*, is a unique socio-economic product range that puts Australia's communities in the spotlight. This product has been developed for the Group's clients and specifically targets local governments, regional development organisations, state governments and businesses.

The *SEE Regional Australia* product range includes the SEE Regional Index and SEE Gross Regional Product publications as well as a range of other useful analysis tools. Selected data and analysis products can be sourced for free from the website: www.aecgrouppltd.com/see.

❖ **Discussion**

Success of social enterprises rests on:

- the development and delivery of resource material and learning modules targeted at the Social Enterprise sector; and
- providing a peer networking and support structure and brokering specialist business development support to assist the incubation of new enterprises.

Much greater attention needs to be paid to regions and regional Australia as subsystems to a much larger system. This system must operate at a higher level than industry sectors and infrastructure corridors and in a more complex level of analysis than nested hierarchies.

At the RIRDC *Advancing Industry – Academic Research Collaborations* workshop, participants identified the need for:

- greater understanding of research data and its application to sustainable regional development; and
- clear pathways that show how to make data and information more accessible and 'user friendly' to a wider audience particularly for the non government sector.

❖ Policy Actions

1. *Expand enterprise education including provisions for skills based training.*

- a. Supporting skills, knowledge and attributes designed to foster entrepreneurial awareness, business start-up and growth along with student propensity and intentionality towards entrepreneurship;
- b. Improving an innovator's skills, knowledge and attributes in conducting a business and managing business opportunities and growth;
- c. Providing business coaching to foster a training and learning culture and the capacity to access external information and apply it to service delivery;
- d. Enhancing skills on how to: stabilise in response to disruptive change; undertake situation analysis; and align business processes, structures and systems in response to rapid change;
- e. Providing programs and funding initiatives to enable nascent entrepreneurs to be linked with like-minded or experienced others.

2. *Greater application of policies that support 'Bottom of the Pyramid or Fifth Estate' sustainable development in regional Australia including:*

- a. Microcredit;
- b. Venture capital and social venture funds; and
- c. Business and community partnerships.

3. *Foster the establishment and maintenance of 'Sustainable Aboriginal Communities' that are "able to make decisions but more importantly fund those decisions" without any need for governmental funding by developing the capacity for Indigenous groups to:*

- Use their land to generate revenue through strategic land development;
- Access revenue streams to provide community benefits;
- Build on and strengthen internal operating capabilities; and
- Develop asset optimisation and management strategies.

Speakers

Dr. Declan Kuch, Research Academic, Centre for Social Research in Energy and Resources, University of Newcastle, *Risks for Whom? Industrial Culture and Community Engagement in the Coal, Oil, Gas and Electricity Sectors* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Helen Lewis, General Manager, Outback Highway Development Council Inc., *Collaboration Along the Outback Way: Australia's longest shortcut* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Brian Ramsay, Managing Director, Inovact Consulting *Creating Organisational Effectiveness* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Michael Campbell, Senior Consultant, AECgroup Limited *How Do We SEE Ourselves? Benchmarking Regional Australia by LGA across Social, Economic and Environmental Indicators.*

Jack Archer, General Manager, Research and Policy, Regional Australia Institute *The RAI Competitiveness Index: developing a positive agenda for regional Australia* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Conversation Pit 2: Maximising Systems: building dynamic capability

Brian Ramsay, Managing Director, Inovact Consulting

Panellists: Margaret Goody, Director & HR Specialist, Akyra Strategy and Development [\[Presentation\]](#);
Glenn Cannard, Team Leader, Community and Cultural Development, Wyong Shire Council and Belinda McRobie, Social Planner, Community and Cultural Development, Wyong Shire Council [\[Presentation\]](#).

5. Achieving Regional Outcomes

➤ Settlement Patterns

The **SEGRA** National Steering Committee would like to acknowledge and thank Robert Prestipino (Director, Vital Places Pty Ltd) for his contribution to the writing of this section.

❖ Key Messages

- i. Regional Australia's settlement patterns form a network of clusters and connecting corridors through which trade, social engagement and services are conducted. Sustainable regional development needs to promote and nurture these networks.
- ii. Place-based theory suggests that sustainable regions will be those regions where the prosperity of the regional centre is directly linked to the vitality of adjacent towns. Regional development strategies need to promote growth that reinforces nodal interconnectivity.
- iii. Implementation of economic development decisions can be enhanced if these networks are recognised and utilised as a catalyst framework. Hence, it is critically important that infrastructure in particular is planned around the concept of place-based networks where it is not just about the challenge of identifying 'the right project at the right time' but more importantly, that the project is in the 'right place' to fully leverage its benefits for the regions' sustainability.
- iv. For example, *SuperTowns* Vision is to have balanced, well-connected regional communities with lifestyle options and access to services. They will offer more choices for people living in regional areas and provide an attractive alternative to living in the metropolitan area. A key principle of *SuperTowns* is strategic alignment, coordination and collaboration through governance, strategic planning and community engagement (place making).

❖ Discussion

Decentralisation needs to operate in a way that recognises the unique value proposition of the regions socially, economically and environmentally. Regional policy needs to reflect its non-urbanised context. Indeed, it needs to embrace a clear understanding of settlement patterns, their spatial relationships and their capacity to deliver lifestyle value which underpins their unique, regional identity.

Over the last century, regional centers have become more diverse in size and function, providing a wide range of goods and services. The role of regions as transport hubs has declined and the link between place of residence and work has become uncoupled. Towns are now increasingly service based. Moreover, there has been an increase in wealth in regional towns with a consequent capacity to invest in new (personal) assets and high levels of consumption. Further, the ability to travel further to shop, work and holiday has meant there is the opportunity for socialising beyond immediate towns and consequently stronger links have formed between towns. This has also led to more competition between towns and an uncoupling of towns from their traditional industries.

Particular encouragement and efforts need to be made to support Indigenous leaders in developing local solutions to regional and Indigenous challenges and for greater participation in government. Also, more government jobs, service delivery and management functions should be located in the regions. As well, there needs to be greater inclusion of private and not-for-profit sectors in strategic land use planning, service delivery and infrastructure provision.

❖ **Policy Actions**

1. Regional policy impact statements need to report on the way in which particular policy actions will enhance or otherwise impact on the local regional networks for example by:

- a. Disseminating statements on how policy actions are spatially (regional) and vertically (government/administratively) integrated;
- b. Making greater use of regional advisory boards/development commissions with expert knowledge on regional development integrated at local, state and federal levels;
- c. Fostering concomitant business and private investment especially major commercial landholders and investors;
- d. Developing new models for leveraging opportunities for public and private collaboration and funding key projects - individually and as clusters - across regions; and
- e. Holding discussions and developing collaborative networks with major commercial landholders and investors.

2. Developing frameworks/ policy position on concepts of regional equity by creating:

- a. Tools/methodologies for balancing out the needs of smaller populations and larger populations – allowing for more sophistication than majority rules;
- b. Ways to articulate mining areas with high employment opportunities and high unemployment areas – collaboration across regional/urban needs; and
- c. Opportunities to increase skilled regional immigration.

3. *Provide certainty that decentralisation is not a shift of problems of urbanisation and suburbanisation of large capital and regional cities by ensuring that:*
- a. Regional growth plans include the support of strong regional centers within a well-connected region;
 - b. Environmentally sustainable design for infrastructure and housing (e.g. appropriate block sizes);
 - c. Establishment of community infrastructure is geared to be a catalyst for regional innovation; and
 - d. Appropriate levels of education and technology centers are provided within the fabric of existing regional settlements.

Speakers

Michael Campbell, Senior Consultant, AECgroup Limited, *SEE Index Launch* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Glenn Cannard, Team Leader, Community and Cultural Development, Wyong Shire Council, Co-presenter: Julie Vaughan, Manager of Community and Cultural Development, Wyong Shire Council *Social & Community Enterprise in Local Government* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Geoff Frost, Research Leader, DIT, Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics *The development of Australia's towns: a one hundred year perspective* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Alexandra Kriz, PhD Candidate, International Business, University of Sydney, *Ambidextrous Regions* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Lynette O'Reilly, GM SuperTowns, Department of Regional Development & Lands, Government of WA, - Mal Osborne, LGA CEO/RDA Chair, Local Government/RDA Network, Shire of Esperance/RDAGE *WA SuperTowns* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Robert Prestipino, Director, Vital Places Pty Ltd, *Can Infrastructure Promote Regional Growth AND Local Lifestyle?* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Bill Fish, Senior Spatial Analyst, GIS & Mapping, Spatial Visions Innovations Pty Ltd, *Scenario Planning for Melbourne's Peri-Urban Region: a spatial framework for examining urban planning options for focused regional development* [\[Presentation\]](#)

➤ Sustainability technologies for water, wastewater and renewable energy

The National Steering Committee would like to thank Peter Henderson, Environmental Management Services, for his contribution to this section.

❖ Key Messages

Sustainable technologies are now readily available and ideally suitable for regional use in the supply of water, the treatment of waste water and the provision of renewable energy. These were explored in depth in the **SEGRA** showcase, *Sustainability Technologies: tools for sustainable decentralisation - water, waste water treatment and green energy* held on the 19th November and discussed further in a Conversation Pit on 21st November.

The messages from the Showcase were focused by the three themes:

- i. Introducing and Applying Hard Technologies: integrated systems for water security, waste water treatment, urban biosolids and solid wastes and wind and solar energy;
- ii. Preparing for Hard and Soft Technologies at the local and regional scales; and
- iii. Applying Hard Technologies: *A Structured Conversation: How ready are we for decentralised systems?*

The messages from the Conversation Pit drew on learnings from case examples of applying sustainability technologies for water, wastewater treatment and renewable electric power generation.

Presenters and participants at the Showcase and in the Conversation Pit confirmed the message that Australia wide regional development offers a focal point for innovation in the conceptualisation, commercialisation and promotion of sustainability technologies crucial for:

- ensuring cost savings in the provision of water, energy and waste management for industries and communities;
- supporting the decentralised delivery of affordable essential services in coastal, rural and remote regions;
- establishing new economically viable ‘green infrastructure’ in regional towns and cities; and
- fostering capacity building based on meeting identified professional and technical skills and practitioner needs.

Embedding the development and delivery of sustainability technologies should be collaboratively supported by in-kind and financial assistance by governments and industry through regional development initiatives by way of programs and grants. This collaborative approach is essential for the incubation of new enterprises and the training of future sustainability technologists. As such, it can be a major contribution towards establishing and promoting sound business acumen in the emerging field of sustainability technologies.

Further, as a reality check, Showcase and Conversation Pit participants confirmed the message that delivering innovative initiatives is somewhat constrained by the following:

- Policy uncertainty and conflict with respect to where innovation should be driven from. Specifically, is it to be top down or bottom up or a hybrid approach that accommodates commercial and community expectations, regional realities and governmental policy settings and programs?
- Bureaucratic obstacles apparent in grant application and approvals processes for project funding.
- An apparent lack of a clear understanding of the scope and scale of innovation and the professional development and skills training needs in the field of sustainability technologies.

Participants agreed that such a co-operative approach between all spheres of government, regional bodies and business should be used to help articulate the steps from innovation to roll-out and illuminate flexible pathways for fostering and maintaining regional sustainable industries and work forces. Most importantly, participants in the ‘sustainability technologies’ activities were in full agreement that it is essential to:

- Physically showcase suites of technologies for the cost effective provision of water, energy and waste management services at regional hubs;
- Provide vehicles for the dissemination of information on the availability and performance of different sustainability technologies; and
- Foster the formation of collaborations (commercial or co-operative) for the integrated delivery of decentralised water, energy and waste management services at regional, community and site specific scales.

❖ **Discussion**

A number of challenges, ranging from practical measures to support the introduction of sustainability technologies to the more philosophical cultural shifting were identified, including the following:

- The development of uniform standards for systems at all stages of the process – equipment, services, outputs (e.g. waste material) and will this improve take-up rates?
- The interaction with various approval/regulators for new technology, spare parts and retrofitting; and
- The interface of new sustainable technology with occupational workplace health and safety.

Key questions raised were:

- What new skill sets are required to introduce the new technologies and how will these be developed?
- How to challenge the business as usual model with sustainable technologies e.g. will renewable energy supply be able to accommodate peak load requirements?

Pragmatically, another key message was that: *Initially, it will be essential to develop the business case and cost benefit analysis on a project by project basis if the innovation adopting, self-sustaining urban utilities services is to be broadly accepted.*

Cost structures incurred in introducing technological innovation are used to argue against moving away from business as usual. Project based evidence shows that this need not be the case. For example, the costs associated with sustainable buildings are competitive as illustrated by the construction of the Flannery Centre, Bathurst, NSW. The Centre was built to a 75 year operational horizon and showed the cost competitiveness of sustainable construction compared to standard practices. Most importantly, it operates with significantly cheaper ongoing operating costs while providing a self-sustaining, climate adaptive work environment.

This raised the question: *Are the advances in technology able to keep up with the introduction of sustainable utilities and, if so, is such integration the right approach?*

Difficulties were identified in the storage of energy and water to accommodate regional development. Therefore, it was argued that:

- a 'gestalt' could be achieved by integrating the application of sustainable utility technologies; and
- the combination of sustainable electric power, water and wastewater treatment would enhance the overall support for the take-up of sustainability technologies.

❖ **Policy Actions**

1. Evaluate and test the technical and economic feasibility of sustainability technologies in a range of regional settings by:

- a. Undertaking project specific studies that fully evaluate business as usual headwork's costs on 'Greenfield sites' compared with introducing sustainable technology across a range of urban and peri-urban sites in regional and remote areas; and
- b. Facilitating the establishment of a small loans funding scheme directed to assist the introduction of sustainable technology in regional areas.

2. Provide incentives for enhancing professional and technical capacity to support the adoption of sustainability technologies through:

- a. Promoting the establishment of programs and courses in the university sector in regional Australia that will prepare a new generation of sustainability professionals in the engineering, environmental, economic, primary industry and social sciences fields;
- b. Providing additional resources to the VET sector to support training of sustainably focused trade apprentices;
- c. Undertaking local and regional professional and technology skills needs analysis to help quantify the demand for new professions, skills and the skill-sets required;

- d. Fostering industry-trade union-Vet sector collaboration to streamline the preparation for the integration of sustainability technology skills into emerging and established workforces; and
- e. Allocating additional funding for living allowances for university students and apprentices to undertake programs in sustainability technology in rural and remote regions.

3. *Encourage small demonstration projects that exhibit renewable utilities in action as for example:*

- a. Establishing secondary school, VET institutions and community based food gardens to demonstrate and experience sustainable production landscape principles and practices;
- b. Using underground, roof space and building surrounds in public and private sector facilities to house infrastructure, such as water tanks, solar panels and small scale wind turbines;
- c. Undertaking sewer mining to produce recycled water for use in toilets and to enhance recreational facilities and urban open spaces; and
- d. Detailing and promulgating the benefits and cost savings inherent in the removal/partial removal of stormwater from municipal waste water treatment systems.

4. *Initiate public awareness and communication strategies for community engagement aimed at the acceptance of sustainable technology by way of:*

- a. Identifying ‘champions’ of sustainability technologies and promoting and supporting case example of applications in local communities;
- b. Encouraging local and regional electronic and print media to run ‘good-news’ stories on the benefits of providing self-sustaining integrated urban utility services and sustainability technologies in general; and
- c. Using social media and community based social marketing in regional centers that explain what the new technologies would look like and what skillsets supporting professionals and technicians would require.

Speakers

SEGRA Sustainability Technologies Showcase

Adjunct Assoc. Prof. Peter Waterman, Managing Director, Environmental Management Services Pty Ltd, [\[Presentation\]](#)

Ashley Bland, Sustainability Manager, Skillset, Bathurst NSW

Peter Henderson, Environmental Management Services Pty Ltd

Greg Laves, Smart Water Research Centre, Griffith University

Rod Macdonald, City of Greater Geelong Council

Conversation Pit 1: Implementing Sustainability Solutions: making it happen

Speakers

Ashley Bland, Sustainability Manager, Skillset, Bathurst NSW [\[Presentation\]](#)

Kelly Nunn-Clarke, Consultant, Nu-Tech Energy Systems Pty. Ltd [\[Presentation\]](#)

David Jacobs, Director, Nu-Tech Energy Systems Pty. Ltd

Steven Hill, Consulting Energy Specialist, Nu-Tech Energy Systems Pty. Ltd

Dr Gary Ellem, Project Manager, Sustainable Futures, Tom Farrell Institute, University of Newcastle [\[Presentation\]](#)

➤ Policy and Governance

❖ Key Messages

- i. When government chooses a particular policy tool to manage resources, choices are also being made about governance. The level and nature of participation in the process of policy development, choices about funding, administration, implementation and the enforcement of non-compliance all shape the allocation of authority, responsibility and resources. For example, different policy tools afford agents different levels of flexibility and autonomy in how they meet policy objectives.
- ii. A market based approach to enhancing biodiversity, such as Bush Tender, provides landholders with a choice to participate in a program to change their land use in return for a cash payment. Depending on its design, a regulatory approach to enhancing biodiversity may apply to all landholders and those not complying with the regulation may be liable for a penalty.
- iii. Arguably, it is also important that the governance arrangements facilitate land use decisions at an appropriate spatial scale to meet objectives of public policy. While local councils have powers to approve particular uses within their jurisdiction, some of these uses span more than one local council boundary such as ecological landscapes and would deliver greater benefits if coordinated at a larger scale. In contrast, the State government has powers to determine planning at this broader scale, but does not have access to information to make decisions that reflect values and objectives of communities. Regionalisation of land use planning is an approach that devolves the identification of challenges, opportunities and priorities from the State while maintaining legislative and regulatory roles of local councils and state government agencies.
- iv. Regional Development Victoria (2010) provided *The Blueprint*, a document that is based on the principle that “regional communities are best placed to identify and plan for their priorities, future challenges and opportunities”. As such, it is designed to give regions maximum flexibility in developing processes that suit their circumstances.

❖ Discussion

A critical focus for practitioners in regional Australia is on two core areas of issue. Firstly, on how to respond to the economic, biophysical, social and governance issues associated with a vast, sparsely settled continent with large urban conglomerations on the coast; and secondly, the cost of not responding to the issue. Thus, in this context, effective regional policy:

- Recognises regional Australia’s critical role in the position of Australia for the future;
- Identifies both the potential and actual competitiveness of regional areas and the multivariate consequences for national policy;
- Acknowledges the diversity of regions and recognises the connections and dependencies between metropolitan and regional Australia;
- Accommodates interrelationships within converging and competing systems, as well as positioning within its ‘ecosystem’; and

- Supports the implementation of economic decisions - especially in relation to infrastructure - which will only be enhanced if these networks are recognised and utilised.

Regions should not be competing with each other for funding. Funding should be focused on a broader national framework for regional Australia. Thus, the objective should be collaboration across government tiers rather than institutional competition. Also, regional development programs and project initiatives need a longer funding cycle, specifically one that breaks funding into more meaningful tranches that recognise the complexity of delivery in regional settings.

Currently, the emphasis on particular rather than generic funding and the funding processes tend to fracture the availability of financial resources and result in duplication of effort in application, compliance and reporting.

The *Blueprint for Rural and Regional Victoria* recognises that “regional communities are best placed to identify and plan for their priorities, future challenges and opportunities.

Regional Australia is not seen as integrated within the national agenda. Evidence shows that there is no overall social, economic design plan or collaborative work on governance design and delivery across jurisdictional boundaries. Notwithstanding, RDA provides some opportunity for more collaborative approaches and this still needs to be translated into cross-boundary delivery of program and project initiatives.

Absence of regional stakeholder collaboration gives emphasis to the need to understand the unique characteristics of each region in its geographic context as distinct from governmentally delineated boundaries. Across the nation there are different patterns of demography, economy and climate. Policy needs to reflect these different regional conditions and the resultant development interests.

There needs to be an alignment of policies through all levels of government and across all departments to ensure that incentives provided by one level of government are not contradictory to policies of another government sector – e.g. Federal health budget included incentives for tele-health into remote and regional Australia but many of these regions are not able to access these services due to lack of broadband connectivity or do not appear to be on the roll out for the NBN. Arguably, private enterprise is picking up on some of this need.

Regional Australia is seen as service hungry and to some this is expressed as a series of industry sectors, isolated, less sophisticated modal points to ports. Collectively, these perceptions result in policies that exclude activating the innovation capacity and advantages regions have as illustrated by greenfields sites for development projects.

In short, there needs to be common language or broad acceptance of what the problem is that regional policy and governance is addressing.

❖ Policy actions

1. *Develop strategic directions for the sustainable economic, environmental and social management at the relevant levels and set a climate that builds and supports a positive and pro active economic and social environment where business (especially small-medium ones) are able to flourish by:*

- Promoting greater understanding and integrated mapping of regional networks;
- Fostering technological networks (internet, telephone, power, transportation, delivery and product distribution);
- Supporting formal and informal governance networks – social affiliation, interactive, decision making, power distributions and scale free;
- Enhancing information networks to exchange knowledge, share resources and provide opportunities for innovative collaborations; and
- Supporting regional networks in food , water and waste management and energy.

2. *Embed proactive regional development strategies in whole-of-government provision of infrastructure and the delivery of services by:*

- Integrating departmental and agency policies that geographically common regional focus;
- Organising regionally; and
- Acting with one voice.

Stay involved

This communiqué is an overview summary of the discussions that took place at the **SEGRA 2012** conference hosted by Central Coast Region, NSW. The themed content is indicative rather than comprehensive. As such, it is a living document and discussions of many of the themes raised in this paper continue to be debated in the **SEGRA** LinkedIn group. All readers are invited to join this group.

To receive regular updates about **SEGRA**, please subscribe at www.segra.com.au, email info@segra.com.au or phone 07-3210 0021.

SEGRA continues to be the not to be missed event for those who are looking for real-action not reaction and who have a passion for regional Australia.
SEGRA 2012

SEGRA 2013 will be held in Coffs Harbour, NSW on 16-18 October 2013. Call for papers will be open soon.

The energy, passion and fight of a local community is often what stokes the fire that drives change. The focus at **SEGRA** this year will be on regional communities and how they harness local energy and passion to respond to challenges. Key ideas include how to work co-creatively; structures and processes for community based action; social enterprise facilitation and regional business models in the new globally networked world.

Citations and Bibliography

Abrahams, D., n.d. *SEGRA LinkedIn* [Online].

Andressen, M., n.d. *blog.pmarca.com*. [Online].

Deloitte Access Economics, December 2011. *Investment Monitor*, s.l.: Deloitte Access Economics.

Dutton, W., 2009. The Fifth Estate Emerging Through the network of Networks. *Prometheus Vol 27 no 1*, pp. 1-15.

Faggian, V. A. S. a. R., n.d. *SYSTEMIC REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT a systems thinking approach*, s.l.: Department of Primary Industries Victoria .

Hajkowicz, S. a. M. J., 2010. *Our Future World: an analysis of global trends,shocks and scenarios*, Canberra: CSIRO.

Hasan Bakhshi, A. F. a. J. P., Provocation 14: April 2011. *State of Uncertainty Innovation policy through experimentation*, London: NESTA.

Kriz, A., n.d. [Online].

Martinn, D. R.-S. a. M.-. a. G.-., 2012. Government policies to support entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development: An international Journal 24: 9-10*, pp. 861-864.

Perrem, K., 2012. Innovation in Regional Australia: Effective lagging or Under-utilised? In: *Regional Advantage and Innovation: achieving australia's national outcomes*. Germany: Springer, p. 37.

Rodrik, D., 2004. Industrial Policy for the Twenty-First Centruy. *Faculty Research Working Papers Series RWP04-047*, November.

Susan Kinnear, K. C. P. V., 2012. *Regional Advantage and Innovations: Achieving Australia's National Outcomes*. Germany: Springer.