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**Regional Development Victoria March 10, 2015**

**Attention: Tom Crouch | Regional Manager - Northern Loddon Mallee**

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources 131 Langtree Avenue, MILDURA VIC 3500

[www.rdv.vic.gov.au](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/)

Hello Tom,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on RDV and I am very happy the Minister is taking an active role in encouraging thoughts and ideas on how we can do better. I see there is going to be a panel representative of regional Victoria this is great and to have it inclusive of all regions will be a great move, I would like to nominate myself for this External Advisory Board as I have seen nothing of it until now I assume there will be a nomination process?

Just to touch on the way local RDV engages with us we are fortunate to have good people in RDV that are inclusive with their workshops and funding opportunities we work hard through the local RDV and feel it’s a great place to start to see what can be done and what opportunities are out there for funding or community engagement. We have always had a close relationship with our local RDV office and leverage them if we need to visit Melbourne for further insight to funding proposals or ideas we might have at Wakefields or collectively as a group or community. It’s a valuable resource in our community.

We have recently been involved in a workshop lead by RDV which was widely attended by business owners, growers, councilors, accounts, local agencies and farming inputs businesses. It was held in Robinvale and brought out ideas to ensure the community remained viable and sustainable, continued to grow and employ, I would expect a follow up soon from RDV on the governments level of support. Transport and Rail Freight was central to the workshops key outcomes they wished achieved.

I would like to see more opportunity for RDV to introduce us to the key people in RDV 121 Exhibition so we can flush out possible funding sources and opportunities before allocating large amounts of resources and finances to a project that is not centre of mind with the department, how this could be done through our local branch is the challenge.

Bi o-security is a big cost when you have Protocols for most countries our community export to we understand these are agreed positions between Governments but reality is we have Exporters paying $300 to $600 for one inspection for one container of fruit to get approvals and then another USD$1000.00 for In-transit Cold disinfestations treatment by the Shipping Lines. We really need more aggressive Protocol arrangements with better outcomes for our produce and more market access as you would be aware Vietnam is closed this year and took plenty of fruit last year.

Lastly, the SMP should provide a unique environment where property that was browned off during the drought in 2003 - 2007 can now be re-established with varieties that suit the Asian palate these blocks are small so need more of a vegetable type grower mentality, but now we have pressurised water supply 24/7 as opposed to each block requiring its own pump and having certain days that they could water and other days where they could not made for a very poor and overly expensive system. The new system should offer greater crop selection flexibility and better water management practices. I believe some seed funding to attract farmers back to small blocks that have high value export and domestic demand would be a great initiative, these properties require labour and we have labour as our unemployment figures show us, so placements could be an end result of these new crops and properties

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute

Ken Wakefield

Director

Wakefield Transport Group [www.wakefields.com.au](http://www.wakefields.com.au/)