

MSEAT Regional Leadership Meeting Notes

4pm - Thursday 7 April 2022

March Theme: Migration workforce

This May, RDA Murray will be touring the region with Business, Industry and Regional Outreach Officers (BIRO) from the Department of Home Affairs. They will be visiting communities and businesses to discuss the migration needs of the region.

We would like input from MSEAT members as to what you think should be asked of the BIRO team and which businesses/communities the team should visit during their tour.

RDA Murray Update

Edwina Hayes – RDA Murray:

- RDA Murray's focus this month is on strategic regional planning, along with workforce and housing stock strategies.
- Next months' BIRO Visit will be Eastern Murray region only. The VIC BIRO team will visit the Western region later, working with RDA Murray. The tour will consist of peak body and local govt closed roundtable meetings as well as public consultation and public information about visas and how people use them. It is expected to be very popular.

Member Updates

Dan Brear – NSW Farmers.

- Recent focus has been labour and migrant workforce and the Ag visa. Vietnam is the only country that has signed on with this - needs more engagement.
- Housing - Legacies that are coming from other projects (TransGrid) to address issues with housing for labour etc.
- Has been traveling around the region this week. Advocating for the removal of backpacker tax to provide stimulus to provide short term flexible labour force. Mostly for unskilled labour but may also capture those who are skilled and travelling. Backpackers tend to spend money in the region rather than sending it offshore (e.g., pacific workers)
- Has been working with Graeme Kruger. This is because of the connections made in MSEAT.
- We invite you to ABARES Perspectives, an informative series of free online webinars on key industry assessments, market outlooks and the latest in ABARES research. - <https://abares.cmail19.com/>

Gary Rodda – Murray Local Land Services

- Recruitment for semi prof and professional roles in the area is difficult. Recently seeing a more shorter-term tasks in natural resource management, which require contracts of 6-18 months. It is difficult to secure people to come into those roles. Combination of lack of positions and housing for those periods of time. Sees that this is causing grief in all

sectors, from seasonal fruit picker right through to high paid, high skilled positions. It is becoming a long-term problem for the region.

E Hayes - RDA Murray

- The pinch in labour market is getting more universal and is not just a problem caused by COVID-19. Workforce issues are so very complex, but we are lucky in the Murray region to have a number of residential developments come online in 2021. We are still playing catch up and need to fast track at every level.

Graeme Kruger – Rice Growers Assoc.

- Rice harvest has started.
- Vesting review is going before cabinet next week. Indications that they have heard the request of the industry and 98% of growers have voted in support of current arrangements.
- Mills are now back to 24/7. This season will result in \$250 mil of direct payments to growers, \$60mil to suppliers, and \$90mil to employers in the next 12 months
- Attended a number of meetings with Ministers over the last 3 weeks. Water remains a focus - 3 areas in particular. They are working closely with Murray regional strategy group for a coordinated voice. Underuse remains a priority. Embarking investigation on property right erosion. (Property rights erosion - over time because of a number of policy settings e.g., water recovery and changes to water scheme plans, each setting has a minute impact on the property rights. As those changes build, they have an impact.)

Nicola James – DPIE.

- Hearing that visa process is difficult across the board. Many businesses have always done it themselves but are now finding that they are getting resistance or Nos back after months. Having to start again or hire migrations lawyers because they are not getting enough feedback with the refusals. Forms with smart feedbacks would be helpful.
- Businesses are being forced into automation as they cannot get the people. Difficult for some people to do and often does not make sense.
- Hard to keep on top of the changes in visas and the processes.
- The industries that just do not seem to be attracting enough trades - fabrication / welding, chefs, project managers, auto technicians, diesel mechanics
- Electricians will be another one with the HumeLink Project

Anthony McFarlane – Business NSW.

- Locked in the missing chunk of AEC development. This will put Albury on the map as a destination in regional Australia, bringing the capacity of the venue up to 800.
- AW Health continues to be an issue that we are trying to progress in terms of states stalemate - if it continues to slide it will be of concern. Justin Clancy very focussed on this. Finding health staff is very difficult. Government needs to address this specifically for this region.
- Demand in manufacturing uptick in infrastructure projects - workers being poached at inductions by other companies and taken on as direct employees.
- Defence base upgrades in the regions - will require workers for 5-10 years.

Matt Hicks – Greater Hume Shire Council

- Manufacturing sector could take 30 people tomorrow. Hard to find skilled people. Even difficult to find people to pack boxes.
- Housing is a big issue in getting people into the region. GHSC are recruiting new general manager - looking to purchase a house to ensure they have accommodation for the person who secures the job.
- Majority of applicants appear to be from nearby.
- Housing should be pushed equally as hard as increased migration.

ACTIONABLE COLLECTIVE PRIORITIES

- Nil

Next Meeting Thursday 28 April 2022 4pm via zoom.

Please contact Edwina 0427267753 edwina.hayes@rdamurray.org.au for further clarification or information