



10 October 2017

Thank you for your ongoing interest in the Mallee Regional Partnership and our 2017 Regional Assembly which took place in Swan Hill on 29 June 2017.

At that meeting, which was attended by close to 190 people, we committed to keep all in the room, and those who had expressed interest in the Partnership and our community engagement, up to date with developments and abreast of time lines.

The 2017 Mallee Regional Assembly in summary

The 2017 Regional Assembly was the Partnership's second major opportunity to consult with the community.

Not only did we have a wealth of local residents and businesses in the room, our Assembly was also attended by three Victorian Government Ministers: the Minister for Regional Development and Agriculture Jaala Pulford, the Minister for Industry and Employment and Resources Wade Noonan, and the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Local Government Marlene Kairouz.

While our 2016 Assembly was a first chance to explore priorities for the region (which included advocating for better access to services and improving the liveability of our communities), 2017 gave us the chance to dig deeper into these key issues with the help of the community. Discussions at the 2017 Mallee Assembly were focused on six main themes: Education and Training, Food and Water, Health and Wellbeing, Lifestyle and Tourism, Road, Rail and Air, and Small Town Futures.

Some of the key messages coming from the Assembly were as follows:

- The need for better public transport provision across the Mallee, and a greater level of support for existing community transport services;
- The creation of multi-purpose community hubs in small towns is critical in ensuring ongoing local access to services and supporting the long term viability and vitality of smaller settlements;
- A range of cross border issues impact upon the operations of Mallee businesses and complicate infrastructure planning and service delivery;
- Poor quality or non-existent digital connectivity prevents social networking and impacts upon business development and productivity;
- The Mallee tourism 'brand' needs to be strengthened to attract more visitors to the region, and support is required to help hospitality businesses to modernise and improve service levels;
- Better access to a range of healthcare services is required, and better targeted assistance needs to be provided to patients and families who are required to travel long distances for appointments;
- Better housing provision and support services are required to help seasonal workers integrate successfully into regional and rural communities;
- Training opportunities need to be tailored to meet the needs of key employers and regionally-significant sectors.

A graphical snapshot of the 2017 Mallee Regional Assembly is also attached.



Next steps

As a Partnership, we will take the key messages and learnings from our 2017 Assembly and present them to the Rural and Regional Ministerial Committee.

Since presenting our 2016 Regional Priorities to the Committee, the Mallee Regional Partnership members are pleased that a number of our regional priorities were supported in this year's State Budget– including funding for tourism infrastructure projects at Lake Tyrrell and Koondrook, support for the next stage of the Swan Hill Riverfront, investment in the Robinvale Community Library and funding to produce a business case for a Victorian Cross Border Commissioner. As you can see, our Partnership is already having an impact and our voice is being heard.

The Partnership is also taking forward initiatives to boost links across all three levels of Government and with business and community to support our priorities.

Ongoing consultation

Though our 2017 Assembly is now behind us, the Regional Partnership is very keen to continue the consultation process and is committed to ongoing engagement with our community.

With that in mind, our Engage page (www.engage.vic.gov.au/mallee) is open for further comment and we would encourage you to get on the page and let us know your thoughts and ideas to strengthen the future of the Mallee region, or email us directly at Mallee.Partnership@rdv.vic.gov.au.

Over the course of the next few months, we may also look to hold additional focus groups to further particular ideas, or to hear from groups we feel have been absent from our engagement to date. We will let you know about such additional consultation either by direct email, through the Engage page, or our Partnership Facebook page.

We will of course also keep you abreast of announcements relevant to our region through these channels.

Once again, thank you for contributing to our Regional Assembly. Your views are incredibly valuable in this process and will mean that the voice of our region is heard right at the heart of Government.

I look forward to keeping the conversation going,

Regards

Win Scott
Chair, Mallee Regional Partnership