

BRIEFING NOTE

To: The Hon Nola Marino MP and DITRDC
From: RDA Murray NSW
Submitted by: Edwina Hayes - DRD-CEO
Information Source: RDA Murray and Murray Socio-Economic Activation Taskforce (MSEAT)
Date: Friday 26 June 2020

Recovery phase and what this looks like:

- HMFD cancelled representing a \$92M hit to the region. We are hustling to identify and support amelioration activity
- MSEAT continues fortnightly with nested sub-regional working groups actively addressing, seeking and sharing support and stimulus advice
- Local economic and business development agencies are working at individual business level to understand and respond to specific factors in their recovery. A wide range of recovery factors are being taken on at this level.
 - Business owner implementation of individual interpretations of restrictions eg. Inviting staff to stay away, voluntarily closing front of house, whether to go online or not and differing relationships and engagement with staff on JobKeeper.
 - A booming agricultural season is buoying the sector generally with fresh orders for merchandise, machinery and sheds etc
 - Retail polarisation between places and types eg supermarkets vs café/gift shop,
 - Some data may be biased at scale because supermarket retail is lumped in with High St retail
 - Tourism divergence eg Echuca-Moama June long weekend visitation was 25% more than historical average while most towns report accommodation and hospitality crash) Lake Mulwala significantly impacted by Melbourne advice not to travel
- Business Development and economic development staff continue their attention on solvency and worries about Sept Cliff from business owners
- 23 June Federal AWE announcement of Sector Supply Chain Bushfire disaster recovery funding details eagerly anticipated (concern about 50:50 matching)
- RDA Murray is developing a proposal for a collaborative Infrastructure Advocacy program to engage additional investment. Collaborating with Canberra JO (Gabrielle Cusack and Jillian Kilby), RAMJO and DITRDC
- Generally there is a focus on getting on with delivering stimulus projects brought forward
- MSEAT is focussed on job matching plans and collective support for regional priorities as they arise eg, Telecommunications and improving Digital Inclusion

How recovery can be effectively implemented:

- Supported 'business as usual' business development, productivity and growth reviews eg CSU
- Through cooperative alliances creating critical mass across logical communities to effectively identify opportunities to influence positive recovery and implement projects eg,
 - Greater Albury-Wodonga Migrant job matching,
 - Youth and migrant Employment readiness programs,



- Central Murray Agriculture Master Plan implementation or
- Upper Murray cross border agricultural and tourism growth
- Improved Digital Inclusion; promotion of technology to improve access and connectivity, better rural affordability and higher digital literacy.

Impact and effectiveness of the government COVID interventions in your region including identifying what additional support may be needed.

- Albury Wodonga land sales increased fourfold and Builders' job orders doubled immediately with \$25,000 stimulus
- Much appreciated 5 additional BEC Business Advisers coming on deck in the Bushfire and drought footprint are having a positive effect.
- Digital Inclusion program to supplement affordable access in regions and provide technology to improve connectivity and education and engagement to improve literacy.

Business confidence across your region and good news stories

COVID Response

- Locally observing continued polarisation effects eg booming Agricultural season vs bottomed out Tourism sector along the Murray
- Cautiously buoyant with low level of anticipation of pitfalls focussed on Melbourne and Sept JobKeeper changes
- Concern about scope and scale of "zombie" businesses that are not viable beyond JobKeeper
- loosening of Insolvency obligations/responsibilities may mean there are significant numbers of businesses unable to meet their debtors (RDA Murray are collecting data from local sources to inform this issue)

Getting On With It

- Agriculture – focussed on proactively meeting seasonal workforce needs for harvest 2020
- CSU Review proactively focussed on sustainable viability
- Balranald Shire Council preparing for 25% population boom with incredibly positive jobs and business growth (particularly nuts, renewable energy and mineral sands mining)
- Federations Council reports significant jobs growth in the manufacturing sector

Great ideas we will act on from this week's national teleconference:

AIG partnership delivering MedTech cluster development

RDASA State Recovery Plan

RDA Murraylands-Riverlands' circular economy strategic plan

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