



27 October 2017

Thank you for your ongoing interest in the Ovens Murray Regional Partnership and our 2017 Regional Assembly which took place in Wodonga on 27 July.

We were delighted to see more than 170 community members from across the region, and were particularly pleased that every municipality was represented, with around 75% of participants from outside of Wodonga City.

The 2017 Assembly was the Regional Partnership's second major opportunity to consult with our community and present our region's story to Government. At the first Assembly in November 2016, we tested and refined our understanding of priorities for the region. We heard strong messages about passenger rail; tourism and other key emerging economic opportunities; education and skills for the future; digital connectivity; health and wellbeing; climate change and renewable energy; and local amenity needs.

#### 2017 Ovens Murray Regional Assembly in summary

Building on the 2016 Assembly, the 2017 Ovens Murray Regional Assembly brought together people from across the region, including residents, community and business leaders, students and representatives of special interest groups, to talk about stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship in the region.

The 2017 Assembly was attended by Premier Daniel Andrews and five Victorian Government Ministers: Jaala Pulford, Minister for Regional Development; Education Minister James Merlino; Minister for Industry and Employment, and Resources Wade Noonan; Attorney General Martin Pakula; and Minister for Roads Luke Donnellan. Also present were a number of other MPs including Jaclyn Symes. Each was clear they valued the opportunity to listen to regional voices and hear about our vision for the region's future.

Following a short video clip and stories from local innovators and entrepreneurs, participants got to work, sharing their ideas. The most popular ideas for innovation in the region were then 'pitched' to the broader audience. These innovative ideas, in order of popularity, were:

- Sustainable food system - Strategic approach and vision for agriculture in the region
- Entrepreneurship from the ground up - Rural and regional business hub
- Bring international students into regional Victoria
- Community capability network to link people, places and projects
- Tinder style app for volunteers to assist skilled older people become more involved in mentoring businesses and supporting community members
- Toolkit for community owned renewable energy
- Overcome the digital gap - Agency partnerships for infrastructure connectivity and digital support hubs
- Revolution in public transport - Ride-share technologies, passenger rail improvements and creation of the 'Man from Snowy River Way'
- Leveraging community finance to create jobs and provide community benefits
- SOS - Support our students who want to stay connected to the region
- Waking the Sleeping Mount Buffalo - Community driven concept plan.

Please refer also to the graphical snapshot provided of the 2017 Ovens Murray Regional Assembly.



### Next steps

The Regional Partnership is considering the input from the 2017 Assembly, and other engagements, and is taking key messages and learnings to the Rural and Regional Ministerial Committee.

When we met with this Committee for the first time earlier this year, we spoke particularly about the region's need for passenger rail improvements, opportunities for growing cycle tourism, and our entrepreneurial education agenda. Consequently, we are already seeing positive results from our efforts, with the 2017/18 State Budget delivering a \$40 million investment to improve the region's rail network and \$12 million to strengthen our reputation as a world class cycling destination.

Over coming months, we will hold smaller roundtable conversations and targeted forums to follow up on Assembly discussions and explore a number of key opportunities for innovation, in addition to continuing our existing work on regional priorities to:

- Secure improved passenger rail rolling stock and services along the North East line
- Strengthen regional tourism
- Develop a strong and sustainable agriculture sector
- Support our manufacturing sector and build on our competitive advantages in freight transport, distribution and logistics
- Trial innovative approaches to digital connectivity, including a Digital Hub co-working space
- Support innovative workforce skills development alongside industry and education providers
- Encourage school based initiatives to develop social enterprise skills and entrepreneurship
- Support community based renewable energy initiatives
- Attract investment to important community infrastructure priorities
- Improve regional health and wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

The Regional Partnership will continue to strengthen its links with all three levels of government, as well as with business and community, to support our priorities.

### Ongoing communication and consultation

The Ovens Murray Regional Partnership is committed to ongoing communication and consultation with our community and will continue to keep you informed of key announcements and progress on regional priorities.

Our Engage web page ([www.engage.vic.gov.au/ovens-murray](http://www.engage.vic.gov.au/ovens-murray)) remains open for comment from community members and we encourage your continuing feedback and ideas. You can also email us directly at [ovensmurray.partnership@rdv.vic.gov.au](mailto:ovensmurray.partnership@rdv.vic.gov.au) or leave a message on our [Ovens Murray Facebook](#) page.

Thank you again for your interest in the work of the Regional Partnership and we encourage you to continue your highly valued contribution to our region.

Regards

Irene Grant  
Chair

Michael Gobel  
Deputy Chair