

## **Charter for Stronger Regional Policy**

Three in every 10 South Australians live in a regional community and make a major contribution to South Australia's identity, quality of life and prosperity.

Regional South Australians generate much of our State's wealth, contributing more than \$20 billion towards our economy and producing more than 50 per cent of South Australia's overseas exports.

Collectively, they affect the lives of every South Australian. They work the land to produce our food and drink, they grow and fish for our seafood, they mine for the riches beneath us and they produce products that we sell to the world.

The people that run small regional businesses support the fabric and economy of their local community. They provide jobs, products and services that contribute to the enviable way of life that many country people enjoy.

Many regional citizens volunteer their time to care for the needs of others in their communities, contributing to the strong community spirit that characterises our country towns.

South Australia's country citizens show great resiliency and a can-do attitude, often in the face of challenging conditions, such as drought, floods and bushfires.

But their biggest challenges often come from the sometimes vast distance between where they live and the services they need to grow their businesses and support their families.

It is incumbent upon State Government to recognise the needs and special circumstances of regional South Australians in policy planning for healthcare, education, transport, infrastructure, community services and economic growth.

This must start from a foundation of open and regular discussion with local people about local needs, irrespective of where they live. In this way, we can support regional communities to develop their own visions and lead their own future.

South Australia has always worked best when strong government works with strong business and strong communities. This Charter sets out a commitment to a new way of engaging with regional South Australians.

The State Government will ensure the views of regional South Australians are fully considered in decision-making, helping to deliver on the commitment to govern for all South Australians.

The State Government's commitment to stronger regional policy will be achieved through the actions outlined below.

## **Recognising the importance of the regions**

The State Government will reform Cabinet structures to recognise the importance of regional South Australia. In particular the Cabinet will establish a new Regional South Australia Cabinet Taskforce, to be chaired by the Minister for Regional Development. The taskforce will comprise relevant Ministers and expert advisers from outside government.

## **Listening to the regions**

Regional communities will have more opportunities to discuss their views directly with decision-makers through:

- ❖ Reintroduction of Community Cabinet meetings, with a commitment to three Community Cabinet meetings each year in regional areas of South Australia, to ensure Cabinet as a whole continues to take into account regional perspectives.
- ❖ Taking Parliament to the people through at least one State Parliamentary forum in a regional area once per year.
- ❖ Requiring at least one Minister to spend a day each week in a regional area to ensure regional perspectives are taken into account in their decision-making.
- ❖ Holding at least three Senior Management Council meetings in regions each year. In addition, all Chief Executives will be required to make regular trips to regions.
- ❖ Developing an interactive portal connected to the SAGov website to engage with regional communities and provide better access to government information on regions.
- ❖ Encouraging the Commonwealth Government to maintain their website [myregion.gov.au](http://myregion.gov.au) which provides region-specific data and information, and is currently being reviewed.
- ❖ A dedicated 'GovChat' program that enables regional South Australians to discuss issues directly with the Premier, Government Ministers and Chief Executives through phone-ins and social media. A response will be provided to issues raised through 'GovChat' within 14 days.

## **Transparent funding for regional South Australia**

To provide greater accountability and transparency regarding the State Government's funding for regional South Australia the government will publish material in its budget papers setting out the funding provided to regional communities, so the community can clearly identify the funding that is provided to regional South Australia.

## **Decision-making to support the regions**

To ensure greater focus on regional South Australia in government decision-making, the State Government will:

- ❖ Realign and increase the capacity of the Olympic Dam Taskforce to have a broader focus on delivering regional development projects. The new Regional Development Projects Taskforce will have access to the State Government's New Jobs Acceleration Fund to provide funding support for projects that meet job creation and economic development criteria.
- ❖ Require Regional Development Australia committees to be consulted on relevant policy development, including infrastructure and service delivery priorities, with an increased State Government funding commitment to RDA.
- ❖ Hold an annual Regional Summit, in conjunction with South Australia's universities, to gain independent, expert advice on regional policy.
- ❖ Commit to make regional development a standing agenda item of the Premier's State/Local Government Forum, which will be held a minimum of three times a year.

## **Listening to the views of young regional South Australians**

Young regional South Australians will have more opportunities to contribute their views through:

- ❖ A scholarship program to support more young people from regional areas to attend the annual Youth Parliament.
- ❖ A new regional student internship program to give students in regional areas opportunities to work within government and experience policy making and Parliamentary processes first-hand.