



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia



RDA BARWON SOUTH WEST

Achievements

2020-24

February 2024



An Australian Government Initiative



Contact us

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Contents

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that we are on traditional lands, including those lands of the Eastern Maar, Gunditjmara, and Wadawurrung people and Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupgalk Nations as well as other Traditional Owner groups in Victoria who are not formally recognised.

We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, their communities and cultures, the intrinsic connection to Country, the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in developing a prosperous region.

From the Chair	4
Local people creating local opportunities	6
Network activation	8
Geelong City Deal	10
Tourism and the visitor economy	12
Agriculture and food	14
Advanced manufacturing	16
Renewable energy	18
Workforce strength	20
Transport and logistics	22
Aboriginal self-determination	24
The RDA Barwon South West Committee	26
How to get involved	27
Contact us	28

EARLIER ACHIEVEMENTS

Early planning for the highly successful **GROW G21 Region Opportunities for Work** project, that was subsequently repeated in five other regions of Victoria.

The **Avalon Airport Master Plan**, which resulted in the recognition of Victoria's second international airport, and the continued advocacy to the Australian Government to enable international air travel.

The establishment of the **Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority**, a long-standing RDA BSW priority to simplify the previously complex and fragmented Great Ocean Road management arrangements.

Implementation of the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan and ensuring the region saw the benefit in including the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan in the Geelong City Deal.

Securing **\$370 million for the Geelong City Deal**, a ten year investment framework and partnership across three levels of government, with the investment now at over half a billion dollars.

From the Chair

The RDA Barwon South West Committee proudly contributes to the prosperity, livability and sustainability of Victoria's South West

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a national network of committees made up of local leaders who work across government, business and community to support economic development.

In Victoria, there are six RDA Committees covering all areas of the state. The network shares information and collaborates to develop innovations and solutions that can be adapted across Victoria and Australia.

In the Barwon South West region, we are fortunate to have committee members who are passionate and dedicated local leaders. They bring a broad range of experiences from local government, the private sector, the community and not-for-profit sectors to support and advocate for our local industry, businesses, and communities.

Our focus areas are long-term and aim to diversify and strengthen our economic foundations by leveraging the region's comparative advantages and latent potential.

Over the past three years, RDA Barwon South West has delivered great outcomes by helping our industries adapt to changing business environments and consumer demands.

We have collaborated to address growth barriers such as workforce and skills shortages, housing supply and infrastructure gaps to realise opportunities in advanced manufacturing, high-value agriculture, sustainable and cultural tourism, green hydrogen and renewable energy.

On behalf of the past and current members of the RDA Barwon South West Committee, I am proud to present this account of our recent achievements. The outcomes demonstrate that with a unified purpose and voice, great things can be achieved. We look forward to continuing the journey together.



Liz Price
Chair, RDA Barwon South West



\$914.8m

IN BUSINESS INVESTMENT

1074

NEW REGIONAL JOBS

\$57.4m

IN EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES

2020 – 2023



Local people creating local opportunities

We connect business, industry and community organisations to local, state and national government support and investment opportunities in our region

RDA Barwon South West collaborate with all levels of government, regional leaders and businesses to identify opportunities for leveraging Australian Government programs that will increase economic activity in our region. We work closely with proponents whose projects align with our objectives and, where possible, advocate for fast-tracked approval and delivery of projects.

Our strategic priorities are informed by evidence and information including the Regional Economic Development Strategies of the **Barwon and Great South Coast Regional Partnerships**.

We collaborate with regional leaders to seek input on submissions and advice provided to the Australian Government. We have strong working relationships with local government leaders and participate in working groups involving local stakeholders, including those featured on this page.

Our long-term strategic focus areas reflect the region's comparative advantages to drive economic growth:

- Add value and diversify within the agri-food supply chain** - diversify agricultural commodities and invest in advanced manufacturing capabilities.
- Accelerate the transition to new and high-value manufacturing opportunities** - build capabilities and leverage supply chains to drive new opportunities.
- Realise the potential of our visitor economy** - leverage our region's world-renowned natural and cultural assets to build high-value economic return.
- Grow and equip the workforce to enable future economic opportunities** - build a strong pipeline of skilled people to meet industry demand.
- Switch on Clean Energy and Green Collar Jobs** - demonstrate clean energy applications for a low emission economy.



IMPROVING LIVES IN VICTORIA'S SOUTH WEST

To achieve our regional ambitions, we also collaborate to address barriers and challenges that are impacting our growth potential.

Key interventions in recent years have included addressing:

- *Affordable housing for key workers*
- *Value-add opportunities in agriculture and raw commodities*
- *Immediate skill and workforce shortages*
- *Digital access and capability gaps*
- *Community education for green hydrogen opportunities*
- *Supply chain interruptions and freight logistics.*

Network Activation

Information, evidence,
connections and opportunity



*Ministers McBain and Tierney
at ManuFutures*



*RDA Barwon South West Committee meeting
at Avalon Airport*



THE ISSUES

The Barwon South West is renowned for the strength of its **collaborative network** of government, community and industry organisations.

With nine independent local councils, two regional alliances, two Regional Partnerships and a diversity of peak industry bodies and authorities all contributing, a common evidence base and collaboration mechanisms were required to **reduce duplication** of effort and improve **consistency of messaging** and **advocacy outcomes**.



THE APPROACH

RDA Barwon South West acts as **a conduit across government, industry and the community** to support the sustainable growth of the region. As **real-time advisers** to the Australian Government on critical local issues, opportunities and challenges, we provide advice that informs **government policy**, regional programs, information campaigns and **grant funding** opportunities.

Working closely with the **Barwon and Great South Coast Regional Partnerships**, we identify Australian and Victorian programs and strategies that allow our stakeholder network to address regional priorities in an **informed, efficient and effective** way.



THE OUTCOMES

- **Brown Bag Briefings**
Provided information and coordinated advocacy and messaging on cross-cutting regional priorities.
- **Submissions**
to inform the *Employment White Paper* and the inquiry into *Early Childhood Education and Care*.
- **Networking events** (including the 2023 Avalon Airshow) generated supply chain opportunities in defence, aviation, aerospace and future technology.
- We supported the delivery of **Australian and Victorian government funding programs** to generate transformational and lasting change for our region.



Darryl Mohr & Peter Dorling



Mary-Ann Brown & Anita Rank



Grant Sutherland & Keith Baillie



Elaine Carbines

Geelong City Deal

Revitalising Geelong and unlocking
the potential of the Great Ocean
Road visitor economy





THE ISSUES

Geelong is one of Australia's **fastest-growing cities** – offering attractive lifestyle choices, job opportunities in new and growing industries, and the chance to be part of a vibrant community with an exciting future.

Geelong is the gateway to the Shipwreck Coast and Great Ocean Road, and its diverse natural beauty attracts **over five million tourists** each year.

Significant infrastructure and facility gaps were making it difficult to capitalise on the economic potential of the visitor economy and were hampering the successful transition to a **diversified and thriving economy**.



THE APPROACH

Working in collaboration with stakeholders from Geelong and the Great Ocean Road region, RDA Barwon South West campaigned for a Geelong City Deal to facilitate **new private investment** that would allow the region to benefit from its natural assets and encourage visitors to spend more time in the region.

The Geelong City Deal capitalises on the significant growth and economic transformation taking place in the city. It supports the region's **economic diversification** by unlocking the significant economic potential of the visitor economy, a revitalised city centre and emerging industries. City Deal investment is providing upgrades and planning for **rail, road and air transport infrastructure** across the region.



THE OUTCOMES

- The **Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre** precinct will feature flexible event spaces including a 1000-seat venue, exhibition spaces, meeting rooms and conference facilities. The precinct will also be home to retail spaces, a large public plaza and a 200-room Crowne Plaza hotel. It is anticipated that the precinct will generate millions in economic benefit to the region.
- Redevelopment of the **Queenscliff Ferry Terminal** has improved customer experience and opportunities for retail such as cafés and tourism ventures.
- The delivery of several major **Revitalising Central Geelong** projects is drawing more locals and visitors to central Geelong.



Redevelopment of Queenscliff Ferry Terminal



Wave attenuator, Geelong Waterfront

Tourism & Visitor Economy

Increasing sustainability
and visitor yield



Twelve Apostles Visitor Experience Centre



THE ISSUES

The Great Ocean Road visitor economy has experienced **sustained and significant growth** over the past 30 years, but has significantly **under delivered in-region yield**, and resulted in visitor congestion and **poor visitor experience**, especially at the Twelve Apostles.

On top of this, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the region's visitor economy. To recover and build a more resilient visitor economy, we must **address socio-economic, environmental and cultural tourism challenges**.



THE APPROACH

Realise the potential of our visitor economy and **build high-value economic return** by enabling self-determined **Traditional Owner opportunities**, encouraging private sector investment and improving visitor experience.

Provide regional COVID-19 recovery **advice to government** on interventions required to support tourism, events, hospitality, arts, entertainment and retail sectors.

Leverage the investment in the Geelong City Deal to **drive private sector investment** in high-value tourism and cultural tourism opportunities.



THE OUTCOMES

- Planning for delivery of the Geelong City Deal's investment along the Great Ocean Road and Shipwreck Coast regions including the **Twelve Apostles Precinct Redevelopment**, which will encourage visitors to spend more time and money in the region, while also protecting the environment and cultural history at this spectacular location.
- We helped eleven regional businesses to secure a total of **\$18.7 million** of funding through the Regional Tourism Investment Fund and Enabling Tourism Fund.
- We helped to facilitate **regulatory approval pathways** with DEECA to connect stakeholders with **geothermal investment opportunities** in the region.



Agriculture & Food

Unlocking value in the
Great South Coast





THE ISSUES

Barwon South West is one of Australia's most productive food and fibre regions, generating more than **\$2.4 billion** in annual output. The region produces **over a third of Victoria's milk volume, 15.3% of Victoria's beef, 23.9% of Victoria's lamb**, nearly **20% of Australia's timber** and contributes **22% of the nation's dairy export value**.

However, a substantial portion of the region's food and fibre output is **traded in its raw unprocessed form**, representing a missed opportunity to **add value, improve self-sufficiency and sovereign manufacturing capabilities**.



THE APPROACH

Encourage a **strategic shift** towards **higher-value production** to ensure sustained **profitability** and long-term **sustainability** in the face of growing **global competition**.

RDA Barwon South West led a consultation project on *Unlocking Value in the Great South Coast* to determine the **appetite to support higher-value growth** across dairy, (red) meat, and timber sectors.

Industry consultations were undertaken with dairy, (red) meat and timber products industry stakeholders as well as local and regional government personnel.



THE OUTCOMES

- We found businesses in dairy, (red) meat, and timber sectors are **keen to invest in value addition**. The study also identified sector-specific stages of value addition, pinpointed barriers, highlighted potential catalysts, and provided **actionable pathways for growth**.
- We progressed work to improve **economic diversity**, high-value economic outcomes, and **workforce participation** by collaborating with the Great South Coast **Economic Futures** and **Social Futures** Project Steering Groups.



A woman with brown hair, wearing safety glasses and a white lab coat, is focused on her work. She is using a red-handled tool to shape a translucent, curved material. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

Advanced Manufacturing

Building capability and leveraging supply chains

Specialising in the manufacture of food products, construction materials, chemicals and plastics, oil refining, carbon fibre products and industrial structures, the Barwon South West region benefits from collaborative partnerships with local research and education institutions, particularly Deakin University.

The strength of the region's education assets and research institutions has enabled the innovation ecosystem to attract skilled workers to the region. The establishment of the Advanced Fibre Cluster Geelong through Carbon Nexus, the Hycel Technology Hub and Deakin University's ManuFutures Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Hub are examples of world-class research and commercialisation initiatives.



THE ISSUES

We must **address growth challenges** for advanced manufacturing businesses including comparatively **high labour and energy costs**, distance to global markets, limited domestic demand, international trade issues, **technological adoption barriers** and **workforce skill gaps**.



THE APPROACH

Facilitate **collaboration** between industry, government and educational institutions to **foster innovation, improve infrastructure**, and enhance global competitiveness.

Provide evidence and information to encourage **investment**, develop **partnerships** and influence **policy** that enhance the region's **innovation culture and reputation**.

Promote the region's advanced manufacturing capabilities, facilities, supply chains and achievements to local, national and international stakeholders and investors.



THE OUTCOMES

- Three local businesses were finalists in the **2023 Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Awards**.
- Supported the **ManuFutures** team at Deakin University in the organisation of its **Advanced Manufacturing Showcase** with over 300 attendees.
- Worked with the Victorian Government to support **Hanwha Defence Australia** to deliver Self Propelled Howitzers to the Australian Government from its advanced manufacturing facility at **Avalon Airport**.





Renewable Energy

Powering our future with wind,
green hydrogen and waste recovery



THE ISSUES

Barwon South West is at the forefront of **renewable energy** and **hydrogen mobility research and uptake** in Australia. Regional stakeholders are developing projects to progress **hydrogen heavy vehicle** mobility transition, **offshore wind** and **waste recovery** capabilities that will help to validate Australia's **decarbonisation aspirations**, demonstrate real commitment to **climate change mitigation**, and increase awareness of **globally significant green hydrogen** market benefits and opportunities.



THE APPROACH

RDA Barwon South West is undertaking a project to explore the **potential of hydrogen and other forms of clean energy** by identifying and analysing current, planned, and potential **public and private sector clean energy investments**, their interrelation and added value, and their implications for the region.

This will enable government, industry stakeholders, and the community to make **informed decisions, attract investment**, and support the region's quest for a clean energy future.



THE OUTCOMES

- Advocating to **accelerate hydrogen fuel cell heavy vehicle development and operation** with Hycel and Deakin University.
- Supporting a feasibility study for a **Clean Energy Commercialisation Hub** to take circular economy projects to commercial readiness.
- Early-stage feasibility funded for a **Hydrogen and Green methanol** manufacturing facility in Portland.
- Three **offshore wind** developers commenced pre-feasibility activities and community engagement in 2023.



Hycel Technology Hub at Deakin University, Warrnambool



Barwon Water's Regional Renewable Organics Network



Workforce strength

Housing, accommodation and training
to attract and retain a skilled workforce





THE ISSUES

Excellent lifestyle, education and employment opportunities are attracting more and more people to South West Victoria. It is the **fastest-growing region** in Victoria.

This rapid population growth is putting pressure on accommodation markets. We are unable to realise forecast **economic growth** in several key sectors, due to a **critical shortage** of affordable **housing for workers**.



FormFlow relocatable housing



THE APPROACH

RDA Barwon South West works with all levels of government to address workforce shortages. We provide evidence to government, support regional skills development, education and industry collaboration, and successfully advocated for a Designated Area Migration Agreement to help address workforce shortages.

We also made submissions to the *'Inquiry into Housing Affordability and Supply in Australia'* and *'Jobs and Skills Summit Employment White Paper'*, facilitated roundtable discussions and attended a regional hearing to provide further advice on this critical issue.

With funding provided by RDA Barwon South West, Moyne Shire Council led a project on behalf of seven LGA's to **progress the recommendations** of the *Barwon South West Key Worker Housing Action Plan*.



THE OUTCOMES

Our advocacy helped to secure Victorian Government funding for:

- The Anglesea Community Health Precinct which should provide **housing for up to 30 key workers**.
- Corangamite Shire Council to **unlock 140 housing lots** to support agriculture and tourism.
- Moyne Shire Council to install **five new cabins** at Koroit Caravan Park for key workers in construction, agriculture and hospitality.
- Geelong-based manufacturer **FormFlow** to transform an unused Portland airport hangar into a housing manufacturing facility. The **\$2.35 million** facility could produce up to **200 relocatable houses a year** for the Glenelg Shire and surrounding regions. The project will create **50 full time jobs** and an estimated **150 indirect jobs**. Once complete, it will establish a **new industry for the Portland district**.

Our advocacy efforts also helped to establish the **Regional Worker Accommodation Fund** to address worker accommodation shortages across the state.



Transport & Logistics

**A transformational opportunity
for the Barwon South West**

The relocation of the Spirit of Tasmania to Geelong represents a transformational opportunity for the Barwon South West region. Through collaborative efforts with key industry partners, RDA Barwon South West has identified significant potential for growth in the Visitor Economy, Food and Fibre, and the Transport and Logistics sectors.

By advocating for key recommendations and strengthening partnerships with RDA Tasmania, we are committed to realising these opportunities and driving sustainable growth across both regions.



THE ISSUES

The Barwon South West region has **nationally significant transport infrastructure**, including the Princes Highway and associated freight road networks, two deep water ports, and an international airport.

Spirit of Tasmania relocated to Corio Quay in 2022, creating **tourism and business growth** opportunities for the **hospitality, agribusiness, and logistics industries** in Geelong, regional Victoria and Melbourne.

RDA Barwon South West wanted to better understand the economic opportunity in the **transport and logistics** sector including the potential for **exporting food and fibre products to Tasmania**.



THE APPROACH

Building on the outcomes from a previous study that explored potential impacts and opportunities from a tourism perspective, the *Spirit of Tasmania Impact and Opportunity Study* sought to **identify opportunities** for supporting inbound **freight from Tasmania** as well as **outbound freight from across the Barwon South West**.

The study identified **immediate business opportunities** associated with freight handling, cold storage capability, capacity increase when new ferries arrive in 2024, and development of a logistics precinct with an **intermodal framework** for sea, air, road and potentially rail.



THE OUTCOMES

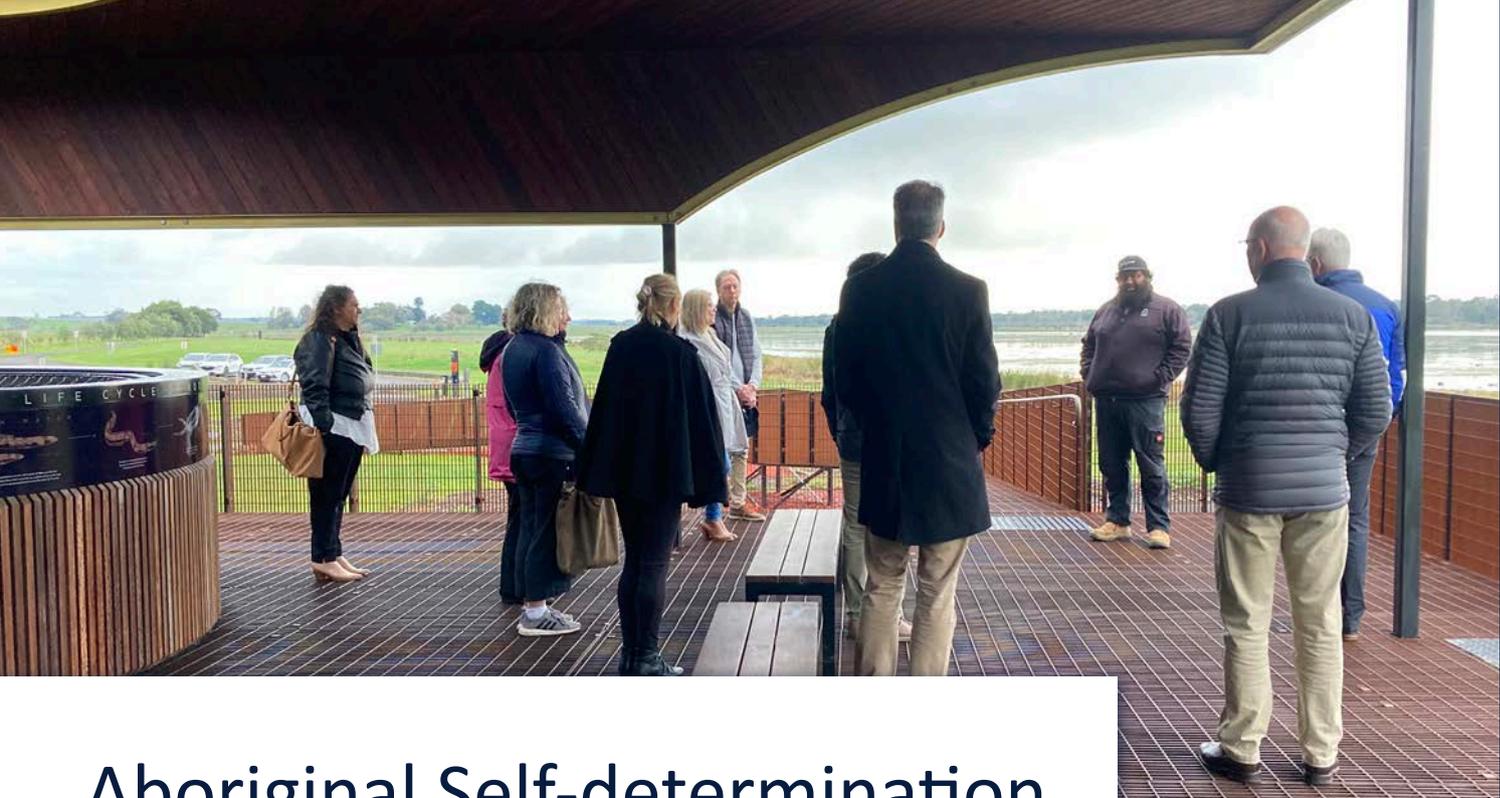
RDA Barwon South West is now working with **RDA Tasmania** and relevant stakeholders to advance opportunities in the **Visitor Economy, Food and Fibre** and the **Transport and Logistics** sectors by:

- **Advocating** for and **facilitating recommendations** from the *Spirit of Tasmania Impact and Opportunity Study*.
- Coordinating opportunities for **freight forwarding and logistics hubs** in Geelong as larger ferries commence operations in 2024.
- Supporting the associated **tourism boards** to develop and promote joined-up **visitor experiences**.



Spirit of Tasmania Quay, North Geelong





Aboriginal Self-determination

Listening and learning to enable economic opportunities for Traditional Owners

The lands and waters of the **Eastern Maar, Gunditjmara** and **Wadawurrung** people are home to the Great Ocean Road and Shipwreck Coast, the Surf Coast, the Otways, the Grampians, the Bellarine and Victoria's largest regional city, Geelong.

With rich agricultural land and **UNESCO**-listed Aboriginal cultural sites, we must leverage our competitive advantages to

ensure our significant population and economic growth is equitable, inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We seek to learn more from our traditional owner groups to protect and preserve Country and to support Aboriginal self-determination efforts.





THE ISSUES

Renewed Victorian and Australian Government commitment to *Closing the Gap* and support for initiatives that enable Aboriginal self-determination.

The **unique cultural heritage** of the Traditional Owner groups of the Barwon South West is acknowledged in the Victorian Government's *Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS)* and identified as an opportunity for **economic diversification and growth**.

Traditional knowledge of Country should be harnessed for the betterment of those living on, prospering from or enjoying its land, waterways and coastal areas.



THE APPROACH

Engage with the region's Traditional Owner groups to help meet the needs of, and provide opportunities for, First Nations people.

Support the self-determination activities of the **Eastern Maar, Gunditjmara and Wadawurrung** Aboriginal Corporations by **listening, and learning** about culture, heritage and Country and acknowledging its importance in our region's past, present and future.

Ensure that Traditional Owner goals and principles of **economic independence** are considered in decisions and activities of the RDA Barwon South West Committee.



THE OUTCOMES

- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners funded to **advise and influence** the scope, design principles and outputs of the **Revitalising Central Geelong** projects.
- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation funded to inform the **Shipwreck Coast** and **Twelve Apostles Precinct** projects.
- Cultural tours of **Kurtonitj Indigenous Protected Area** and **Budj Bim National Park** and meetings with traditional owners have **strengthen relationships** and provided insight into effective **collaboration opportunities**.



RDA Barwon South West team enjoy cultural tours of Kurtonitj Indigenous Protected Area and Budj Bim National Park

The RDA Barwon South West Committee



Liz Price
Chair



Grant Sutherland
Deputy Chair



Keith Baillie



Mary-Ann Brown



Peter Dorling



Anne Howard



Alison McLeod



Darryl Mohr



Clive Pugh



David Spear



Brett Ince
*Director, Regional
Development*



Meg Bullen
*Manager, Strategy
Development and
Regional Planning*



Nada Malinac
*RDA Coordinator,
Barwon South West*

RDA Barwon South West committee members are selected for their business expertise in the region's key economic areas. The team has global, national and local experience in advanced manufacturing, digital capability, agriculture, education, tourism and energy. The executive support team highlights competitive advantages and encourages relocation and investment opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT TEAM



GET INVOLVED!

RDA Barwon South West brings government, industry and community together to improve economic diversity and opportunity in Victoria's South West. We enable the sharing of evidence and information with all levels of government, and facilitate connections across the region, state and nation to progress our region's economic priorities.

Connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) or [email](#) to join a powerful network of people dedicated to influencing sustainable growth in Barwon South West.



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