

RDSA 2022 ANNUAL SUMMIT



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OVERVIEW

The RDSA 2022 Annual Summit provided an opportunity for federal, state and local government, industry and business to better discuss the housing and workforce issues in our regions.

More than 140 attendees attended the RDSA 2022 Annual Summit, held 13 September 2022 at the Bridgeport Hotel, Murray Bridge, with others joining via live stream. The day started with a highly engaging Welcome to Country presentation from local Indigenous artist, Ngrakani (Harley Hall).

The first half of the session focussed on skills and jobs of the future, migration and placed based solutions and case studies on building jobs of the future in regions

The second part of the day focussed on Housing solutions for the future and case studies of businesses on the ground and the practical steps they are currently taking, or are considering, to address housing and/or workforce challenges in their communities.

A special thank you and acknowledgement to Anna Butler from RDA Adelaide Hills Fleurieu Kangaroo Island for providing a summary of the Summit which can be found at <https://rdahc.com.au/rdsa-2022-annual-summit/>



MINISTERIAL OPENING ADDRESS

Hon. Clare Scriven MLC

Federal Minister for Primary Industries & Regional Development and
Minister for Forest Industries

- The Minister acknowledged there has been a 23% decrease in rental accommodation and a more than 30% increase in home values in regional South Australia. To help address these issues in the short to medium term, the South Australian State Government has committed \$177 million over 4 years to build 400 new public houses, with a further 350 existing vacant homes to be renovated and brought up to standard and 3,000 homes to undergo general improvements.
- A bilateral funding agreement between the Federal Government and South Australian government will also see a focus on skills training, with two new regional technical colleges being built in Mount Gambier and Port Augusta, and a further three technical colleges to be built in Adelaide.
- Other areas for focus included providing the support and infrastructure needed to help more people with disability, women, younger and older Australians into the workforce.



CASE STUDY

STUDY ADELAIDE TOURS

Jane Johnston, CEO StudyAdelaide and David Wheaton, CEO RDA
Limestone Coast

- Jane spoke on the engagement they're doing with international students, and the tours provided within the regions to introduce students to our regional employers and the lifestyle our regions have to offer.
- Over the past 16 months, some 1,500 students have registered with StudyAdelaide, with 250 students heading to the regions across 8 tours. These tours have already resulted in some of these students relocating to our regions to live and work.
- David explained the role our regional RDAs play in connecting business and employers to these programs and helping them to succeed. Part of the challenge of attracting migrant students to regions is the misconceptions they have about what regional Australia has to offer.
- The StudyAdelaide tours are invaluable in helping break down those misconceptions by facilitating face-to-face connections between students and employers, but without the regional RDA Workforce Programs helping drive the program, these connections could not be made.



CASE STUDY

WORKFORCE AND LEADERSHIP

Anne Moroney, CEO RDA BGLAP and Bridget Kennelly, Executive Support RDA BGLAP

- Anne and Bridget explained the importance of our community volunteers in supporting programs to drive local communities via the unpaid workforce. The Workforce and Leadership Programs offered by regional RDAs aim to expand the pool of current and future leaders in regional communities, helping to reduce the risk of volunteer fatigue by those who often take on the heavy lifting.
- The programs also remove barriers to volunteering by helping create greater understanding around governance, which can often be seen as too complex or confusing for the average person.



CASE STUDY

RIVERLAND AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE (RAW) PROGRAM

Ben Fee, CEO Murraylands and Riverland

Ben provided insight into their Workforce Program and reiterated important role RDAs play in regional communities to connect people with various programs and support. He highlighted the number of RDS staff and board members in attendance at the Summit and encouraged attendees to seek them out and build connections.



JOBS OF THE FUTURE

Renee Hindmarsh, South Australian Skills Commissioner

- The Commissioner introduced the audience to global workforce megatrends, which will see a move away from manual labour and jobs requiring more physical work, to those that will require a higher level of cognitive skills and education.
- The Commissioner stated that our greatest workforce challenge is helping current and future generations gain the skills they need to enter, or transition, into these emerging fields. Studies indicate the human skills future jobs are most likely to require will be:
 - cognitive
 - digital
 - personal/self-development
 - leadership
 - adaptability
 - collaboration
 - analytical
- As a result, it's predicted that within the next 5 years at least 9 out of 10 jobs will require a post-secondary qualification, with healthcare being the dominant employer in both regional and metropolitan areas.
- It is therefore critical to ensure our regions have access to higher-level education to not only future-proof our future workforce by providing the skills and education they need, but also ensuring regional areas remain an attractive and feasible locations for people to live and work.



MIGRATION - PLACE BASED SOLUTIONS

Mark Glazbrook, CEO, Migration Solutions

- Mark examined the disconnect between migration into Australia and South Australia's share to fill workforce shortages. While program numbers have increased from 160,000 to 195,000, almost 500,000 job vacancies remained in May 2022.
- South Australia only accounts for 2.4% of all migrants coming into Australia under the 482 visa program (replacing the 457 visa). Mark suggested this has been due to a change in programs to focus on skilled migrants with employment prearranged prior to travel, from migrants being invited to work based on current skills demand.
- As a result, many skilled migrants are moving to mainly larger metropolitan areas where there is a greater proportion of skilled employment available, while smaller cities and regional areas struggle to find the support they need from these programs.
- With regional areas struggling to fill workforce gaps, he submitted it may be time for the migration program to review the efficacy of the supply driven model. An increase in migration numbers would also boost economies and create additional jobs in local communities, with data indicating that for every 1 demand driven job taken up by a migrant, 1.6 additional jobs and training opportunities are created for local residents.



HOW DO WE FIX THE SKILLS SHORTAGE

PANEL

Zac McCrindle, Mark Glazbrook, David Wheaton, Renee Hindmarsh, Jane Johnston

- Key points from this discussion included whether the RDAs may have a role in migration reform to add “more layers” to the definition of “regional”. With some visa programs designed to fill skills gaps in more remote regions, those regions closer to the metropolitan areas are at risk of falling through the gaps in filling workforce shortages with migrant workers.
- Fast-tracking migrant visas into regional areas and fast-tracking permanency could be beneficial to get people into jobs now – businesses can’t wait months or years to find people to fill roles.
- There is greater need to ensure training into the jobs of the future and support for people with disability in the workforce.
- Regional Australians also need better access to services that might only be readily available in metro areas to attract and keep people living in regional areas. This included services such as education, healthcare and childcare.
- People were reminded to reach out to their local RDA for help with making connections to government and industry programs.
- The Commissioner for Skills SA reminded people to check their website to find a range of free support.



HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

Chris Menz, CEO Renewal SA

- Chris provided a presentation on Growth and Leadership Through Property and Projects. He acknowledged that housing had been an issue well before COVID -19 and that Renewal SA were making regional South Australia a focus to identify housing priorities. Forward planning was also flagged as critical to accommodating future demand.
- In some areas, the addition of 10-20 new homes may be all that is required to meet the accommodation needs, achieving significant outcomes with small increases to housing stock.
- Chris then outlined the 5 ways affordable housing is facilitated, which encompassed:
 - mandated affordable housing
 - government initiative schemes
 - existing rental stock
 - direct development
 - structured development and finance deals



SOLUTIONS FOR HOUSING IN REGIONS

PANEL:

Will Frogley, Stephen Knight, Daniel Gannon, Craig Holden, Lea Bacon, Anne Moroney

- Key points for this discussion included the cost for various housing options, including passive buildings and consideration for modular accommodation that could be expanded, contracted or repurposed to meet the shifting needs of communities.
- Specific government-owned accommodation for workers was raised as a way to avoid the need for people entering/leaving areas for employment to rent or purchase homes in the private market, particularly in areas where shortage of accommodation is at crisis level.
- Housing density was once again raised to suggest that higher density accommodation (such as apartment living) need not be a bad thing for regional communities when well-designed.
- Roadblocks and red tape also needed to be reduced to allow immediate release of available residential land for development. Additionally, housing demand needed to be correctly identified to ensure the correct solutions were being implemented in the right areas. It was also acknowledged that there are currently capacity issues in the building sector to enable construction of new homes.
- It was suggested council audits be conducted to identify available, liveable housing stock currently unoccupied and ways to incentivise property owners to make homes available for immediate use. Stamp duty reform was also discussed as a way to make home ownership more affordable.



CASE STUDY

ALYSON GILBEY, GENERAL MANAGER – HUMAN RESOURCES – VITERRA

- Viterra is one of the largest buyers of Australian commodities nation-wide, with around 2,200 permanent and casual employees in multiple locations across South Australia.
- While COVID-19 didn't impact Viterra's exports, Alyson discussed the impact of COVID and housing shortages on attracting and retaining staff, which has seen the number of candidates for seasonal employment decrease quite noticeably since the start of the pandemic.
- In the past 12 months, Viterra has spent some \$80m on wages, with an additional \$1.8m on accommodation for casual workers and contractors who may move to a region during harvest for short-term employment. Accommodation options include hotels, caravan parks and some local housing, but Viterra have recognised the need for long-term accommodation planning to ensure they can house their workers both now and into the future.
- After considering a range of options from doing nothing, through to leasing or purchasing dongas or houses, along with the long-term impact of each option on local communities, Viterra settled on a range of strategies which include:
 - Investing in a long-term accommodation project
 - Working with councils to establish permanent worker accommodation that can be used across industries in regional areas.
 - Establishing short-term accommodation options for harvest period in localised areas.
 - Finding ways to work with existing accommodation available in certain locations during harvest.



CASE STUDY

LIMESTONE COAST LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Peta Crewe: General Manager Regions PIRSA, Kirsty Starling: Owner and Director Maroona Station, Kristen Wilks: Owner and Director Lacepede Seafood

- Peta Crewe introduced this case study with an overview of the Limestone Coast Leadership Program which ran from 2019-2021. Designed in partnership with, and delivered by, the Leaders Institute of South Australia the program was rolled out to all 7 local government areas within the Limestone Coast region.
- Accepting 15 participants per year, the aim of the program was to stretch the capabilities of existing and emerging leaders to ensure they had the relevant skills to work with, and influence others, for the benefit of the region. The program covered a range of leadership topics such as, Personal leadership styles, motivating and mentoring, governance and finance, public speaking, building relationships, managing change, emotional intelligence, economic development, community action projects
- Kristy and Kristen shared their experience in the program and how it has helped them to advocate for meaningful change in their community.
- They had joined the Leadership Program to expand their professional development, build a stronger connection with their community and to push themselves out of their comfort zone. On the back of this, they came together to tackle the issue of limited childcare services in their town.
- While there are a range of childcare options readily available in metropolitan areas and larger towns, Kingston residents were struggling with insufficient access. As a result, many women who are willing and able to transition back into the workforce find themselves unable to do so due to the need to look after younger children during the day.
- Using the skills they developed in the Leadership Program, Kristen and Kristy created a working group to advocate the same early childhood education and workforce participation opportunities that their city counterparts enjoyed.
- As a result, they now meet regularly with the State Government and Education Department to discuss their project and needs of the community. They were able to secure bipartisan support for \$1.8m in funding to support the building of a childcare centre next to the Kingston Community School that will initially take on 3 workers 3 days a week.
- Now they “have a seat at the table” they are continuing their advocacy for childcare reform in South Australia, and are currently in the process of costing up plans for their childcare centre.

CASE STUDY

Paul Worley: Executive Director Clinical Innovation at Riverland Mallee Coorong Local Health Network

- Paul spoke about the challenges of attracting and retaining medical staff into regional areas, and how his organisation decided to take a different approach.
- He suggested that many regional medical clinics and hospitals have a tendency to offer lower wages than their metropolitan counterparts. This has resulted in regional towns finding it difficult to recruit medical practitioners on a long-term or permanent basis, as many are keen to move back to metro areas and higher wages once their country residencies are complete.
- This provides poorer outcomes for those living in regional and rural areas, who either have limited access to healthcare services, including GPs and specialists, or lack healthcare continuity as one locum replaces another.
- To provide greater incentive for new and existing medical professionals to move to regional areas on a permanent basis, his practice decided to provide salaries competitive with metropolitan centres along with 4–5 year employment contracts. The aim is to encourage practitioners to become embedded in the local communities and view regional opportunities as a viable career move, rather than a stepping-stone in their career path, which so far seems to be having the desired effect.



REGIONAL WORKFORCE AND HOUSING

PANEL:

Jane Johnston, Daniel Gannon, Will Frogley, Mark Glazbrook, Craig Holden, Peta Crewe

- The Summit drew to a close with a final discussion panel and the opportunity for attendees to submit questions.
- Discussion was had around how to support pensioners who may be willing and able to venture back into the workforce, such as tax reform to ensure they were not at a financial disadvantage from loss of pension for income earned. It was also suggested that while some older Australians may not have the physical capacity for some roles, that they had a wealth of knowledge and transferrable skills to provide support in other areas.
- There was more discussion around the lack of available housing for those who may wish to move to the regions and how, in some instances, red tape was causing bottlenecks in accessing building supplies. Low salaries in hospitality and trades were also highlighted as a barrier to attracting workers, particularly given the cost-of-living increases in regional areas due to housing stock shortages.
- The lack of investment in regional TAFEs and centralisation of tertiary education was raised as a factor in young people leaving our regions and contributing to subsequent skills gaps. However, there was much support for the RDA Leadership Programs, as well as discussion around how local leaders could be supported to avoid burnout.]



RECOMMENDATIONS - WORKFORCE

Key recommendations that RDSA will focus on include:

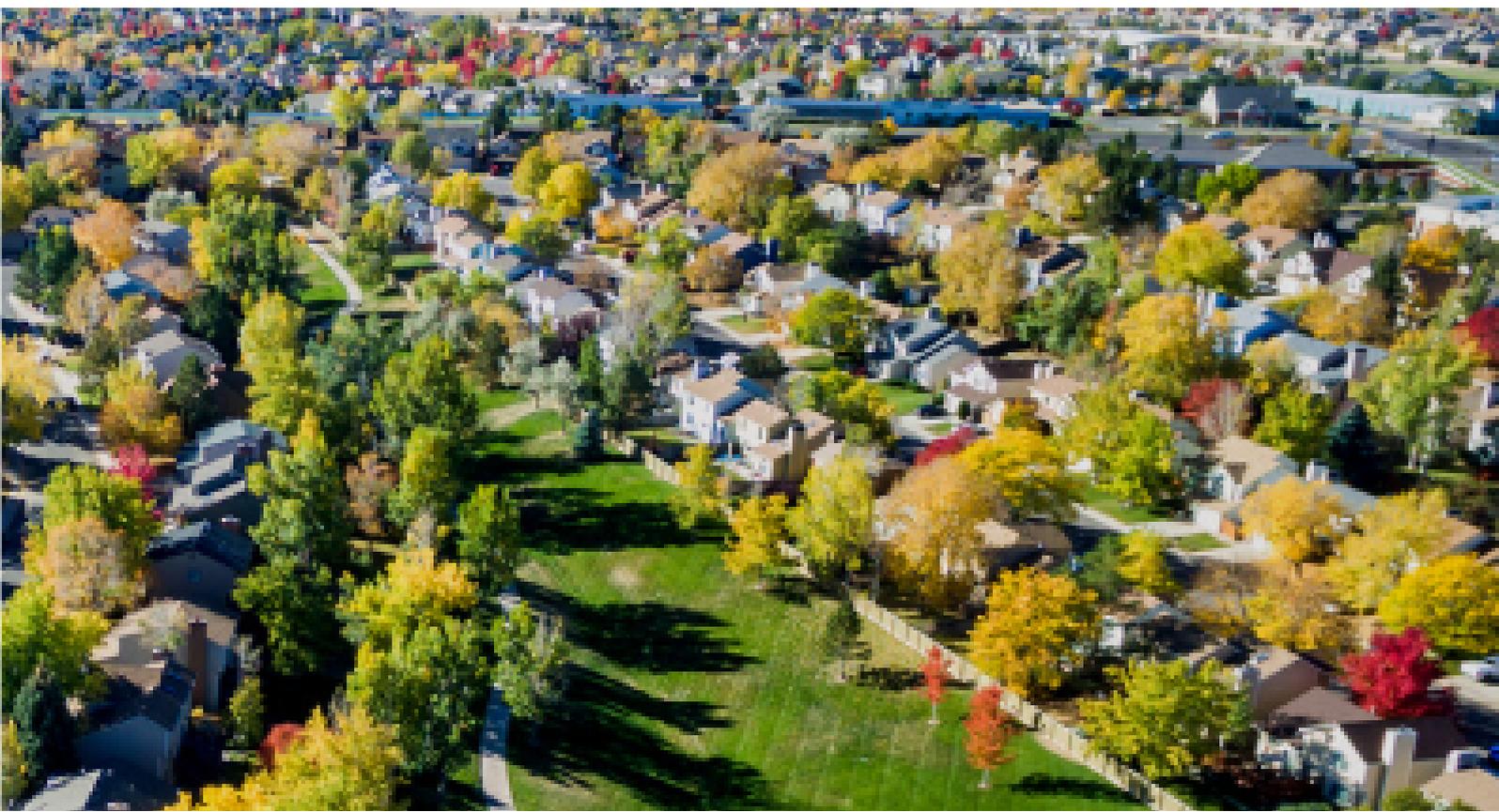
1. Upskilling of workers
2. Supplement Childcare facilities to enable the primary carer to re-enter the workforce
3. Continuation of Study Adelaide Tours
4. Migration reform
5. Community programs to welcome migrants to region
6. Connecting industry to schools



RECOMMENDATIONS - HOUSING

Key recommendations that RDSA will focus on include:

1. Well-designed high-density housing accommodation
2. Stamp Duty Reform – to make it affordable to purchase a home
3. Council Audits to understand asset availability
4. When looking to secure government assistance, be specific and articulate what type of project you are looking to develop
5. Repurposing housing to meet the shifting needs of communities
6. Need to investigate locally produced sustainable building materials to offset stress on international supply chains



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For more information on the Summit including photos, videos of the presentations please visit

<https://regionaldevelopmentsa.com.au/2022summit/>

A special acknowledgement to the following who made a significant contribution to the Annual Summit:

- Dept of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
- RDA Adelaide Metro, RDA Adelaide Hills Fleurieu Kangaroo Island, RDA Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains, RDA Eyre Peninsula, RDA Far North, RDA Limestone Coast, RDA Murraylands and Riverland, RDA Yorke and Mid North.
- PIRSA
- Local Councils & LGASA
- The Bridgeport Hotel
- Dbusiness Events
- Considered Image
- Stacey Lee
- Guest speakers and panellists

