

4 November 2016



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Dear Mr Smith

### **RDA Independent Review**

Regional Development Australia Barwon South West (RDA BSW) Committee welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Independent Review of the Regional Development Australia (RDA) programme.

We understand that the Independent Review will examine the effectiveness of the RDA programme in delivering the Australian Government's regional agenda and will make recommendations regarding its future scope, structure and delivery model.

RDA BSW strongly supports the current RDA model in Victoria where the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments work together to deliver the Victorian RDA programme. This provides a practical and efficient approach that has led to tangible outcomes for the Barwon South West region, local government authorities within the region, and the Victorian and Commonwealth governments.

RDA BSW believes there is an opportunity to strengthen the model to ensure better outcomes for regional Australia, and better use of Commonwealth resources, as outlined in the Key Recommendations section of the attached submission.

If you have any enquiries about this submission, the RDA BSW Committee would welcome an opportunity to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Anson".

Bruce Anson

**Chair**

**Barwon South West Regional Development Australia Committee**



An Australian Government Initiative



**Regional Development Australia Barwon South West  
submission in response to the Independent Review of  
the effectiveness and future scope of the Regional  
Development Australia programme**

4 November 2016



# Contents

1. Key Recommendations	3
2. Regional context	3
3. How the RDA BSW Committee Works	4
4. Collaboration	5
5. Core Responsibilities and Mission	5
6. RDA BSW Mission	6
7. Underpinning Principles	8
8. Recommendations on role clarification for government	9
9. Conclusion	10
10. Appendix 1 – Detailed response to the Independent Review criteria	11

# 1. Key Recommendations

Regional Development Australia Barwon South West Committee (RDA BSW) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Independent Review of the Regional Development Australia (RDA) programme.

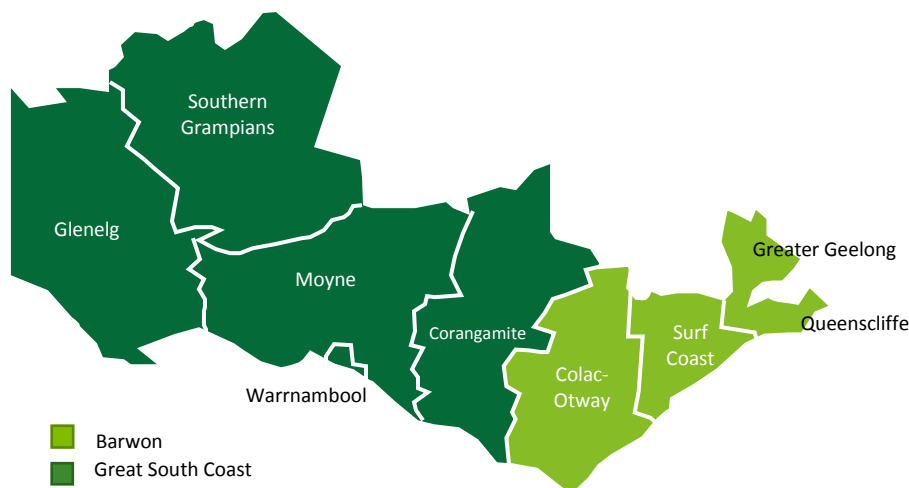
RDA BSW strongly supports the current RDA model in Victoria and acknowledges the benefit of collaborating across the two levels of government. RDA BSW believes there is an opportunity to strengthen the model to ensure better outcomes for regional Australia, and better use of Commonwealth resources.

RDA BSW would like to submit the following recommendations to be considered as part of the review:

1. A stronger link and opportunity to inform the Federal Government’s policy and decision making framework is required.
2. There is a need to determine a measurable outcomes approach that aligns with all levels of government.
3. Role clarification is essential to enable effective collaboration. Proposed delineation of roles and responsibilities should help minimise any duplication of activities between different levels of government.
4. RDA to be involved in funding planning ie. reporting on regional priorities.
5. Open collection/access of data will allow all three levels of government to share and use the outputs.

# 2. Regional context

The RDA BSW region is made up of the area from Queesncliff to the South Australian border and includes two state regions (Barwon and Great South Coast) and nine local government areas, as shown below:



Within this context it is important to note that the RDA region is at many times for different reasons best considered as being made up of the two sub-regions (Barwon and GSC), rather than defaulting to an aggregation. This is the overwhelming view of stakeholders, repeated throughout the consultation for this submission and in many different contexts. Whilst there are some occasions where aggregation is useful, it more often than not distorts the reality of the region by distorting data or not allowing the full picture to be easily understood.

The RDA BSW regional context is unique in Victoria and, indeed, Australia. Within the region is Victoria’s second biggest city, Geelong, which has a strong sense of identity and is experiencing population growth more than most other regional cities in Australia, despite the regional economy having to transition as a result of globalisation. The region also includes regional and rural towns that experience:

- Significant diversity in standards for prosperity throughout the region with some areas of significant, and long term socio-economic disadvantage with the inherent health and social problems that are tightly coupled to the economic reality.
- Real challenges facing all levels of government and business in terms of accessing funding and building and maintain infrastructure.

The region has a strong collaborative nature across the three levels of government and values this as the key to success. There is an increasing willingness from business and industry to be more involved and active in shaping the region’s future.

### 3. How the RDA BSW Committee Works

The Committee is made up of 11 members drawn from across the region and currently includes:

<b>Bruce Anson, Chair</b>	<b>Peter Dorling, Deputy Chair</b>	<b>Elaine Carbines</b>
<b>Ruth Gstrein</b>	<b>Andrew Westlake</b>	<b>Dr Kaye Scholfield</b>
<b>Grant Sutherland</b>	<b>Sue Wilkinson</b>	<b>Darryl Mohr</b>
<b>Carolyn Woods</b>	<b>Anita Rank</b>	

The Victorian Government strongly supports the Regional Development Australia (RDA) program in Victoria. A structured, formal, efficient and practical collaboration between the Australian and Victorian Governments provides for the embedding of the RDA Committees within the Victorian Government.

RDA BSW has two officers embedded in the Regional Development Victoria (RDV) offices. These officers undertake secretariat, project management and funding application work on behalf of the RDA committee. This approach enables greater information sharing, integration and access to state government resources. Under this model RDA BSW Committee has:

1. Provided policy and program advice to the Victorian Government (e.g. Regional Policy Advisory Committee);
2. Led work on regional development funding applications (e.g. Regional Development Australia Fund, National Stronger Regions Fund);
3. Developed work that contributes to regions’ economic evidence base; and
4. Developed tools to enable regions to prioritise a large, disparate number of projects into a smaller number of projects with the potential to deliver the broadest economic benefits.

This integrated, practical and efficient approach has led to tangible outcomes for Barwon South West region, for the local government authorities within region, and the Victorian and Australian Governments.

## 4. Collaboration

Achieving shared objectives in growing regional prosperity such as employment tackling disadvantage, population ageing, building digital and physical infrastructure, requires an integrated approach between the three levels of government and across government portfolios; and also one which engages business and community groups.

With effect this year, the RDA BSW is in the fortunate position of being able to engage with and leverage the Victorian Government's Regional Partnerships model, which is a new approach to priority-setting in regional Victoria. They differ from previous approaches with a much stronger emphasis on direct community input, driven by place based planning with a pathway straight into Victorian Government through the Rural and Regional a Sub-Committee of Cabinet.

An RDA representative has been appointed on each Regional Partnerships along with community and business representatives, and local government representatives. This presents a clear opportunity for RDA Committees to connect the Commonwealth Government's regional agenda with the other two tiers of government.

More importantly, it allows the RDA to optimise alignment with Australian Government policy objectives.

## 5. Core Responsibilities and Mission

Like other RDA Committee's, RDA BSW Committees core responsibilities are:

- To be a key facilitator of strategic change and economic, social and environmental development in the region;
- To be the link between government, business and the community; and
- To facilitate whole of government responses to opportunities in the community.

In undertaking these responsibilities, the Committee notes there is no other agency at federal level undertaking this work. RDA BSW also undertakes the responsibility to provide advice back to the Federal government on Federal issues that impact the region (visas, telecommunication, etc).

The RDA BSW has invested time and effort in considering how to be most effective in executing these responsibilities. That is, how to make an optimal contribution within limited time, budgets and consistent with both its responsibilities and creating synergies with other government agencies at all levels, business and community groups.

RDA BSW sees it has a unique opportunity to make a long term and substantial contribution to building regional prosperity in the region<sup>1</sup>. It needs to do so by leading and enabling collaboration and focussing

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<sup>1</sup> Regional prosperity is defined as:

- a. A condition where the economic (material standards, wealth, jobs, opportunities for growth) and social (sense of care for community, healthy, safety and security) elements of prosperity are fully meeting the expectations of the people.
- b. A state of play where both individuals and businesses can enjoy successful, flourishing, or thriving conditions driven by cohesion and collaboration between all levels of government; that only serves to advantage the region's pursuit of success (both economic and social).

effort consistent with the broader regional prosperity and economic development architecture already in place at all levels of government, and within business and the broader community.

Earlier this year RDA BSW undertook work to identify the requisites required to truly understand, measure and grow regional prosperity using a collaborative approach. This involved significant stakeholder consultation (workshops, interviews and surveys with key leaders all levels of government and business and community) in considering this challenge, the need for collaboration, the barriers to it happening, and the range of solutions to overcoming those barriers.

This work resulted in number of key recommendations which are aligned to and inform the Independent Review themes and provide a stronger focus for the RDA’s roles and responsibilities going forward. Most importantly the work has helped RDA BSW determine a clear mission statement to ensure it can execute its assigned roles, collaboratively, purposefully and efficiently.

## 6. RDA BSW Mission

The RDA BSW Region Committee will execute its core responsibilities in a collaborative, practical and efficient way by:

1. Enabling and encouraging regional prosperity, monitoring progress in key areas;
2. Leveraging regional advantages and build sector strengths;
3. Promote regional capabilities/investment opportunities;
4. Support increase in exports/greater Asian presence; and
5. Reduce barriers to job/economic growth i.e. infrastructure development, policy alignment.

### ***Mission Element 1: Enabling and encouraging regional prosperity, monitoring progress in key areas***

RDA needs to have the focus on the big picture as others by nature of their role / purpose don’t. Key activities are:

- Enabling place based planning mindful of Federal and Victorian government imperatives and opportunities;
- Monitoring and reporting progress on regional prosperity, in a similar way that NAPLAN at a Federal level monitors education outcomes; and
- Enablement for other agencies.

This mission must also include working with federal politicians and agencies to help inform, educate and influence federal initiatives that address elements of regional prosperity i.e. NBN, visas, population, generational and entrenched disadvantage.

### ***Mission Element 2: Leverage regional advantages and build sector strengths***

- Working with business, communities and other government to maintain a consistent focus over time on those sectors and subsectors that have advantage within the region.
- Seek to harness the strengths at a sub-regional and community level.

Aggregation is not always possible – we must accept that every region of Barwon South West is different. In fact, whilst Great South Coast has geographical coastal alignment and commercial flows in common or shared with Barwon, there are far more differences.

As such, it is important to help create a shared vision for both sub-regions as well as use common ground driven by related issues. The key to implementation and taking advantage is down to the following factors:

- Synched relationships between three government levels;
- Private sector investment and enablement; and
- Measurable outcomes.

***Mission Element 3: Promote regional capabilities/investment opportunities***

- Capitalise on and enable private sector investment and partnering.
- Provide opportunities to build capacity at community level.

In doing so, the RDA should aim to understand and add value to work being done in great detail at other levels of government (see the section below on Roles)

***Mission Element 4: Support increase in exports/greater Asian presence***

Significant activity is occurring at all levels of government and by many different businesses.

Support here means a number of things:

- Helping provide visibility of the opportunities for business within the regions, as well as opportunities for our businesses to engage with Asian businesses to create the essential private sector connections;
- Enablement also means synergies – what is going on in one part of the region might well be able to benefit other parts, if it is communicated and encouraged;
- It also means encouraging governments to provide the enabling infrastructure – NBN, visas – as well as physical infrastructure; and
- It is also the education role – helping the region understand the challenges and risks, and overcome the barriers to export.

***Mission Element 5: Reduce barriers to job/economic growth i.e. infrastructure development, policy alignment***

- Foster the required skills and knowledge and improved availability of skills;
- Place based planning as above;
- Improved linkages between industry and policy makers; and
- Coordination and measurement of outcomes.

In doing so, the RDA should provide the facilitation of collaboration in the region to allow a consistent, agreed and documented agenda for informing government and business at all levels.



## 7. Underpinning Principles

The RDA BSW Committee, based on its recent thorough consultation, will be guided by the following key principles and encourage their adoption throughout the region as the evolved paradigm for collaboration for regional prosperity:

- 1. Regional prosperity is what matters:** A focus on prosperity rather than economic development. This is not to say that economic activity is unimportant, simply that it is not sufficient to derive whether or not people will come to or remain in a place. Regional prosperity is what attracts and retains business and enables thriving community groups. No government agency currently looks at the region from this lens, and so this is a key opportunity for the RDA.
- 2. Place based planning:** We understand that there are significant differences between and within communities in terms of the demographic characteristics of families, their needs, and their priorities. Stakeholders at all levels are of the view that it makes sense that priorities, policy frameworks and services in one community may not be the most appropriate for all of the others. Place-based planning requires good and rich data used for the purpose, a willingness to work closely in partnership, thoughtful financial planning and accountability and high quality, local leadership. Most importantly it requires that federal and state agencies to work outside their silos and accept that communities prosper when they are deeply engaged in their own planning, and invest in enabling this. This practical, real world approach is widely shared by the stakeholders within the region.
- 3. Optimising Federation:** Application of the federation approach as it applies to many areas of life to building regional prosperity. In the same way that the Federal Government Department of Education sets standards and policies, and measures progress but does not run schools, we see the role of the RDA to help establish and monitor progress towards regional prosperity rather than have a project based approach.
- 4. Valuing enablement and leadership:** In the past, successful projects have been seen by many as the key to success. In the future, enablement and leadership are key to place based planning, reducing complexity and achieving collective impact. Collective impact, as has been the region's own experience, provides a framework for facilitating and achieving large scale social change within an area or region. This model brings cross-sector and cross agency organisations together to focus on a common agenda that result in long-lasting change. Included in this must be business.
- 5. Engaging, informing and educating role:** our experience is that the engaging, informing and educating role in developing our region is best done by the relevant level of Government. By taking this approach we minimise the politics and optimise the ability to engage on appropriate bigger agendas. In this principle, local government engages community, the State Regional Partnership Forums and RDV engage State Government (and its agencies) and RDA engages Federal Government (and its agencies). This principle relies on, but also underpins, our collaborative and transparent approach.
- 6. Respect for the region's reality:** the RDA region is in reality many communities and a number of sub regions. Aggregation is not always possible, practical or desirable, and it may well be that for the RDA in different arenas, it needs to communicate and educate the reality of the region, rather than simplify to meet the needs of others.

## 8. Recommendations on role clarification for government

The RDA BSW sees that underpinning effective and efficient delivery of planning and initiatives for regional prosperity, there needs to be a trialling and application of enhanced role clarity between government agencies. The table below is being developed collaboratively by the RDA BSW to trial in the region, noting that this role clarification addresses only government agencies not business or community groups' roles. RDA BSW is already committed over the next three months to further engaging government agencies at state and local level to trial the following roles and responsibilities related to regional prosperity:

	LGA	STATE / RDV	RDA
<b>Economic development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on economic enablement and leading place based planning</li> <li>Foster / auspice the business groups to enable business participation rather than seek to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead engagement with business on opportunities, projects and specific investment</li> <li>Provide the one stop shop for business to engage with government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimising the environment for business by influencing and shaping federal policies and infrastructure planning</li> <li>Funding planning rather than picking projects</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring regional prosperity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect and contribute data</li> <li>Include as key element of community engagement agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect and contribute data</li> <li>Include as key element of Regional Partnership Forum Agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable the data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination ("NAPLAN" approach)</li> </ul>
<b>Place based planning and community engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead, plan and conduct</li> <li>Provide findings to RDV and RDA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support LGAs and inform the subject matter of some consultations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support LGAs and inform the subject matter of some consultations</li> </ul>
<b>Data and knowledge sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designated and communicated role at each LGA, at RDV, within the Regional Partnerships Secretariats and RDA Secretariat which is accountable for data and knowledge sharing on regional prosperity.</li> <li>All agencies commit to sharing reporting and data, and seek to co-commission reports, studies and data sharing across all three levels of government so as to allow all three levels to share and use the outputs</li> </ul>		
<b>Selection and targeting of projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform RDV / State</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritise through Regional Partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform RDV / State</li> <li>Focus where possible Federal effort on the catalytic projects identified at RDV / State level or those areas uniquely Federal ( i.e. telecommunications)</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement, informing and educating leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local communities and community groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Government, its representatives and agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal Government, its representatives and agencies</li> </ul>
<b>Private sector investment attraction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enablement – making it as simple and easy</li> <li>Prioritise simple, streamlined statutory planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish connections between prospective investors and with the necessary government agencies (at all levels) and business groups to help companies locate and expand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence Federal Government to attract investment and provide the funding for infrastructure</li> <li>Influence Federal policy issues to better enable private investment</li> </ul>
<b>Skilling and creating employment opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on economic enablement and leading place based planning</li> <li>Foster / auspice the business groups to enable business participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and support where possible catalytic projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the vehicle for coordination and optimise investment</li> </ul>

## 9. Conclusion

The collaboration between the Victorian and Australian government to deliver the Regional Development Australia program provides for a practical and efficient approach that has led to tangible outcomes in the Barwon South West region.

Regional prosperity is what attracts and retains business and enables thriving community. Achieving our shared objectives in regional development such as growing jobs and tackling disadvantage requires an integrated approach between the three levels of government and across government portfolios.

With the recent introduction of the Victorian Government's Regional Partnerships there lies a clear opportunity to better enable collaboration between the three levels of government and to optimise alignment with Australian Government policy objectives.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the model to ensure better outcomes for regional Australia, and better use of Commonwealth resources. RDA BSW believes that the Mission and the clarification of roles and responsibilities will result in a more effective and efficient RDA contribution to regional prosperity. To further enhance the RDA contribution, an outcomes approach with a clearer direction from the federal government around the RDA's role and stronger links between the RDA and the federal government would enable a better whole of government response.

## 10. Appendix 1 – Detailed response to the Independent Review criteria

### 1. Alignment with the Australian Government policy objectives (including the smaller government agenda) now and into the future. This will include consideration of:

- a. Whether the current RDA programme framework is appropriate for delivery of the Australian Government's regional agenda, considering new initiatives; state and territory regional policy agendas; and implementation mechanisms and changes to regional programmes.

A stronger link and opportunity to inform the Federal Government's policy and decision making framework is required. The Mission and Principles will enable the RDA committee to align with the Australian Government policy objectives (Section 4)

### 2. The RDA programme framework, including the:

- a. value of RDA Committees' outputs and measures of success;

There is a need to determine measurable outcomes that align with all levels of government. This will leverage regional advantages and build sector strengths (Section 4 - Mission Element 2)

- b. purpose and structure of the Chairs Reference Group;

This provides an appropriate and practical means to provide advice direct to Government at the appropriately senior level

- c. funding model/formula for the programme (including historic and future allocations, state co-funding and potential collaborative arrangements);

RDA to be involved in funding planning rather than picking projects (Section 6 – Economic Development)

- d. number of RDAs and their boundaries (including processes to alter them, and whether capital cities and external territories should be included);

Aggregation is not always possible or beneficial. Need to acknowledge differences, understand common ground and support place based planning. (Section 4 – Mission Element 2)

- e. desire to minimise any duplication of activities between other bodies in states and territories (including Joint/Regional Organisations of Councils, Regional Development Commissions, etc.); and

Role clarification is essential to enable collaboration. Proposed delineation of roles and responsibilities should help minimise any duplication of activities between different levels of government (Section 6)

**f. RDA Committees' role in both promoting access to programmes and assisting proponents to develop proposals.**

RDA to play a more enabling role and monitor projects only. Development and implementation to be completed by local stakeholders and agencies (Section 6)

**3. The governance and administration of the programme, including:**

**a. whether RDA Committees can manage their internal governance appropriately within the current structure;**

More refined and clarified roles and responsibilities for each level of government will only increase safeguards for appropriate internal governance (Section 6).

**b. whether appointment processes are appointing appropriately skilled committee members;**

These processes are now effective and efficient.

**c. RDA Committee membership and appointment arrangements, with a focus on simplifying the administrative processes involved in appointing RDA members;**

The Chair and Deputy Chair's role in committee appointments was well received and overall beneficial. Improvement in finalising appointments needs to be better administered within a quicker timeframe.

**d. How government can best support and administer the RDA programme, including evaluation processes, data collection and staff resourcing; and**

Open collection/access of data will allow all three levels of government to share and use the outputs (Section 6 – Data and knowledge sharing).

**e. Any other opportunities for reducing the administrative burden imposed on RDA Committees and government in delivering the RDA programme.**

These processes are now effective and efficient.