**Mitchell Shire Council**

Dear Angela

Thanks for the opportunity to provide input into the Minister’s review of DEDJTR’s regional service model, with a particular focus on driving sustainable growth in regional and rural Victoria. To this end I provide the following comments for the consideration of the review team.

* It is important that any revised regional model takes into consideration the diversity of municipalities that it will be engaging with across the State. Councils, as you know, span the maturity spectrum with relation to their capacity to engage with an influence local economic drivers. The model needs to be able to respond accordingly, in order to ensure that all local communities are benefitting from intellectual and financial investment, not just those that are higher resourced such as Regional Cities.
* We are supportive of the principle of regional business centres, however the quality and reliability of advice needs to be as strong in the Regions as it is from central Melbourne. At the moment this can at times be variable, resulting in ‘advice shopping’ or working around the system if necessary to get good information or outcomes. We would like to have confidence that the communication lines are strong between central and regional government, and that the messaging and advice is consistent and outcome focussed.
* Having tangible and visible objectives for the translation of State initiatives into local regional programs will be important. The Premier has spoken on a number of occasions about taking some initiatives that have been successful in a Melbourne context (particularly with an art and culture focus that then have flow on economic benefit) and applying them regionally. We’d like to understand more about what that will look like and what the expectations are.
* It would be good to have a higher profile of those services supporting regional investment facilitation. To date in Mitchell these services have been relatively absent – or perhaps it has been that we have been uncertain on how to draw on them. There is an appetite within this Council to work to attract new investment, particularly investment that will lead to enhanced job creation but we need support in knowing which levers to pull.
* There is opportunity for Government agencies to collaborate more on developing shared outcome measures and accountabilities that start with community benefit as their first point rather than agency led outputs. The latter, silo approach to government service planning and delivery leads to duplication of effort and confusion for service users. There are some examples of where this is working better (in some of the community services areas for example) but is less apparent in other areas, particularly those relating to economic development.

 These are just some initial thoughts from our team, but we would be happy to have a follow up discussion with the Project Team representatives to discuss wider contextual issues influencing local economic development in Mitchell Shire if you think it would be helpful.

Thanks and see you soon,

Rebecca