

## BRIEFING NOTE

**To:** The Hon Nola Marino MP and DITRDC  
**From:** RDA Murray, NSW  
**Submitted by:** Edwina Hayes – Director Regional Development and CEO, RDA Murray  
**Information Source:** RDA Murray Network and MSEAT  
**Date:** 23 November 2020

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Murray NSW Region has suffered some of the most restrictive conditions of any region in Australia causing significant economic affray and devastating collapse in Tourism, accommodation and entertainment sector.

**We welcome the opening of the NSW Border to Victorians today after 20 weeks of segregation and work arounds.**

JobSeeker/JobKeeper often broadly blamed for hospitality, cleaning and seasonal agricultural sectors being unable to find employees. MSEAT interrogated the issues more closely and advises of deconstructed issues

- Job Keeper is unlikely to be impacting people's availability for work as maintaining an employee on this payment is at the discretion of the employer who fortnightly authorises the program. Job Keepers who don't turn up for work are at risk of being terminated.
- fear and anxiety may be playing a part in younger people being discouraged from jobs perceived as higher risk. Jobs that involve serving or cleaning after many people or people from metropolitan areas like in hospitality and accommodation businesses.
- Job insecurity may be influencing Job Seekers to stay on their Services Australia payments rather than start employment they are not confident will be ongoing
- JobSeeker rates (with rent assistance and Family Tax Benefits) are currently in the order of
  - o \$450pw for singles who house share
  - o \$513pw for singles with child/children
  - o And approx. \$460- \$816pw if you are a part of a couple with up to 3 children (subject to family income and assets)
- The national minimum wage is currently \$753.80 per 38 hour week (before tax).

Have ATO tax rules kept up with casualisation of the workforce? Employees with two or more casual jobs, with an even split in hours per week could be paying considerably more tax on their work hours than traditional full time employees. Tax collected is not refunded to the worker until EOFY. Many people are living pay cheque to pay cheque as a result of COVID impacts in the border region. This lag in having the cash available could tip the scales to remain on JobSeeker in the short term.

**Could reducing the tax burden on second jobs encourage more workers into 2 or more casual jobs rather than remaining on JobSeeker?**

A person earning \$454pw before tax. (Single, share rent, JobSeeker or 23 hours minimum wage equivalent)

In 1 Job claiming Tax Free Threshold take home = \$434

In 2 jobs 50:50 with second job not claiming TFT take home = \$404

**Waiving the additional tax threshold on the second job could put \$30pw more cash into the pockets of casual workers.**



BBRF Rd 5 anticipation is building. Murray RDA has established a Regional EDO community of Practice ready to share and collaborate to develop regionally prioritised projects. There is positive engagement from Councils and Businesses RDA Murray working with Destination Riverina Murray and Murray Regional Tourism to coordinate, aggregate and prioritise at scale.

Tourism and Hospitality Sector require additional assistance to rebuild Murray visitation particularly from Melbourne and Victoria.

Key solutions are investment in promotion, rebuilding employee relationships, catalysing visitation through place making destination investment using infrastructure projects and regenerating a cross-border trust and engagement.

RDA Murray focussed on

- Engage economic drivers leveraging post COVID boom behaviours
- Supporting multicultural community to engage in seasonal work eg. Partnering with Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau to facilitate Bushfire safety for workers travelling to pick berries in fire affected Upper Murray.
- Establishing regional economic recovery priorities
  - Reviewed MSEAT ToR to adapt to recovery mode (evaluation attached)
  - Amplifying Tourism and Visitation Regional priorities eg. Golf on the Murray Prospectus
  - Raising awareness of opportunities to invest in regional priorities for recovery eg. Murray Irrigation Infrastructure and Environmental Watering Projects

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