

Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan



Feedback – Regional Development Australia ACT (RDA ACT)

Introduction

RDA ACT commends the vision and collaborative approach of the *Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan*, and would like to be included as a key stakeholder in helping to determine the vision of the final Regional Plan, and to share the responsibility for achieving its goals into the future.

Much of the Draft Plan's content outlines a vision that is shared with RDA ACT, and is consistent with the RDA focus on progressing strong regional economic development outcomes. RDAs bring the third (Federal) level of government to the collaborative regional governance approach, working under the direction of Senator the Hon Fiona Nash, Minister for Regional Development¹.

RDA ACT works closely with RDA Southern Inland (RDASI) and RDA Far South Coast, and is currently re-visiting our recently-expired *Memorandum of Understanding* with RDASI to refresh its focus on a collaborative regional approach that recognises, appreciates and develops the synergies of the ACT and south east NSW region – the Australian (Greater) Capital Region (and beyond).

RDA ACT particularly commends the recognition by the Draft Plan that: the economy of this NSW region is 'shaped by its ongoing relationship with the ACT'; that the ACT is a 'significant driver of growth and economic opportunity' for the region; and the importance of regional collaboration in shaping and optimising economic development outcomes.

The *RDA ACT Strategic Regional Plan* (currently being updated), notes the three crucial roles (dimensions) of Canberra as being the:

- **Capital of the Australian Capital Territory** – a city of its people, a vibrant, bold, prosperous, aspirational, progressive and well-educated smart city;
- **National Capital of Australia** – seat of national Parliament and centre for public policy, and home to much of the nation's cultural wealth; and
- **Hub of the south east NSW Region** – a major centre for residents of the surrounding south east NSW region to access its facilities, services and employment opportunities.

RDA ACT focus is on developing the economy of the ACT in the context of its surrounding NSW region, noting that the synergies of many of the holistic region's smart specialisations are best developed through a regional approach, with benefits flowing to both sides of the border.

The following RDA ACT feedback on the Draft Plan particularly addresses Goal 1 – *Sustainably manage growth opportunities arising from the ACT* and Goal 3 – *Strengthen the economic opportunities of the region*, with focus on the Goal aspects for which RDA ACT has particular commonality of vision with the NSW Government – Planning and Environment Department.

¹ Deputy Leader of the Nationals, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Local Government and Territories, Minister for Regional Communications

Addressing Priority Growth Sectors/Aims of the Plan/ Goals for Regional Economic Development

RDA ACT endorses the Draft Regional Plan's objective to further diversify the region's economy, recognising the scope for regional economic development – new jobs, business growth and diversity, in many of the six priority growth sectors identified. Growth opportunities that are particularly well aligned with those noted in the strategic regional planning of RDA ACT are addressed below.

TOURISM

RDA ACT too has identified the massive potential for tourism to bring economic development benefit to the region but importantly and foremost, it is crucial to *consistently* brand the region e.g. The Capital Region, and to build marketing around that brand.

The international facility of the Canberra Airport brings new global opportunities, as does the clean, green image of its agricultural produce. The diversity of its tourism offering has yet to be fully developed, and it is important to diversify its available attractions.

RDA ACT leads [SERREE](#) – an initiative to develop a region of Region of Renewable Energy Excellence in the south east NSW-ACT Region (referenced in Direction 3.3 of the Draft Plan), funded by the Federal, ACT and NSW (OEH) Governments, and by renewable energy industry stakeholders.

RDA ACT is developing a tourism initiative as part of the work of SERREE – the [Renewable Energy Trail](#), a self-drive tourism experience to showcase the diversity of renewable energy infrastructure sites located within the south east NSW-ACT region. The region boasts many of the biggest and best renewable energy generation facilities in Australia.

Global precedent underpins the success of this unique tourism initiative, which can, over the longer term, also be linked into the many other regional attractions (trails) to present a regional tourism experience (app) that presents food and wine, heritage, natural history – geology, as well as the renewable energy sites.

Recent understanding of the Singapore inbound tourism market suggests that offerings that are new and 'different' have strong appeal. RDA ACT has completed Phase I of the Renewable Energy Trail, delivering a *Renewable Energy Concept and Action Plan* (a consultancy funded by industry) and a brochure of Trail sites for future development launched by Minister Corbell as part of the launch of Renewable Energy Day 2015. There is more to be done, initially developing prime viewing sites and providing interpretive signage.

AGRICULTURE

Again the Canberra Airport provides new opportunities to enhance the productivity of regional agriculture with new potential for export, particularly given the clean, green image of Australian produce.

The often gourmet niche of this region's food and wine industry provides fresh capacity also to value-add to produce and thus capture new opportunities flowing from the new wealth of the rising middle class that is developing particularly quickly in south east Asian countries.

RDA ACT is part of a current initiative to develop a Regional Food Hub across the south east NSW and ACT region which is exploring the capacity to develop a regionally holistic approach to regional food. RDA ACT would like to extend the capacity of this initiative to develop a Regional Food Industry Cluster, as has been done with such good effect in bringing together the region's renewable energy industry stakeholders under the SERREE banner. The Industry Cluster philosophies of collaboration and information sharing are powerful and proven mechanisms for driving strong economic development outcomes.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

As noted previously, RDA ACT leads the [SERREE](#) Renewable Energy Industry Cluster initiative, which has successfully brought together a diverse and collaborative network of some 800 stakeholders to develop and strong and sustainable renewable energy industry in this region.

Plans to implement the ACT Government's 100% by 2020 renewable energy target are now in place, with the most recent announcement – construction of the Crookwell II Wind Farm by Union Fenosa, set to boost the region's economic growth as recognised by the NSW Government:

The NSW government said the \$200 million Crookwell wind farm would directly support 80 construction jobs and 14 ongoing operational jobs.

Union Fenosa has also committed to a "community enhancement fund" of \$2500 per turbine, and established a shared benefits scheme for those living nearby, according to NSW Resources and Energy deputy secretary Kylie Hargreaves.

Ms Hargreaves said nearby farmers will be able to continue working the land surrounding the turbines.

"NSW offers a number of sites which offer a combination of high average wind speeds, consistent winds, and smooth landscapes," Ms Hargreaves said.

"The construction of this wind farm will contribute to the financial security of the people of the Upper Lachlan, Crookwell, and Goulburn, and demonstrate the potential of renewable energy to transform our regional communities."²

Given the bounty of the region's solar and wind resources, there is potential for further development of this industry in the region. The Renewable Energy Trail is also important in this regard, as it helps to engender community understanding, acceptance of and appreciation for renewable energy industry development, and thus social license for the industry.

RDA ACT has applied for Federal Government funding to support a Supply Chain Capability Mapping exercise of the renewable energy industry in this region which, if successful, will present prospects to further develop the industry – local business capacity building and identifying gaps to be filled by new ventures creating new jobs.

The Renewable Energy Trail initiative thus presents value on three counts:

- As a driver of tourism - economic development;
- As a mechanism for encouraging community acceptance of the industry; and
- Underpinning the health of the environment.

² <http://www.serree.org.au/knowledge/news/article/?id=new-south-east-nsw-wind-farm-to-be-built-to-power-the-act-with-renewable-energy>

STRATEGIC REGIONAL ASSETS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

[Smart Work](#) is an increasingly popular global trend, recognised as a new way of working that can boost our region's productivity, sustainability and well being. Smart Work is more than teleworking, but even in that simple form, it provides potential to address the deluge of commuting traffic into Canberra from the surrounding region each day.

RDA ACT, in conjunction with RDASI, commissioned a *Smart Work in the ACT and Region Report* from University of Canberra researchers that presents Smart Work as an initiative with the potential to link the knowledge economy jobs of Canberra city with the educated, 'smart' workforce - many of whom live in the surrounding region, using technology to support workers 'working anywhere'.

RDA ACT is discussing the potential to establish pilot Smart Work Hubs in the surrounding region – Queanbeyan and Goulburn particularly, with the objective of trialing the concept of smart work, and whether its many benefits can be realised in this region.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – the ACT is a major user, driver and developer of ICT and there is potential for technology-based businesses in NSW to better position themselves to access this market. The Regional Plan could support this important economic diversification by proposing a collaborative cross-border strategy that would assist NSW based technology businesses (e.g. Bega ICT Hub – Co-working Space) to support ACT technology needs.

Conclusion

RDA ACT is a key regional stakeholder in the economic development of the ACT and south east NSW region, with many successful regional initiatives and strategies currently underway and more planned.

RDA ACT looks forward to being part of the discussion that develops the Capital Region of the future – a region that is strong, resilient and sustainable, with a growing economy being achieved in a way that does not compromise our environment, and builds our communities' well-being and liveability.

26 August 2016