

# NMRDA NEWS

Newsletter of the Northern Melbourne Regional Development Australia Committee · November 2011

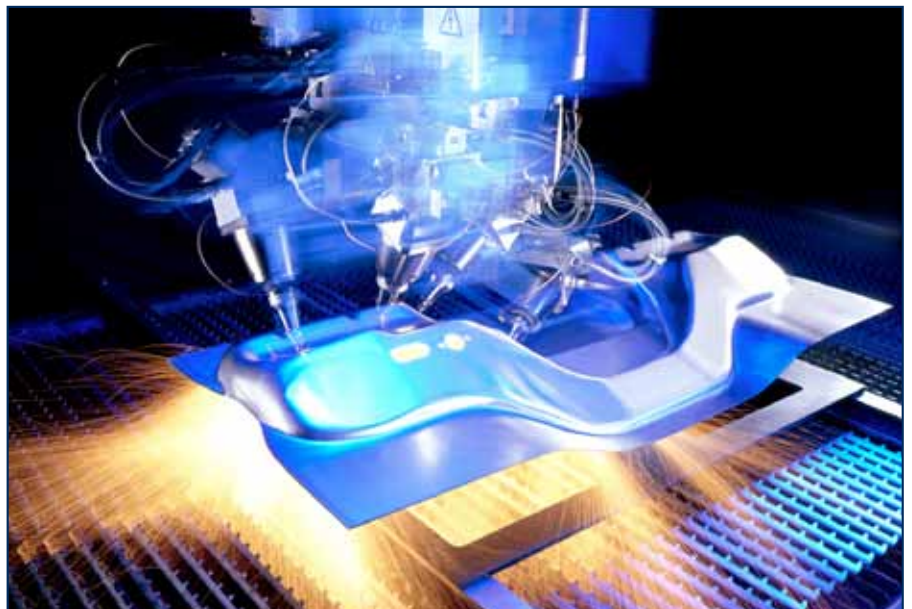
## Strategic growth for local manufacturing

**D**ecline in manufacturing jobs is having a big impact on employment in Melbourne's North, and a current NMRDA project is looking at strategic recommendations for government, industry and other stakeholders that will maximise growth and opportunities.

Manufacturing has traditionally been a critical industry sector in our region, employing a large number of people and driving economic growth. Despite reductions in recent years, it still provides a majority of jobs and is vital to our future.

This project is addressing several identified gaps. There is no clear research available on directions and drivers of manufacturing at a regional level. There is little understanding of current interrelationships of manufacturing and industry in the region, including identification of potential clusters. And there appears to be significant opportunity to drive innovation and growth for regional industry by developing effective relationships with higher education.

Conducted in three stages, the project looks at statistical data for each manufacturing sector individually and involves extensive and direct engagement with key stakeholders.



The result will be a comprehensive report that makes practical recommendations, including strategies for change, retention and expansion of manufacturing; key tasks for business and government to retain and build manufacturing in the region; opportunities for industry clusters; and opportunities for improved linkages between manufacturing and the tertiary sector.

The project will be completed by the end of 2011.

**Project partners:** NMRDA; NORTH Link

### Meeting NMRDA strategic priorities:

- Grow business capacity
- Increase regional employment

## Plenty Food Group strategic review

A comprehensive review of the Plenty Food Group's activities will help this successful initiative to grow in the future (see page 3).

# Chinese medicinal herbs set for growth

Over recent years the City of Whittlesea has been looking at the viability of growing and manufacturing herbs for use in the Chinese herbal medicine market. To move forward, there was a need for further research and exploration of export and business development opportunities. At the same time, a specialised and targeted approach was required to attract investment from the private sector, both locally and internationally.

"This is definitely a growing market, as people become more educated about alternative medicines and the importance of health and wellbeing," said John Francis, Director Economic Development and City Marketing at the City of Whittlesea.

"This project is a great chance for us to utilise agricultural land and create a niche manufacturing sector with skilled employment opportunities. Ideally, we would grow the raw materials, value-add at a local high-tech manufacturing plant and sell

locally and overseas, taking advantage of Australia's reputation for being 'clean and green!'"

This project will explore potential business opportunities within the industry, identify key drivers in relevant businesses (including decision making criteria) and establish who current suppliers are. It will also look at commercial entities that use the product as a value added component, for example in cereals and juices.

Given increasing worldwide demand and problems with the quality of product from China, there is real potential to establish a successful local industry in our region.

This project is funded by NMRDA.

**Project partners:** NMRDA; City of Whittlesea



**Meeting NMRDA strategic priorities:**

- Grow business capacity with a focus on emerging knowledge based industries
- Increase regional employment

# Young women's leadership program

Young women from Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the region are participating in a dynamic leadership program that focuses on their career potential.

Fifteen young women are taking part in the 20-week program, where they are matched with a high-profile female mentor who supports them in pursuing their vocational interests. They attend a series of workshops and at the end of the program will have a clear plan for the future.

"Careers chosen by the girls really vary, from real estate and communications to physiotherapy, event management and voiceover work," said Meri Ivanovska, mentoring coordinator for the program. "One girl who's interested in medicine is being mentored by a doctor at The Alfred and is looking at following the same career path her mentor followed."

"Through the mentoring, the girls have learned a lot more about what jobs are available in their chosen areas and this has expanded their options. Most importantly, they've gained confidence and now have a network and resources to help them on their way."

Education outcomes in our region are below average for this target group and are particularly alarming for Indigenous young people, with a high percentage in the inner north not completing



school beyond year 9. The overall youth employment rate locally is above the state average at 20%.

Our region has significant migrant and Indigenous populations, and many young women from these groups face multiple barriers to skilled career pathways. These barriers have an impact on their confidence and aspirations. And they are exacerbated by the need to juggle differences in cultural values, gender roles, family pressures and community expectations.

NMRDA contributed funding for this project.

**Project partners:** INLLEN; Department of Planning and Community Development; Darebin City Council; Moreland City Council; Yarra City Council; Danks Trust; 5 local secondary schools; local community groups; NMRDA

**Meeting NMRDA strategic priorities:**

- Improve the skills capacity of the region
- Improve economic, social and health outcomes for disadvantaged groups

# Plenty Food Group strategic review

After almost 10 years in operation, the Plenty Food Group needs research to help develop services and initiatives that will meet future market requirements.

The Plenty Food Group, a food manufacturing industry network for companies based in Melbourne's North, represents more than 150 food manufacturers who employ over 5000 people. Coordinated by the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea, it also involves education and industry bodies. The group assists small, medium and large companies in food processing or those who supply products and services to the food manufacturing industry.

Manufacturing is a strategic industry for our region, even though jobs in this sector continue to decline. With food processing a growth industry and the success of Plenty Food Group activities so far, it is timely to conduct a comprehensive review that identifies opportunities and sets the scene for the future.

The review will look at issues such as logistics, target markets, accreditations, industry organisations, financial expenses, business forecasts, export growth, economic climate impact, employment, training, tertiary sector utilisation, skill shortages, marketing, sustainability, purchasing and infrastructure. It will involve a major survey and widespread industry consultations.

Findings and recommendations from



this project will assist, strengthen and ensure the sustainability of local food manufacturers and local industry as a whole.

This project is funded by NMRDA and will be completed in December.

**Project partners:** NMRDA; Hume City Council; City of Whittlesea

**Meeting NMRDA strategic priorities:**

- Grow business capacity
- Increase regional employment

# Real industry job interviews program

More than 600 students from across Melbourne's North were exposed to a real-life interview situation as part of this interactive program, which also involved 86 local employers.

The program gives year 10 and 11 students practical experience in writing resumes and job applications. It culminates in a one-on-one simulated interview scenario with an industry-based interviewer.

Employers from a range of industries generously donated their time as interviewers, providing students with individual verbal and written feedback on their 20-minute interview session. The benefit of this is that it engages employers with their future workforce and is particularly targeted at areas of skill shortage.

Bill Threlfall, CEO of Hume Whittlesea LLEN, explained the benefits of the program and why it has proved popular

with the whole school community.

"The program is great because it gives the young people in our region the chance to be part of a real interview situation. They take it seriously, too – they prepare at school, dress up and some are nervous on the day. Employers also appreciate the chance to meet and get to know local young people.

"If they mess it up, at least they'll learn a lot from the experience and hopefully won't make the same mistakes again. Some do very well. This year, one of the employers offered a student a casual job based solely on the interview. That was a great result for everyone concerned."

Evaluation of the program showed very positive results, with students, teachers and employers awarding it 4.5, 4.68 and 4.66 out of 5 respectively.

NMRDA contributed funding for this project.

**Project partners:** Hume Whittlesea LLEN; INLLEN; RMIT University; NMRDA



**Meeting NMRDA strategic priorities:**

- Improve linkages between education and industry
- Improve the skills capacity of the region

# WHAT'S GOING ON

## Brunswick rollout for the NBN

Residents in Brunswick South's test rollout zone for the National Broadband Network were connected to the super-fast network in October.

One of only five test sites in Australia, and the only one in an inner-urban area, Brunswick was chosen because of the challenges it presents – a diverse urban population, crowded narrow streets, high density housing and high road and pedestrian traffic.

As there will be significant economic advantages for businesses in areas that are quick to link up to the NBN, NMRDA has been working with NBN Co, the City of Moreland and other local councils across the North to facilitate its early adoption for the region.



Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Senator Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, and Oscar Yildiz, Mayor of the City of Moreland, launched the NBN in Brunswick. The NBN will offer huge potential to local businesses and residents in terms of the local, national and global digital economies.

## Digital arts incubator

Australia's first digital arts and new media incubator – ArtDECL – is now operating at the old Northcote Police Station site.

ArtDECL provides affordable accommodation for new media businesses in their crucial start-up or early establishment phases. Its operations are managed by the highly successful Darebin Enterprise Centre Ltd (DECL), which has been recognised as a best practice incubator.

The facility has the capacity to accommodate up to 12 client businesses and provides critical services such as financial management, clerical services, marketing planning, networking opportunities and legal/governance knowledge.

According to the last Census, the City of Darebin has one of the highest concentrations of artists and creative practitioners in the country. A previous



study by the local council found that affordable space was a big barrier to the success of creative businesses and this project is addressing that gap.

NMRDA and the City of Darebin were involved throughout the planning stages and are represented on the DECL board.

## RDAF Round 2 open for EOIs

Round 2 of the Australian Government's Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF) is now open for submissions. Valued at \$200million, the program supports Australia's regions and enhances the economic development and liveability of communities.

Projects should have a regional focus and must align with the NMRDA Regional Plan. This plan and RDAF Round 2 Guidelines are both available at [www.rdv.vic.gov.au/nmrda](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/nmrda).

## About NMRDA

The Northern Melbourne Regional Development Australia (NMRDA) Committee is funded by the Australian Government. It builds partnerships between all levels of government, local businesses, community groups and key regional stakeholders to provide strategic and targeted responses to economic, environmental and social issues affecting Melbourne's North.

One of 55 RDA committees across Australia, NMRDA covers the local government areas of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra.

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## NMRDA Strategic Regional Plan – input welcome

The NMRDA Strategic Regional Plan is regularly updated, and we welcome feedback from all our stakeholders. To view our current plan, visit [www.rdv.gov.au/nmrda](http://www.rdv.gov.au/nmrda).



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