



2025 SUMMIT

STRONG | SMART REGIONS | GROWTH

EVENT PROGRAM

FRIDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2025 | 8:30 am to 3:00 pm

Adelaide Convention Centre

Regional SA - Now and Into the Future



SESSION 1

9:00am - 11:00am

8:30am	Registration
9:00am	Welcome & Housekeeping Mike Smithson - Emcee
9:10am	Welcome to Country Jack Buckskin - Kuma Kaaru
9:20am	Opening address HON Peter Malinauskas MP - Premier of South Australia Ministerial address HON Clare Scriven MLC - Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development and Minister for Forest Industries
9:40am	RDSA Regional Priorities Statement Alison Lloyd-Wright - Managing Director, The Good Trouble Group
9:50am	Keynote Accelerating regional growth - shaping the future of South Australia's economy Dr Susan Stone - Credit Union SA Chair of Economics at UniSA <i>Join Dr. Susan Stone as she uncovers strategies to drive growth and economic diversity and complexity in regional South Australia, spotlighting emerging industries and fostering collaboration between regional and city leaders.</i>
10:15am	Panel session Expanding economic diversity and complexity in regional SA Facilitator: Dr Susan Stone - Credit Union SA Chair of Economics at UniSA <i>Dr. Susan Stone and a panel of experts will discuss innovative strategies for regional economic growth, diversity, and collaboration in emerging industries.</i> Panel: Tori Dixon-Whittle - CEO, Food SA Ian Spencer - Executive Director Defence and Industry, Defence SA Diane Dixon - State Innovation Places Lead, Department of the Premier and Cabinet Sam Crafter PSM - State Lead, Whyalla Steelworks Industrial Transformation
11:00am	Morning tea - City Rooms Foyer

Powering our potential with people



SESSION 2

11:15am - 1:30pm

11:15am

Keynote
Building Tomorrow: The Future of Population Growth in Regional South Australia
Hari Hara Priya Kannan - Chief Data Scientist, The Demographics Group

Join us to explore the benefits and challenges of intentional regional population growth in South Australia and its impact on larger centres, smaller towns, and our economic potential as a state.

12:00PM

Panel session:
Strategies for Intentional Growth in Regional Population Hubs
Facilitator: **Victoria MacKirdy** - Chief Executive Officer, City of Victor Harbor, Chair of RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu, and Kangaroo Island

Unlock the potential for intentional growth in regional population hubs through impactful strategies discussed in this engaging panel session.

Panel:
Martin Hawson - CEO of the Rural City of Mildura

Heather Barclay - CEO, Rural City of Murray Bridge

Sarah Philpott - former CEO City of Mt Gambier

Justin Commons - CEO City of Whyalla

12:45pm

Lunch - City Rooms Foyer



Copper cladding on Adelaide Oval
-Resourceful SA Campaign, SA Chamber of Mines and Energy

John Montesi | Oval Hotel | Adelaide

How we get there together



SESSION 3

1:30pm- 3:00pm

1:30pm

Keynote

Taking the Lead – a systematic approach to sustainable regional workforce planning

Julie Sloan OAM, FAHRI - Chief Executive, Workforce Planning Global

This keynote presentation aims to inform, engage and energise participants to continue to strengthen regional workforce planning initiatives by applying learnings from successful international case studies.

2:10pm

Keynote

Cracking the regional housing nut!

Elinor Walker - Urban Development & Infrastructure, Regional Leader, Egis

This insightful keynote presentation, "Cracking the Regional Housing Nut," will explore effective infrastructure planning and collaboration strategies essential for driving sustainable growth and investment in regional SA.

2:45pm

Where to from here?

How often do we walk away from a Summit thinking, "What's next?"

Summit reporter, **Maz McGann** - Play Your Part will provide some key observations from the Summit.

Leonie Boothby - RDA Adelaide, CEO, will revisit the RDSA Statement, and future opportunities for collaborative discussion and stakeholder engagement.

2:55pm

Closing

HON Rob Kerin - Executive Chair, Regional Development South Australia

3:00pm - 4:00pm

Networking - City Rooms Foyer

Please join us for a networking reception with refreshments immediately following the final session.

According to Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia, South Australia accounts for almost **80%** of the nation's premium wine, with over **700** wineries representing just under half of the country's vineyards.

Daniel Trimboli | Longview Vineyard | Adelaide Hills



Session One:



MIKE SMITHSON

Emcee



Mike Smithson is one of the most experienced reporters and presenters in the Seven Network, having worked as a television journalist and newsreader for 42 years. He was awarded the prestigious Journalist of the Year in South Australia plus numerous other awards for his work on television and in newspapers for his political commentary and critique, where he's influenced public opinion. For 25 years Mike was the senior political reporter in Adelaide having covered many changes of government. During his long journalistic career, he's also interviewed every Prime Minister: from Gough Whitlam to Albo – 11 in all. Mike is currently Chief Reporter and weekend news presenter. He is a regular political commentator on FIVEaa and ABC Radio.



HON PETER MALINAUSKAS MP

Premier of South Australia



Peter Malinauskas is the 47th Premier of South Australia. Adelaide born-and-bred, Peter studied commerce at the University of Adelaide and has dedicated his working life to raising the standard of living for everyday South Australians. He was elected to State Parliament in 2015, became Labor Leader in 2018 and was elected Premier of South Australia in 2022. Peter is leading a government which is getting things done for South Australia, with a strong focus on the state's prosperity for today and for the long term.

Beyond his official duties, the Premier's greatest loves are his wife Annabel, their four young children, the mighty Port Adelaide Football Club and the Adelaide Uni Blacks.



HON CLARE SCRIVEN MLC

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



Clare Scriven was raised in Mount Gambier and returned to the region with her family after living and working in Adelaide for some years. Clare is committed to regional development, improving educational opportunities, supporting small business, and promoting the importance of primary industries sectors.

Prior to entering Parliament in 2018, Clare's career spanned forest industries, human resources, government policy and service delivery. Clare's post-graduate studies in management and business have complemented her diverse working background. Clare is passionate about regional communities. As a member of the Legislative Council, she represents all South Australians.

She and her husband, Gerard, have six children.

Session One:



ALISON LLOYDD-WRIGHT

Managing Director, The Good Trouble Group



Alison Lloyd-Wright is Managing Director of the Good Trouble Group, a consultancy that drives bold outcomes through sharp strategy.

A seasoned public sector leader and former Deputy Chief Executive at the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, she's spent decades delivering reform across regions, population, arts and more.

She's passionate about the big, ambitious shifts that will shape South Australia's future.



DR. SUSAN STONE

Credit Union SA Chair Economics UniSA Business



Susan Stone is the Credit Union SA Chair of Economics at UniSA, where she provides expert analysis and new thinking about South Australia's economic position and how global economic factors impact the local economy.

Prior to joining UniSA, Ms Stone was a division head at the OECD, a Director for the UNESCAP, a Senior Research Fellow at the Asian Development Bank Institute in Tokyo, and a Research Manager at the Productivity Commission in Melbourne. Ms Stone is a frequent guest on radio and television and her opinion pieces have been published in InDaily, The Australian Financial Review and The Australian.



TORI DIXON-WHITTLE

CEO, Food SA



Tori Dixon-Whittle is Chief Executive Officer of Food South Australia, the state's peak body for food and beverage manufacturing. With over 30 years' leadership experience spanning manufacturing, tourism, education, the arts, international trade, and entrepreneurial ventures, Tori brings a strategic, future-focused mindset to strengthening capability, fostering innovation, and championing sustainability—while driving success across the sector.

An alumna of the Governor's Leadership Foundation, Tori collaborates across industry, government, research, and community to drive positive change. She also serves on the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society of South Australia's Agrifood and Commerce Committee and the University of Adelaide's Agribusiness Advisory Board.

Dedicated to helping people and places flourish, Tori leads with a clear vision to position South Australia as a global leader in premium, sustainable food and beverage.

Session One:



IAN SPENCER

Executive Director Defence and Industry



With nearly four decades of experience across Defence, electronic warfare and space, Ian has served in leadership roles spanning government, industry and the not-for-profit sector. As Executive Director Defence and Industry for Defence SA, he leads initiatives to grow South Australia's defence and space sectors whilst strengthening relationships across government, industry and academia.

Ian served in the Royal Australian Navy for over 22 years as a sailor and engineering officer. Following his service, he continued supporting Defence as the senior Navy electronic warfare systems engineer in the Australian Public Service.

In 2015, he transitioned to the private sector, consulting to Defence before founding a leading-edge defence technology company in 2019, employing local engineers to develop technology for the Australian Defence Force and export to the UK.

Since relocating to South Australia in 2007, Ian has embraced the state as home. As a father of five, he is a passionate advocate for community, collaboration and innovation within the defence and space industries in South Australia.

He holds a Bachelor of Engineering in Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering from RMIT University.



DIANE DIXON

State Innovation Places Lead, Department of the Premier and Cabinet



Diane has worked in areas including major infrastructure project management, strategic land use planning, economic development, stakeholder engagement, investment & trade and innovation and precinct delivery in both the UK and Australia over the past 25 years. She has also sat on a variety of innovation, education and government boards.

She is responsible for the delivery of Lot Fourteen in the Adelaide CBD and is now also responsible for innovation and economic places across the state and has developed a South Australia Innovation Places Leadership Framework to elevate the state as a global leader in innovation and economic outcomes. This leadership will unlock even greater value from investment, ensuring South Australia is globally responsive and competitive.

Session One:



SAM CRAFTER PSM

State Lead

Whyalla Steelworks Industrial Transformation



Sam Crafter is a senior executive with over two decades of experience across government and industry in the energy and resources sectors. He currently serves as the State Lead, Whyalla Steelworks Industrial Transformation, leading South Australia's strategic response to the steelworks administration and coordinating whole-of-government efforts to support Whyalla's transition to green steel and long-term industrial growth.

Previously, as Chief Executive of the Office of Hydrogen Power SA, Sam led the \$593 million Hydrogen Jobs Plan, a globally recognised initiative to deliver a world leading hydrogen power plant. He has also held senior leadership roles where he led landmark projects including the Hornsdale Power Reserve (then the world's largest battery), the \$100 million Home Battery Scheme, the \$50 million Grid Scale Storage Fund, and the rollout of South Australia's Virtual Power Plant for public housing tenants. He also co-founded a strategic advisory firm and served in executive roles at Santos Ltd and within State and Federal Government.

In 2024, Sam was awarded the South Australian Public Service Medal for his leadership in advancing the State's clean energy transition.

Session Two:



HARI HARA PRIYA KANNAN

Chief Data Scientist, The Demographics Group



Hari Hara Priya Kannan is Chief Data Scientist at The Demographics Group in Melbourne, renowned for its data-driven journalism, corporate speaking, and business advisory services.

She writes a monthly column for The Australian newspaper, analysing business demographics and their impact on businesses and government policies.

Hari highlights Australia's demographic trends, offering insights into consumer behaviour, workforce dynamics, and social trends, and showcasing their significance for corporate, government and industry audiences alike.

Session Two:



VICTORIA MACKIRDY

*Chief Executive Officer, City of Victor Harbor
Chair of RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu, and Kangaroo Island*



Victoria is a highly experienced leader with over 30 years in local government, primary production, and private enterprise, driving regional growth and innovation across South Australia and nationally. As CEO of the City of Victor Harbor, she shapes a sustainable future and, as Chair of RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu, and Kangaroo Island, champions economic development.

Beyond these roles, she serves as a Director of Regional Arts Australia, Chair of the Zone Emergency Management Committee for Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu, and Kangaroo Island, and a Board Member of SA Leaders for Gender Equity.



MARTIN HAWSON

CEO Rural City of Mildura



A lifelong resident of Sunraysia, Martin has over 20 years of experience as a senior executive in Local Government. He is a proven leader with a strong track record for improving community well-being, especially for disadvantaged groups.

Martin's innovative approach has led to major projects that have transformed the region, including the Mildura Sporting Precinct, Powerhouse Place, and the Trail of Lights. Through his leadership, the Mildura Future Ready strategy has secured \$42 million in government funding since 2017, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in economic benefit for the Sunraysia region.

He holds a Masters in Health Administration, a Graduate Diploma in Health Science, and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



HEATHER BARCLAY

CEO Rural City of Murray Bridge



Heather was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Rural City of Murray Bridge in July 2023. With more than 30 years of experience in local government, including municipal engineering, she has a strong reputation as a transformational leader. She has held senior and general management roles in a variety of councils across South Australia and Victoria. Heather holds an Associate Diploma in Surveying and an Advanced Diploma in Project Management, and is a member of several professional organisations. Her leadership focuses on strategic planning, asset management, and delivering on the council's vision for "Thriving Communities."

Session Two:



SARAH PHILPOTT

Former CEO City of Mt Gambier



Sarah Philpott, the former CEO of the City of Mount Gambier until August 2025, returned to her hometown in 2021 after a diverse local government career spanning South Australia, Queensland, and Victoria. With a background in libraries, community development, and urban projects, she also held roles in private industry and the justice sector. Armed with qualifications in business administration, change management, and a Master's in Social Sciences, Sarah effectively advocated for regional investment and led significant infrastructure projects during her four-year tenure, supporting the city and its residents toward a promising future.



JUSTIN COMMONS

CEO City of Whyalla



Justin is City of Whyalla's Chief Executive Officer, and is a contemporary and accomplished executive and influential leader, with a demonstrated track record successfully operating both large and small Councils - in both regional/rural locations and metropolitan areas - in both South Australia and Queensland.

City of Whyalla is arguably one of the most complex local government areas in the state given the dichotomy between the Multi-Billion-dollar investment in Sovereign Steel Capability and the City having one of the lowest SEIFA indexes in the Nation.

Session Three:



JULIE SLOAN OAM, FAHRI

Chief Executive, Workforce Planning Global



Julie is the Chief Executive, Workforce Planning Global and a widely acknowledged and accredited international expert in workforce planning. Julie has worked widely in the Australian Government sector and in most industries and sectors across 15 countries. Earlier in her career, she worked at the United Nations, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and at the International Atomic Energy Agency both in Vienna, Austria. In recognition of her contribution to the field of workforce planning and management, she was honoured with an Order of Australia Medal and the Standards Australia Meritorious Contribution Award - International for exceptional achievements of an expert in international standardisation.

Julie is the lead writer and convenor of the inaugural ISO Standard on Workforce Planning ISO 30409 and the Australian Workforce Planning Standard AS 5620. She is a Fellow of the Australian Human Resources Institute (FAHRI). She was recognised in the 2008 / 2015 South Australian Government Women's Honour Roll which pays tribute to South Australian women who have made significant impact on the community, women who are role models and leaders.

Session Three:



ELINOR WALKER

Urban Development & Infrastructure, Regional Leader, Egis



Elinor is an Urban Development and Infrastructure Regional Lead for the global engineering company, Egis. She is a former Director of the Growth and Infrastructure Coordination Unit in the South Australian Government, which was established to coordinate growth area and infrastructure planning in SA to help enable the delivery of additional housing and new greenfield communities. She was instrumental in creating a raft of growth area tools designed to enable serviced land to come to market. Elinor is also a former Commissioner with the State Planning Commission and former President of the Planning Institute of Australia (SA) and has a wealth of experience in both public and private sectors. Elinor's expertise is uniquely diverse, having worked in strategic, statutory, and environmental planning roles in urban and regional communities across her career.



MAZ MCGANN

Play Your Part



Maz McGann is a skilled facilitator, strategist and cultural leader who works at the intersection of community, creativity and change. With more than two decades of experience across government, peak bodies, not-for-profits and business, she brings a sharp eye for strategy and a passion for ideas that strengthen people and place. Based in the Barossa, Maz founded Play Your Part in 2014 and has since led projects spanning arts, culture, heritage, health and tourism. Her work has included developing strategies for councils, undertaking research with university partners, developing impact assessments for the community and health sectors, and creating business frameworks for community facilities.

Her work highlights the social and economic impact of culture, while amplifying regional voices and stories on a national stage.



HON ROB KERIN

Executive Chair - Regional Development South Australia



Rob is a Former Premier of South Australia and has held various ministries including Primary Industries, Regional Development, Industries and Resources, Forestry, State Development and Tourism. In addition to having been the Chair of Regional Development South Australia for 14 years he is currently Deputy Chair of the Regional Australian Institute, Chair S.A Oyster Growers Association and SA Oyster Research Council, President of South Australian National Football League (SANFL), Chair Adelaide Oval Stadium Management Authority and Chair Adelaide Oval Hotel Trust.

Session Three:



LEONIE BOOTHBY

CEO, Regional Development Australia Adelaide



Leonie Boothby has over 30 years' experience in senior management roles in both the public and private sectors and has a strong commercial business background. Prior to joining Regional Development Australia Adelaide, Leonie was the CEO of Regional Development Australia Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains. Leonie's public sector experience includes both State and Local Government. Her private sector experience has been in retail, hospitality, tourism, franchising, and finance across Australia and overseas. Her previous experience includes operating her own strategic management consultancy business, providing a range of consultancy services with a focus on economic and community development.